

## **Business Benefits of Remote Work**

*By Robyn Bews*

What benefits can your business or organization expect from implementing a telework program?

### **Improve Employee Development, Retention, Motivation & Performance**

- A recent study by the Telework Exchange concluded that tech savvy “Gen Yers” (b. 1977-2002) base their job choices on flexibility and family-friendly workplace practices, including telework. How is your organization positioned to start competing for this new workforce?
- Increased employee engagement and motivation: the recently released Top 100 Places to Work in Canada features telework prominently. Employees who are given the option to telecommute report greater loyalty. This includes baby boomers who may consider delaying retirement if they are given flexible remote work options.
- Do more with less: employers are seeking ways to get more out of their resources. Telework is one key way to achieve this.

Fact: "Remote workers (54%) and regular teleworkers (45%) are the most satisfied with their work arrangements; about half of them report they are 'very satisfied'." (Richman, Noble, & Johnson, 2002, p. 21).

### **Research Supports that:**

- Telecommuting employees are 15 to 40% more productive than their office-dwelling counterparts. This is like having free talent added to your pool: pretty compelling in this time of hiring freezes.
- 33% of Canadians would take a telecommuting option over a pay raise.
- Telework is a proven tool to radically reduce employee absenteeism and increase employee retention rates.

“...the cost savings to employers were calculated using self-reported average salaries and the average number of days absent on which teleworkers are able to work from home. It was estimated that employers could save 63% of the cost of absenteeism per teleworker, or \$2,086 per teleworker per year.”

- Pratt (Pratt 1999) for the International Telework Association and Council (ITAC).

Fact: In a large compensation survey (1,400 CFOs) conducted by Robert Half International, 33% said telecommuting was the best way to attract top talent. Ekos Research found similar results among Canadians. They also found that 43% of Canadians would change jobs to an employer that allows telework.

### **Improve the Lives of Employees and Their Families**

- What tangible programs does your organization have in place to demonstrate a commitment to work/life balance? Employees who are given the option to work remotely are more effective and less stressed, gain more time to do what they love, and also contribute back a significant portion of their commute time to the company.
- Improved employee health: less stress and less spreading of viruses around the office during flu season results in healthier employees.

### **Reduce Operating Costs**

- Do more with less: instead of adding head count, let your existing employees work where they are most effective.
- Real estate: very real organizational cost savings can be realized through properly implemented telework programs. Organizations that seek to reduce their office footprint can do so by having teleworkers share desks. How many of your existing staff are at their desks eight hours a day, five days a week? By sharing desks, your organization can start to significantly reduce required real estate.

### **Enable Business Continuity**

- Telework is a critical component of any robust continuity of operations plan. An organization that encourages telecommuting is in a significantly better position to ride out an interruption like a pandemic, snowstorm or any other emergency.
- How will your business stay competitive and support your customers if a large percentage of your people can't get to work? With telework, you don't have to go to work to be at work.

### **Promote Environmental Stewardship**

- Just one person telecommuting one day a week can reduce their CO2 footprint by over one metric tonne a year. Imagine if each of the major organizations in downtown Calgary participated in this kind of program.

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Robyn Bews, Program Manager for WORKshift, an innovative initiative led by Calgary Economic Development. As Canada's first regional telework program, WORKshift seeks to accelerate the adoption of telework in the business community in Calgary and to establish a template for regional programs in the country