

Chapter 1

Teleworking

ABSTRACT

This chapter examines teleworking and the important relationships that must be created and/or nurtured in successful organizations. The chapter also highlights teleworking best practices of communication, flexibility, standards, and team building. Communication requires managing both face-to-face and online situations, while flexibility helps in achieving work-life balance. Standards are required to build effective, collaborative relationships, and team building is enhanced when organizations can adjust to new or distributed operations. The best practices are driven by a set of rules for operating that should be developed collaboratively with all members of the team. Clear rules that are combined with supervisor and employee shared understanding should lead to success. To achieve that success, organizations must focus on the assumptions, approaches, personal vs. professional issues, e-leadership, and modeling discussed herein.

BACKGROUND

Teleworking affects many areas of the organization and virtually all its people in one way or another. Teleworking can only be effective if everyone in the organization supports the use of it. This does not mean that everyone must agree to teleworking or that every employee must be approved for telework. It means that the organization must commit to the use of the practice and achieve buy-in from all its members. When the workforce is split between those in the office and those at home, the need for communication is increased. Any

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stressors in terms of resentment of the ability to telework, the division of labor based on who is in residence and who is not, or fairness in terms of how the decision to approve or disapprove telework is made can present problems that an organization may struggle to overcome. These are considerations that should always be top of mind for organizational leadership. We will examine teleworking best practices in this chapter.

Figure 1. Teleworking best practices are focused on communication, flexibility, standards, and team building.



In Figure 1, I list important teleworking best practices collected from various literature sources in this book and my personal experience. These include communication, flexibility, standards, and team building. Supervisors must work with employees to improve or nurture communications both face-to-face and online. Effective communication should address four areas: assistance, viewpoint, standards, and team building. Supervisors should assist the person but should also manage the issue so that both are given the proper attention. People are our priority, but tasks must be completed.

New challenges or changes in operations may make it necessary for supervisors and employees to take a flexible approach to achieving work-life balance. Setting clear standards is the way to build the team and trust between the members, leading to improved collaboration, accountability, and performance. Finally, team activities should be tailored to distributed operations when possible so that all members have an equal chance to participate and be recognized.

The best practices mentioned here rely on a set of rules for operating. When the rules are clear and the supervisor and employee reach shared understanding of the decision to approve or disapprove telework, there is a greater chance for success. There are other issues that must be addressed if the organization is to successfully navigate the telework process. Let us look

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