

## Teleworking

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**Are you having problems with recruiting suitable staff, or wondering how you can fit more staff into the premises you have?**

**Teleworking may provide some of the answers as to how to grow your business.**

**Our E-Business Advisers discuss this growing method of working:**

### 1. What is Teleworking?

Teleworking is the use of IT and telecommunications to enable work-based activities outside the traditional workplace.

Work is carried out at home, on a business trip, or in any other location, using a whole range of IT and telecommunications based solutions - such as the phone, email, Extranets, Virtual Private Networks etc.

Home based teleworkers may work for a single company, or be freelancers working for a number of clients.

Telework can be performed at almost any location, so releasing the need for commuting, and can also be a means of filling jobs in remote areas where transport might be difficult to arrange.

The UK Trades Union Congress succinctly described Teleworking as "Distance working facilitated by information and communication technologies".

Currently, in the UK, there are estimated to be

about 2 Million teleworkers - which is defined as people who work at least one day a week in another location than their place of employment.

Teleworking is also on the increase - by about 15% year on year. There are several drivers for this growth, including the fact that there is a growing desire for it from potential employees.

A recent survey of graduates by Price Waterhouse Coopers found that the number one motivation to work with any company was not the money or opportunities for travel, but the work / life balance offered: teleworking facilitates this.

Skills shortages in certain industries, such as IT have also tipped the balance of power towards employees. This has made business look at their situation, and come up with new and more imaginative ways of working.

What is enabling this change to happen are advances in technology and telecoms.

Resources are now available e.g. from home that would once only have been possible in the workplace.

### 2. What are the advantages for employers and employees?

There are several advantages:

- There is a clear cost benefit argument for teleworking. Having people out of the office cuts the number of desks you need, the amount of office space you need for them and



other associated costs.

- Staff can often be much more productive away from the hubbub and distraction of the office.
- There's always a shortage of talent and businesses have to be different if they want to attract the best people.

Teleworking is one advantage you can offer over your competitors.

- You may be able to employ people who wouldn't normally be able to get to your offices

For example, you may be able to employ somebody with just the skills you need, but with a disability which may preclude them from commuting.

- Likewise, if one of your staff has to relocate elsewhere for family or personal reasons, you don't have to lose their skills. They could telework from their new location.
- A flexible approach to work is also shown to be good for staff morale - which reduces staff turnover.
- As people's body clock's and home responsibilities differ, teleworking might allow flexibility as to when a job actually gets done, to both the staff members and your advantage.
- The removal of the stresses of commuting can have considerable benefits for the employee - and for the employer too, as well as the wider environmental benefits for society.

### 3. ...and the disadvantages?

Teleworking may not be everyone's ideal.

- It can be a cause of tension in the home - this may especially be the case if the teleworker

## Fact Sheet

has a young family, making demands on time

- Full-time teleworkers may feel that they can miss out on promotion because of lack of visibility in the office
- Teleworkers can also feel that they are missed out on in terms of the general updating and "bouncing" of ideas that occurs in most offices.
- Teleworkers need considerable personal discipline - it can be isolating. This means that this might not be a good option for young staff, who may not have acquired self discipline skills as yet.
- It can be difficult to manage teleworking staff- both in terms of day to day results, and integrating them into the team.
- Teleworking often functions best when you can establish a team - then allow staff to telework.
- Finally - there is obviously a cost implication in providing the IT and communications kit required to do the job

### 4. Useful Links

[www.tca.org.uk](http://www.tca.org.uk) -  
Web site of the Telework Association.

[www.sustel.org](http://www.sustel.org) -  
Guidelines on sustainable teleworking schemes for businesses, and other useful resources.

[www.businesslink.gov.uk](http://www.businesslink.gov.uk) -  
National Business Link web site, with many useful resources relating to flexible working for staff, including teleworking