

Telecommuting

[Business](#), [Employment](#)



Telecommuting Telecommuting is a very interesting and complex subject. The pros and cons of this concept are numerous and both sides have excellent arguments. In the research I've done I feel I have to argue both sides to maintain a sense of perspective. I had mixed feelings about telecommuting before I started this research and I find that this is something many others have in common with me. The reasons for and against telecommuting can be complex or simple depending on which view point you take. From a manager's view point telecommuting is a very dangerous undertaking that requires a high readiness level on the employee's part. Allowing an employee with a low (R1, or R2) readiness level to telecommute is not likely to result in a positive manner. When an employee has a high readiness level and a definite desire to attempt working in the home, for some reason or another, many factors should be considered. What kind of schedule does the employee feel constitutes telecommuting? Generally speaking, telecommuting is defined as spending at least one day out of a five day work week working in the home. Is one day home enough for the employee? Or, too little? How does the employer decide how many days to allow? Does the employee's job lend itself well to telecommuting? Some jobs, obviously, can't be accomplished using a telecommuting format. Does the employee have a good track record for working unsupervised? This relates back to readiness levels. An employee who isn't performing at a high readiness level should not even be considered as a candidate for telecommuting. All of these questions and many more must be answered on a case by case basis. This particular venture into creative scheduling has its ups and downs as well from an employee's point of view. It can be quite a

bed of roses for both employee and employer. A lot of nice smells and pretty sights, but watch out for the thorns. In several studies I reviewed I noticed that the telecommuting population loses many of the basics of the social contacts associated with the office environment. Judging the correct amount of time that an employee should spend working at home in relation to working at the office can have a significant impact on both performance and satisfaction. It's usually hard for someone to completely cut themselves off from their work environment and still perform well. The sense of being out of touch with the others in the work force can be mitigated by the use of e-mail, teleconferencing, and the ever faithful telephone. These devices, in a best case scenario, can completely substitute for face to face interaction. That's a strong statement and I would like to explain a few conditions. The best case scenario assumes an individual is at a very high readiness level and has very little perceived need for social interaction with the other office employees. In a worst case scenario an employee can lose touch with the pulse of the office, lose motivation, and their readiness level could drop. This type of scenario is likely to get out of hand if the employee is never in the office to receive the appropriate feedback. It sounds as if I'm not really impressed with telecommuting but that's not true. Let's look at a few of the really solid benefits for the employer. The employer can offer telecommuting as an option for prospective employees to improve recruitment. The current employees could be offered it to keep them around. Saving one employee could save the company a large amount of money. " Most employers don't keep accurate records of the costs of losing good employees and finding and retraining replacements, but there have been estimates ranging from \$30,

000 to over \$100, 000 to replace a professional." The ever present crunch for space could drive a company to reduce the amount of office space it requires. Telecommuting makes the employee provide his own office space. It's been shown that telecommuting does increase productivity with typical increases in the 15 to 25 percent range. These gains may come from the significantly less time a person spends at the company water cooler. A company can improve customer service by making use of telecommuters. It would cost much less to have a few people answering phones at home at 3 o'clock in the morning than running a skeleton crew in a heated/air-conditioned, lighted, and such office building. So what's in it for the employee? That depends mostly on which particular employee we are referring too. Telecommuting allows someone with a physical handicap that could not actually commute to the workplace to still function as a valuable employee. It would allow someone who has small children and feels a great need to be home for them to still work and have a career. The distance an employee must travel daily to work is a factor that can induce great amounts of frustration and expense into their lives. Telecommuting can alleviate this stress. Job satisfaction can be enhanced by allowing greater freedom and bestowing greater responsibility. Employees should be aware of some of the pitfalls of telecommuting as well as the benefits. It is estimated that telecommuters earn less overall than office workers. As a general rule a professional telecommuter will earn approximately 91% of the wage of an office working professional and clerical workers. All of these considerations must factor into a decision by a company to implement a telecommuting program. Many factors must be taken into account and clear organizational

goals must be stated. It is vitally important for the management to support the program and for a great degree of trust to exist between employer and employee. Implementation of a pilot program can take years and involve many aspects of the company as a whole. On the whole, I am impressed with the possibilities that telecommuting presents and daunted by the problems that can crop up. I feel that a well thought out, carefully planned, and conscientiously applied program can benefit most companies in most situations. I don't feel that telecommuting is for every company but it could certainly benefit many.

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