



Telework has the potential to benefit organizations, employees, and the overall community in various ways. The most significant benefits for an organization are:

Enhanced Employee Recruitment

- An organization that offers telework and other flexible work arrangements has a competitive edge over organizations that don't. This is especially important in areas like Kitsap County where employers compete with jobs paying higher wages in nearby urban areas.
- Younger workers in particular are adept at remote or collaborative technologies and may expect to use those skills in the workplace.
- Having a telework program in place expands your human resources pool, particularly if you offer teleworkers the technology to be effective remotely. Employers are able to recruit from a wider geographic area. The pool of potential recruits can also include people who previously wouldn't have considered your organization, such as those that don't drive, people with physical challenges that find it difficult to commute every day, or people who because of personal or family situations have no option but to seek employment with organizations that offer flexible arrangements.

Improved Employee Retention

- Employees who are satisfied with their jobs are less likely to be looking elsewhere. Numerous studies have shown that employees who telework have higher levels of job satisfaction than their coworkers who do not telework. Although the specific reasons vary by employee, some of the most common reasons for improved satisfaction are time saved, greater schedule flexibility, reduced transportation cost, feelings of recognition and trust by employer, and fewer distractions for work requiring concentration. You can read more about the benefits of telework for employees in the Telework Toolkit:
http://www.teleworktoolkit.com/emp_01.html
- Studies have also shown that workers in flexible work arrangements, like telework, have a more positive opinion of the organization and senior management.
- The cost of employee turnover (some estimates are 25% or more of employee salary). Increased employee retention makes economic sense.
- Telework helps retain "high-knowledge" employees who are nearing retirement, but may be willing to continue working under a flexible arrangement.

- Many dual working households eventually find themselves in the difficult position of having to decide to relocate or commute a long distance when one of them is transferred. If one of the employers offers telework, it may prevent the relocation or long daily commute; because one spouse's employer offers telework, the other spouse, who cannot telework, may be able to keep his or her job.

Disaster Recovery & Continuity of Operations

There are advantages to having a telework plan and infrastructure in the event of a disaster, whether natural or man made. Staff and management may still communicate; clients could still be contacted; business goes on. Even if the organization is not interested in promoting telework, having employees in key areas trained and prepared for telework will place the organization in a better position continue vital work in the event of a disaster.

Commute Trip Reduction & Environment Goals

The Washington Commute Trip Reduction Act applies to employers that have more than 100 employees at a single worksite starting their workday between 6-9 AM. These employers must develop a commuter plan in order to reduce the number of vehicle trips. Telework is one of several appropriate solutions.

Learn more about Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) at these websites:

<http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/TDM/CTR/default.htm>

<http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/TDM/CTRInterimReport07>

Telework is environmentally friendly. Roughly a pound of co2 emissions is avoided for each mile not driven. Based on the national average of an 81% drive-alone rate, the commute carbon footprint at US companies per 1,000 employees is 2,072 tons - or on average more than a ton per employee. Washington State is particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. The State has launched a vigorous program to reduce emissions. Businesses and citizens alike will need to make changes to reach State goals.

Learn more on the Washington State Climate Change Website

<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/climatechange/>

Reduced Overhead

Telework offers the potential for reduced overhead from real estate savings, energy savings, and reduced parking costs. Of course any actual savings are determined by many factors, such as the number of employees who telework and how often they telework. The cost of implementing a telework program, particularly equipment costs, needs to be factored in.

Some employers achieve real estate savings by eliminating the offices or workstations of teleworkers in favor of shared workstations. One model for this is called "hoteling", where

employees make reservations for a workstation on the days they plan to work from the central office.

Even if you are unable to reduce real estate costs, a reduction in workstations may create a more generous work area for employees.

Reduced Absenteeism

Many of the causes of absenteeism can be relieved by telework:

- Reports claim that teleworkers take fewer sick days, and teleworkers themselves consistently report less stress because they telework. Employees with a minor cold or flu may want to work at least part of the day from home. More importantly, by doing so they avoid spreading the virus to coworkers.
- Snow days, and other weather emergencies, are a thing of the past if employees are equipped to telework - as long as they have power at home.
- Parent-teacher conferences, a dentist appointment, being home to let the plumber in ... there are many reasons why employees may need an hour or two off during the middle of the day. If the commute is too long, employees may just take the day off. For many of these events, the employee can still get in a full day of work if they are working from home.
- Maternity leave and family leave can be reduced when employees can work from home.

Improved Productivity

Fewer distractions, reduced stress from avoiding the commute, and having a more flexible schedule, equals less absenteeism, improved job satisfaction, and more productive work. Teleworkers consistently report having fewer distractions at home than at work and frequently try to schedule their most difficult work for the days when they work from home.

Improved productivity may also result from a change in management style. Teleworking requires managers and employees alike to be more precise in their expectations and communications, often with written task objectives that focus on work performance.

Superior Corporate Citizenship

Having an active telework program signals your leadership as a good corporate citizen. It recognizes employees' need for balance between home and work. It helps reduce pollution. Fewer cars mean safer roads and reduced transportation construction costs.



It's sensible to want your questions and concerns answered before giving the green light to telework. Some of the most serious concerns are addressed below. There is additional information in the telework toolkit, including a Cost/Benefit Analysis Form, and an expanded discussion of the IT implications of telework.

Security Issues

For IT professionals, security is a major consideration. CDW-G, a major contractor of IT services to the US Government, conducts a large-scale annual telework survey; according to the 2008 survey, 42% of public-sector IT professionals and 27% of private-sector IT professionals indicate that security is their most pressing challenge. The next highest concern is productivity at only 20%. Of course, this survey was only among IT professionals; a survey of HR professionals or line managers might have yielded a different result.

There are two broad classes of security risk: information security and technology security.

- **Information Security:** Rules about confidentiality and sensitive information should be the same whether the information is on a laptop, flash drive, DVD, or in a file folder.

Some information is so sensitive that it cannot go beyond the four walls of the building; this work would not be appropriate for a telework program. On the other hand, if employees are accessing confidential information over the company network while at the office then they should be able to access it from the network while at home, provided certain precautions are in place.

In addition, standards may be implemented to ensure security of employer-owned computers that are removed from the workplace. For example, some organizations require that their PCs are not to be packed into luggage checked at an airport, or, visible in an unoccupied car.

Other standards may include clear rules that organization assets not be used by family members for non-work purposes. Also, many organizations have instituted standards for backing up critical information to minimize the impact of unavoidable loss.

- **Technology Security:** The level of security required for teleworking depends on the level of technology, size of organization, sensitivity of the information, and other factors. This is discussed in detail in the Toolkit's Technology section. In the simplest scenario you will want to make sure teleworkers are using current antivirus software, have firewalls in place and take other reasonable precautions. There are other decisions to make involving the use of networks and network encryption, internet based services, file-swapping software (which often uses a third-party server), and other options.

A quote from Oregon State's website on teleworking helps put risk in perspective:

"Risk is an inevitable cost of doing business. The goal is not to avoid all risk or to avoid all loss. The goal is to avoid all needless and wasteful costs of loss. It is every manager's duty to manage risk. Telecommuting risks are controlled through ordinary good management. But, you have to identify your risks before you can begin to manage them."

<http://www.oregon.gov/DAS/SSD/Risk/RisKeyTeleWork.shtml>

Sustain Productivity

If productivity decreases because of telework, then something is wrong; either the wrong people are teleworking or the wrong tasks are being attempted remotely. This is why it is important to pick the right employees, the right managers, the right work, and have the right policies in place when you embark on a telework program.

You may be skeptical about some of the claims of increased productivity from telework. Many of these claims come from self-reporting surveys in which workers themselves claim they are more productive at home.

One self-reporting survey conducted by the National Sciences Foundation (September 2007) demonstrates the difference in how employees and managers view productivity. They agree precisely on everything except productivity - employees are much more positive than managers, and in this case 67% of the managers are teleworkers themselves, at least part of the time. While only 39% of the managers say productivity increased, another 48% say it was unchanged (87% combined say productivity is either increased or unchanged). Only 13% of the managers thought productivity had decreased.

Benefits of Telework		
	As Perceived by Employees	As Perceived by Managers
Decreased commute times	84%	85%
Less frequent interruptions	77%	77%
Increased productivity	67%	39%
Better work/life balance	63%	63%

Source: National Sciences Foundation: "Telework Under the Microscope", September 2007

One of the problems is that productivity is difficult to define and measure, unless teleworkers are performing tasks that can be counted, like number of sales calls. If you take a broad view of productivity, then decreased absenteeism, increased employee morale and job satisfaction, and improved recruitment should all result in improved productivity.

If you have low-productivity employees who are interrupting high-productivity employees, then the latter will see their output soar when they telework. This may be why employees who perform high-concentration tasks, like writing, designing, or planning, say they are more productive when they telework. It's also possible that employees save their most difficult and creative work for the days when they work from home. Since this is the work they are proudest of, they naturally consider themselves more productive when working from home.

Some experts say teleworkers are more productive because they are managed differently than employees in the office. Teleworkers are often held to a higher standard of accountability with set goals and deliverables. If this is the case, then all employees should be managed this way.

There are some claims that collaborative "group" work isn't as effective when some team members are teleworking. This really depends on the nature of the work, the people involved,

and their comfort with collaborative tools. With experience, much collaborative work can be done remotely, although there will be times when working together in person is preferable.

If you want to objectively measure productivity there are a few things to keep in mind:

- Make sure that employees selected for telework have the traits and qualifications suitable for independent work.
- Any measurement applied to teleworkers should be applied equally to non-teleworkers. Even self-reporting surveys should ask the same questions of both groups. Without this there is no objective frame of reference.
- Don't be obsessed about measurement. Trying to measure keystrokes, for example, will just take up a lot of time and prove that you don't trust your employees. If you can't trust your employees, you aren't ready for telework. Prepare, then trust, then verify.
- Don't expect sensational gains in productivity right away. It takes time for organizations and employees to work out the kinks and settle into a routine.
- Suitable equipment can make a difference. You can't expect employees working from home to be as productive if they don't have the tools.
- There are no indications that telework "decreases" productivity, only that some employees and some tasks aren't suitable.

Adjustments for Managers & Department Heads

Initially there will be increased work to set up the telework program. Much of that work has been reduced by this toolkit, but you may still want to customize the policies and forms for your own organization.

Allowing staff to telework means that supervisors need to set clear expectations and identify specific deliverables with timelines. Actually, this could even be considered a benefit of teleworking - it's an opportunity for the manager to be more innovative, progressive and successful. Increasingly managers are finding that the techniques of managing teleworkers should be used for all employees. In an article titled *"Telework: Profiting from the Virtual Workload"* in Compass Bank's magazine, a manager, initially resistant to telework, stated:

"I was always looking to see if people were here. I should have been looking at what they were getting done."

http://www.compassonbusiness.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=507&Itemid=50

Sustain Teamwork

Managers who have expended a lot of effort to put together a good team are naturally concerned that telework will undo their hard work. It's important to examine when teamwork needs to occur in-person versus virtually.

Some really great work can occur when team members work together in the same space. They can brainstorm and hash-out solutions in a way that is difficult to replicate through virtual tools. But how often does this need to happen - once a week, twice a week? On the remaining days these employees could be teleworking. In fact, some team members may be better prepared for the team meeting after they've spent some time working alone.

There is a wide selection of tools available today that allow people to collaborate virtually. Teleworkers and those that don't telework can and should be connected. Something as simple as Instant Messaging (IM) can make it easy for team members to quickly bounce ideas off each other. The toolkit includes a discussion of collaborative tools.

A telework program should encourage teleworkers to maintain their ties to the office and the team. Most teleworkers will only work from home one or two days a week, so staying informed is not much of a problem, but those who are away more often may need to make a special effort to stay in the loop. Teams sometimes organize events, like a weekly lunch, to replace the social "water cooler"; an opportunity to discuss things informally.

Ensure Continued Quality of Service

One of the reasons for designing a telework program, rather than offering telework informally, is to establish protocols to ensure that client service remains unchanged. Organizations can install or expand their telephone and computer networks so that teleworkers have the same access and presence at home as they do in the office. Clients won't know where employees are working. Face to face meetings in the office can be scheduled for in-office days, or employees can travel to the client's office. For organizations that don't want to invest in connectivity technology, there are alternatives, like having telephone calls and emails forwarded and limiting telework to tasks that don't require client contact.

Supporting Office Routine

To some managers and some executives, not knowing whether people are at home, in the office, or on a break seems too disruptive. Teleworking, they feel, adds another, and unnecessary, layer of confusion to office operations. This is really a matter of perspective and management style. Instead of walking down the hall looking for an employee, make electronic methods of communication (phone, email, Instant Messaging) your first resort. If your teleworkers are using Instant Messaging (IM), all you have to do is click their name on your computer desktop to learn if they are in their office or not. That's easier than walking down the hall and asking other employees if they've seen Joe.

Employees working from home are still "at work" and should be just as reachable as those down the hall. With the right tools they might even be more reachable. If you utilize electronic methods to communicate with all employees then it won't matter who is in the office and who is working from home.

