

# Work @ Home

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Technology has freed us from our desks. With the advent of laptops, cell phones and PDAs (Personal Digital Assistants) we can complete almost any type of work from anywhere. Add to this the concern about greenhouse gas emissions generated by long commutes and you have a strong argument for working at home. Although many managers support employees working at home some or all of the time, it can be a challenge to figure out how to manage remotely. Here are some suggestions that may help you manage workers who stay at home.

*"Working at home occasionally can be just the change of pace an employee needs to keep energized and enthusiastic about their job."*

## **Take a Team Approach.**

Discuss how people will complete their work at home. It's important to talk about the potential pitfalls and involve employees in planning how to overcome them. Delegate some of the planning, for when a team is involved in setting up the rules, they are unlikely to break them.

## **Develop skills.**

Working at home takes discipline. Friends think it is a day off and drop in. Personal calls take more time than expected. Loads of laundry beckon. Before employees are sent home to cope with these challenges they should be trained with skills such as time management, goal setting and work organization.

## **Create a travelling office.**

What are the supplies someone would need to work from home for a day? It may be more reasonable than you think to create a portable supply centre which contains basic office supplies, a laptop computer and jump drive. Even when the need to work at home wasn't anticipated such as when a child becomes ill overnight, a quick call to the office can get things moving. Local courier companies will even pick up and deliver for just a few dollars. Although the initial cost may seem daunting, think about the real cost of the same employee not working at all that day.

## **Work out accountability issues ahead of time.**

It can ease everyone's conscience when they know how their efforts will be measured and monitored if they choose to work at home. As a general rule, the best work at home projects are ones that are evaluated based whether or not the job is completed rather than how much time was invested. Agree in advance on time estimates for tasks and allow the employee the leeway to get the job done in the manner that works best for them.

Working at home can be a real morale booster for employees. When the system is managed well, it allows people the flexibility and freedom to do their jobs without the restrictions of the standard work environment. Working at home occasionally can be just the change of pace an employee needs to keep energized and enthusiastic about their job.

