



*Almost everyone likes the idea of working at home. That's why a telecommuting program can make a major change in your drive-alone rate almost overnight.*

## ● What Is Telecommuting?

Telecommuting is defined as working at an alternative work-site. You might say it is commuting to work by telephone instead of by car. A better definition might be moving work to people instead of people to work.

Telecommuters don't necessarily need special equipment, and schedules can vary. Employees can split their time between the office and the alternative work-site, come in for meetings, work at home on special projects, or make other arrangements that suit both employer and employee.

## ● What Are the Benefits of Telecommuting?

### **Employer Benefits:**

- ★ can increase staff without increasing office space needs
- ★ reduces the cost of building additional parking facilities
- ★ reduces congestion in existing parking areas
- ★ shifts use of office computer system to off-peak hours (maximizing your system)
- ★ improves community relations by reducing neighborhood traffic and parking problems
- ★ provides an effective, low cost recruitment tool
- ★ increases productivity by reducing absenteeism, tardiness and employee turnover

- ★ increases employee motivation, job satisfaction and morale
- ★ enhances employee benefits packages

### **Employee Benefits:**

- ★ increases job satisfaction
- ★ reduces stress
- ★ reduces overall commute time
- ★ reduces office/work interruption
- ★ reduces commute-related costs such as gas and auto maintenance
- ★ reduces job-related costs such as clothing and meals

### **Community Benefits:**

- ★ reduces rush-hour congestion
- ★ improves air quality
- ★ reduces the need for costly new highway construction
- ★ reduces dependence on fossil fuels
- ★ reduces vehicle-related noise pollution

## **● Do Telecommuters Always Work at Home?**

Not necessarily. There are three types of alternative work-sites:

1. **At-Home Offices:** Home workstations can range from a telephone and a pencil and paper to home computers, modems, fax machines, and automatic call- forwarding.
2. **Neighborhood Work Centers:** Several companies may share strategically located office space. Telephones, copiers, fax machines, and computers may also be shared.
3. **Satellite Offices:** Employers may choose to operate branch offices strategically located near their telecommuting employees' homes.

## ● How Do We Determine If Our Plans -- and Employees -- Are Working?

Initially, managers may worry about losing visible, day-to-day control over telecommuting employees. A remedy for this -- and a more effective management procedure -- is to evaluate performance by measuring the quantity and quality of the work against the stated goals and objectives. Scheduled deadlines get products from your employees. Train your managers in this methodology before your program begins. As time passes and productivity rises, even skeptics will be reassured.

To make sure that small problems don't turn into big ones, appoint a *trouble shooter*, then periodically evaluate your program. An employee survey will tell you whether employees and managers see telecommuting as a benefit and, if not, how to modify the program.

## ● How Can I Set Up a Program?

It's easy if you formulate your program and policies in advance. Consider.....

1. **Who may telecommute and how often?** Evaluate which jobs can be adapted to telecommuting. Since managers and supervisors will implement the program, they should participate in the evaluation. Managers should also decide when workers may telecommute.
2. **What rules should govern computer use and data safety?** Will the company install computers in employees' home or will telecommuters use office diskettes in their computers? If you choose the latter, be sure to decontaminate returned diskettes to prevent viruses from infecting your company computers. If you supply computers to your telecommuters, review your insurance coverage. Also, strongly consider employees who may own a home computer or other technological advantages with the capabilities to produce the needed work.
3. **Additional Considerations:** While planning your program, address data security, union and insurance concerns, start-up budget, and any management skepticism. Consider possible social isolation, decreased visibility, lack of support services, and home distractions. To avoid confusion, put all policies in writing.

## ● Where Can I Get More Information?

Let us help you! Baton Rouge Area Commuter Services (BRACS) is dedicated to providing the commuter transportation assistance you may need. For details, call us at (225) 344-RIDE (7433) or FAX (225) 383-3804.

*BRACS is a service of the  
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