Telecommuting and the mobile worker

Technology, Information Technology

ASSIGN BUSTER

Telecommuting and the Mobile Worker Telecommuting and the Mobile Worker Telecommuting conserves energy in terms of reducing or eliminating conventional aspects of workers physically arriving at the workplace associated with fueling vehicles and powering, heating and lighting offices. Through telepresence and teleconferencing technologies, it also promotes green computing by preserving the environment through the reduction of land requirements for expanding highways and the reduction of emissions from vehicles (Trivedi, 2011). In terms of IT operational costs, a firm can expand its technical talent pool and enhance productivity without incurring the full cost of facilities. Regarding shifts, since telecommuters work from homes or nearby telework centres, those only available during non-conventional hours still have the flexibility to maintain their lifestyles and work their shifts too (Ellison, 2004). During disasters or when employees cannot access the central workplace, it is helpful if the firm has a separately located data bank, back-up servers and disaster recovery plans that allow employees access from any other location upon appropriate authorisation. Four advantages of telecommuting to the IT manager are reduced needs and costs associated with relocating equipment; fewer interruptions; higher capability to acquire talent; and reduced software license costs for personal devices (Hill et al, 2002). Since employees are free to work from locations of their convenience, they will find their own ways of mobility and hooking up to the infrastructure. This leads to fewer interruptions that arise when employees have to be moved to different areas of the office and having to be set up afresh. Since employees do not have to be in the same geographical region as the headquarters, appropriate talent can be sought from anywhere

and contribute to the firm's productivity. Finally, employees will often be responsible for upgrading their personal devices to keep up with technology and continue having access to their working information and stay connected.

The disadvantages include the initial sourcing of appropriate technology; security threats; challenges in actively and continuously connecting employees; and efficient tracking of employees. Acquiring and implementing the technology to support telecommuting seamlessly is a burden to the IT budget. Then, since the IT manager has no foolproof way of controlling who shares remote devices with employees and accesses confidential information from them, security may be compromised. Further, since employees are only concerned with getting their devices hooked onto the infrastructure, it is up to the IT manager to ensure the operation and availability of the larger network, which sometimes spans beyond national borders. Finally, unless voice and video communication are used constantly, tracking the employees cannot entirely rely on electronic feedback, because anyone else rather than the employee could be on the other end of the remote device (Hill et al, 2002).

Bringing your own device can compromise the IT infrastructure's security because some devices might bring in viruses, or extend access to other unauthorised users and devices. In terms of IT support, since most of the devices are personal, there is no solid standard as to the brand, version or model to be used, which purely depends on the preference and financial capacity of the owner (Curry et al, 2012). Therefore, sourcing for spares and upgrades from random vendors might cause interoperability conflicts

resulting in reduced productive hours while a solution is being sought. Data management is also a challenge because the device could be accessed by family members or incompetent support personnel. It also depends heavily on the employees' knowledge, or third parties, of integrating the device to the firm's IT infrastructure which cannot undergo major modifications for the sake of a few employees. However, in terms of green computing, it may be hazardous because individual employees may not dispose of computers and peripherals efficiently enough with minimal environmental impacts (Curry et al, 2012).

References

Curry, E., Guyon, B., Sheridan, C., & Donnellan, B. (2012). Developing a sustainable IT capability: Lessons from Intel's Journey. MIS Quarterly Executive, 11(2), 61–74.

Ellison, N. (2004). Telework and social change: How technology is reshaping the boundaries between home and work. Connecticut: Praeger.

Hill, J., Miller, B., Weiner, S., & Colihan, J. (2002). Influences of the virtual office on aspects of work and work/life balance. Personnel Psychology, 51(2), 667–683.

Trivedi, B. (2011). Developing environmentally responsible business strategies: A research perspective. International Journal of Green Computing, 2(1), 69-81.