

Telecommuting

Are you an employer looking for ways to make your business more efficient? Or are you an employee tired of the hassles of a long daily commute? Working out of the home—often called 'telecommuting' - may be just the option for you! One of the biggest contributors to poor air quality and smog is excess private vehicle use. Telecommuting, even as little as one day a week, can help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and very importantly, lower work-related stress levels!

What is Telecommuting?

Telecommuting is when office-based employees perform portions of their job from a remote location—usually their homes—while still collecting the same salary and benefits they would working on-site.

A study done in Arizona showed that if a mere one percent of all employees in companies in the greater Phoenix area telecommuted one day a week, 185 fewer tonnes of pollutants would be discharged in the air each year and fuel use would be reduced by 463,000 gallons (www.gogreen.com). With Peterborough having one of the poorest air quality levels in Ontario for the summer of 2002, think of the difference that could be made here if more citizens telecommuted!!



Benefits for Employers

- Increased productivity
- Lowered absenteeism
- Lowered employee turnover
- Increased employee morale
- Larger labour market access
- Reduced office costs

Benefits for Employees

- Save money normally spent on transportation!
- Reduced time spent in traffic and therefore lowered stress levels!
- Fewer distractions from the office environment.
- Gained time normally spent on commuting.
- Greater space to work in and greater control over that space.
- Less influenced by weather.



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5 Easy Steps to Setting Up a Telecommuting Program at Your Workplace

1. **Set Program Goal:** Your company must determine what it wants to accomplish. Is it to save real estate? To increase productivity? Reduced employee stress and absenteeism? Reduce the need for parking spaces? Consider both costs and benefits to ensure you find a system that works for you.

2. **Set Policies and Procedures:** To ensure your program runs smoothly, a system of rules and parameters must be devised. Roles as telemanagers and telecommuters must be clearly outlined. You may also want to address such issues as condition of home work space, frequency of telecommuting, communication, injury liability etc.

3. **Select Telemanagers and Telecommuters:** When starting up your program, start small, and select high-performance employees. Manager's should have particular qualities such as being able to provide clear direction and consistent communication, are results-orientated, have employee trust and manage by objectives, rather than presence.

4. **Implement the Program:** Be sure to orientate and train employees well. A good understanding of how the program works and what is expected will minimize any potential setbacks and misunderstandings.

5. **Implement the Program:** Keeping track of the program is an important part of its success. Schedule regular employee check-ins and program evaluations. Finding out what works and what doesn't work is mandatory for improving its effectiveness and employee productivity, especially if you plan to expand the program.

Be Sure Telecommuting is Right for You

While telecommuting has many great benefits, it poses special challenges that must be addressed before an employee decides to telecommute on a full-time basis. Even for part-time telecommuters, certain people and their living situations are better suited to telecommuting than others.

Employees best suited to telecommuting are self-motivated, adaptable, independent, computer literate, have good communication skills and can balance work and non-work activities well. Importantly, employees need to have an appropriate workspace. They must have enough room in their home to work, including the space for necessary office equipment. Too, they should have limited need for files etc. that cannot easily be provided at home.

Resources:

Go Green

www.gogreen.com/telecommute

Telecommuting Employer Implementation Kit

www.hronline.com/lib/orgadmin/tele_a.html

Canadian Telework Association

www.ivc.ca/

For more information on local transportation programs and resources contact Peterborough Green-Up at 745-3238 or visit:

www.peterboroughmoves.com

Take the One-Tonne Challenge!

Peterborough Green-Up joins the Government of Canada in encouraging Peterborough citizens to reduce their personal greenhouse gas contribution! This sounds bigger than it is! Remember, the average Canadian produces 5 tonnes of greenhouse gases per year - 50% of this is from transportation! Let's walk, bike and bus our way to a healthier climate! Learn more at:

www.climatechange.gc.ca 



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