

Questions and Answers from Telework 101, April 25, 2012

Will implementing telework require a large initial investment in computers and other equipments?

Most companies start at a cost neutral basis and use access to technology and remote access as one of many selection criteria.

What about ensuring the confidentiality of company materials?

Typically all companies use some form of domain or network authentication and have user privileges tied to their network “logon” credentials. These privileges allow a user access only to appropriate resources and programs located on servers based on their identity. This stresses importance of having a high-level IT person on your telework steering committee. When working at home, employees need to comply with the same company practices regarding confidentiality of the information as in the office.

Can an employee still telework if he or she does not have the requisite office equipment, or office at home?

Usually, either the employer provides the requisite office equipment or the teleworker is responsible for having the necessary office equipment and work area at home. The specifications (will) be listed in the employer’s telework policy and the access to equipment, connectivity and private space at home could be a component in selecting the teleworkers. You don’t necessarily need an entire room to telework, an area of a room, as long as it is private would suffice.

What assistance is available related to training for new teleworkers?

Montgomery County provides free assistance for implementing telework programs to employers that demonstrate executive commitment. Those services include training for teleworkers and managers.

Is having a way to measure productivity one criterion that should be used to select employees for telework?

Organizations should have practices in place for measuring productivity irrespective of teleworking. Relying on managing by objectives with defined deliverables, timeline, and a defined quality and quantity of work often allows managers to best measure productivity.

What about fairness when it comes to weather & other emergencies?

During some bad weather here in DC area there was discussion in the news about how employees with the ability to telework were expected to work regular day, while those without telework capability were given those days off without being charged leave. Is that fair to the teleworkers?

Employers that allow for snow days will not let teleworkers to take the day off if they have been set up to work at home. Most business continuity plans list telework as a strategy to remain productive and be respondent to customer service in times of bad weather or other emergencies.