

Telework *Australia*

Maximising the benefits of flexible work location



What is telework?

At its simplest telework means '**work from a distance**'.

It's about **flexibility**: flexible work locations and work times, flexible management structures and flexible responses to the challenges of change.

Telework is about **resilience** and getting the most out of available resources.

Telework is about **people**: how they work, how they interact, and how they prepare for an increasingly changing world.

The world has changed—and is continuing to change at an ever-increasing rate. Employers have to find new ways of recruiting and retaining valued staff and increasing profit and productivity.

Background

In 2004, the Australian Government established a telework taskforce to advise on options and impediments to the development of telework for employees and businesses.

This taskforce, the Australian Telework Advisory Committee (ATAC), had its final meeting on 27 February 2006 at which it recommended that Government encourage the growth of telework.

In support of the recommendations made by ATAC, a telework online resource centre has been developed to help promote the benefits which telework can deliver to business. It is available on the internet at www.teleworkaustralia.net.au.



The benefits of telework

Recruitment and retention: Telework reduces avoidable staff turnover by over 20%. With staff replacement costing 75% or more of salary, this is a significant financial benefit.

Productivity: Managers report that employees are between 8% and 40% more productive.

Office space: Savings of up to 80% have been reported. Even a 10% saving in space could be significant.

Absenteeism: Absent staff cost up to \$400 a day and telework can reduce avoidable absenteeism by up to 80%.

Morale: Improvements of 80% have been reported in some organisations.

Service: Clients and customers report quicker response and better service from teleworkers.

Office costs: The costs of heating, air-conditioning, car parks, lighting and more, can drop by 17% of salary costs.

Other benefits, reported in the 2005 Sensis survey of Australian SMEs, include: improved information access, time savings, improved communications, increased sales, more face-to-face contact with clients and easier contact with employees.

Telework also has the potential to reduce traffic congestion and emissions, reduce energy consumption and support better work life balance for employees.



Seven success factors

Successful telework initiatives have seven things in common:

1. They support out-of-office desk work, within ordinary working hours;
2. They are structured and promoted as voluntary and mutual agreements;
3. They are available to all employees (within guidelines) as a 'normal' work option. A telework policy and its associated guidelines will ensure appropriate employees can telework;
4. Successful initiatives are supported by management focused on outcomes, not by location-based work measurements.

5. They control when and where work takes place to maximise benefits and avoid possible issues;
6. They have clear corporate and individual objectives that are known in advance; and
7. They are built into, and supported by, the corporate culture.

Not all telework initiatives start with all seven elements in place. However, managers of successful initiatives have recognised the importance of each and are endeavouring to make progress in all seven.



Ten simple steps

Telework can be easy but successful initiatives require planning and preparation. More complete guidance is available at www.teleworkaustralia.net.au but the following ten steps will help you get started.

1. Know what you want to achieve: Telework can deliver many benefits when they are specifically targeted.
2. Know what your organisation will look like in three years: A long-term plan makes meaningful cost-benefit analysis possible and can align the telework initiative with the organisation's plans.
3. Develop an indicative budget: Work out what financial benefits can be expected and what costs might be involved.
4. Obtain support and commitment from senior management.

5. Consult widely: Set up a steering committee and ask for comment on your plans from all employees.
6. Draft a telework policy and guidelines: Include a staff selection process.
7. Specific consultation: Discuss the details with senior management and relevant HR and IT staff.
8. Organise: Training courses, new equipment and off-site offices will need to be thought about.
9. Start your telework initiative gradually: Confirm that processes and policies work well before making the initiative available to all staff.
10. Make it 'normal': Successful telework initiatives are totally integrated into the way the organisation works.

More information

Website: www.teleworkaustralia.net.au

Email: admin@teleworkaustralia.net.au

Phone: 1800 283 089

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