

# Telework: Frequently Asked Questions

## **Q. So, what exactly is telework?**

A. Because of changes in society, the business landscape, and the revolution in communications technology, employees in almost any type of industry doing almost any type of work can perform at least some of their work remotely—eliminating the need to spend time commuting. Employees can effectively work from their homes or from satellite centers between their homes and offices. This is telework!

## **Q. What are the advantages to telework?**

A. Teleworkers approach their tasks without the mental fatigue that often accompanies the daily commute, in a less disruptive environment than the office. Employers find the productivity of these workers improves—some national studies have shown increases as great as 20 percent—and frequently other business costs, such as real estate expenses, may be reduced. In addition, employees receive an "Indirect Pay Raise" due to the reduced costs of commuting every day.

## **Q. Are there other advantages?**

A. Employers also find that morale is improved and talented employees are more easily recruited and retained. Teleworking provides a viable alternative to outsourcing, often improving an organization's perception by the public. Employees experience greater flexibility in their working arrangements, often allowing them to better juggle demanding work and family situations. They also find reductions in both stress and commuting costs, which greatly improve quality of life. Other advantages, such as reduced parking costs, can be realized.

## **Q. How does telework affect our region?**

A. Telework can help bring about an enhanced quality of life that extends beyond the individual worker. It touches the community as a whole, because any reduction in the use of motor vehicles means less traffic congestion and cleaner air.

## **Q. It sounds too good to be true. Can it be abused?**

A. Teleworking offers many advantages, but it is something that should not be entered into lightly by either employer or employee. It might be helpful to consider what telework is not:

- Telework is not usually a full-time arrangement. Most teleworkers work remotely one or two days a week.
- Telework is not sending people home and never seeing or hearing from them. Teleworkers communicate with managers, co-workers, clients, and vendors via phone, fax, email, instant messaging, text messaging and web conferencing on days when they're out of their offices.
- Telework is not a substitute for child or elder care. Teleworkers are expected to tend to business only during their agreed upon work hours.

**Q. It sometimes seems that telework is a very loose arrangement. Is that true?**

A. An effective telework program is, in fact, a very structured, sometimes contractual, arrangement between employer and employee. Teleworkers are asked to commit to both specific performance measures and periods of availability. They are expected to maintain safe and professional workspaces, which allow them to complete assignments as effectively and efficiently as possible.

**Q. What are the employers' responsibilities?**

A. Employers need to establish clear and consistent telework policies, provide the proper technical resources, and the information and tools that both employees and their managers need. Perhaps their most important obligation is providing training for both managers and teleworkers to ensure the success of their programs.

**Q. This all sounds a bit daunting, where can my organization learn more?**

A. The Baltimore Metropolitan Council wants to give qualified area employers a hand in establishing successful telework programs. That's why we've created [Teleworkbaltimore.com](http://Teleworkbaltimore.com). Just take a few minutes and you'll be able to download valuable materials—the types of documents needed to start a telework program.

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