



Employer Telework Case Study

Employer

Defense Information Systems
Agency (DISA)

Contact

Mr. Aaron Glover
Aaron.Glover@disa.mil

Background

The Defense Information Systems Agency (DISA) is a combat support agency responsible for planning, engineering, acquiring, fielding, and supporting global net-centric solutions to serve the needs of the President, Vice President, the Secretary of Defense, and other DoD Components, under all conditions of peace and war.

DISA's teleworking program was established in 2001 and was successful in meeting OPM's requirement to have all the employees in eligible positions offered the opportunity to telework. However, the DISA policy allowed employees to telework a maximum of one day every two week pay period. As the result of the 2005 DISA

Employee Satisfaction survey, a recommendation was made to expand DISA's telework program. On December 21, 2005, the DISA Director changed the policy to allow employees to telework a maximum of two days per week, totaling four days per pay period.

During the same time period, DISA was selected under the Base Realignment and Closure Committee recommendations for relocation of its Headquarters function in Northern Virginia to Fort Meade, Maryland. With 75% of the DISA workforce living in the Northern Virginia area, a solid strategy was needed for retention of this experienced, highly qualified workforce as well as one for recruitment of exceptionally qualified employees for the Fort Meade location. It was determined that the expansion of the telework program would serve as an excellent tool for both retention and recruitment. The successful implementation of the newly expanded telework program required extensive cultural change within all levels of management.

The Telework Experience

In January 2008, the DISA Director expanded the telework policy to three days per week, with supervisor approval.

DISA's telework participation has increased ten-fold since the initial expansion of the telework policy. Currently DISA has over 2500 employees with approved telework applications for regular and recurring telework (at least once a pay period) and "ad hoc" (typically once a month).

Annual employee satisfaction surveys reveal a steady increase in satisfaction regarding DISA's quality of work life programs that was directly related to the telework program. Employees are now provided an opportunity to improve their quality of work life, save money due to reduced transportation cost and help improve the environment. Employees and managers have also recognized an increase in productivity in most instances. Under its policy, DISA furnishes government equipment for teleworking, consisting of a laptop and docking station. DISA has also implemented measures to access productivity for employees while teleworking through optional work plans.

DISA's policy authorizes reimbursement for high speed internet cost for regular and recurring teleworking employees. Telework is also an essential COOP enabler. As an enabler of our COOP, emergencies and inclement weather no longer cause lost productivity with employees now able to be as productive at home when needed. DISA is setting the standard for an effectively managed and maintained telework program for the federal government. Telework has become an established way of doing business within DISA. DISA's telework program is not limited to the National Capitol Region and has been embraced by elements world wide. Approximately 45% of the agency's workforce teleworks to some extent.

Successful implementation of the program allows DISA to work toward and achieve the following objectives: Facilitate BRAC relocation to Fort Meade, Maryland; improve employee productivity; improve retention and recruitment; ensure continuity of operations during emergencies. The program will also help to promote DISA as an "Employer of Choice"; Enhance DISA's efforts in employing and accommodating people with disabilities, reduce traffic congestion, decrease energy consumption and pollution emissions, and reduce parking congestion, transportation cost and costs of transit subsidies.

With the implementation of the noted effort above, DISA is now recognized as one of the leading Federal agencies in telework. DISA has won four (4) awards from the Telework Exchange, a public-private partnership focused on demonstrating the tangible value of telework and serving the emerging educational and communication requirements of the Federal telework community. In 2007, DISA was the only DoD element cited in a testimony before a Senate Committee covering positive examples of telework within the federal government. DISA's Telework program was also selected for OPM's Chief Human Capital Officers (CHCO) Council's first Collection of Human Capital Practices for the Federal human resource community

Challenges and Investment

With the new policy in effect, several initiatives were implemented to leverage DISA's use of telework as both a recruitment and retention tool. These initiatives include:

A. A “SWAT” team, was charged with researching best practices at other organizations, determining what equipment was needed, developing training needed for management and the workforce, and bringing it all together within 90 days. A senior HR manager and a senior IT manager co-chaired the SWAT team, blending the two critically needed functions together during the entire process, reducing potential problems or issues. There was also a change in acquisition policy regarding computer life cycle replacement computer equipment; DISA now uses a 90% laptop to 10% PC ratio. DISA also pays for 50% of the broadband cost on a monthly basis into teleworking employees’ homes.

B. Training was developed, specific to the culture of DISA, and provided to management at all levels as well as the workforce. In an effort to continually improve the program, training continues to be provided, including the creation of a computer based training (CBT) offering and instructor lead sessions “on demand.” The training helps combat the fear factors managers and supervisors may experience prior to and during telework.

C. An innovative web-based application was developed to support the Telework program, which allows employees to register for the telework program and select the ad-hoc or regular and recurring days they would like to work remotely. Managers are notified of pending applications and can login into this application to approve, disapprove, or modify their subordinates’

registration requests. Additionally, managers can run reports which provide much needed data to assist in the Agency’s management of the program.

D. DISA established its own telework centers at six (6) locations and continues to explore additional sites. DISA also continues to partner with OPM and GSA in exploring the possibility of establishing telework centers that will accommodate employees requiring access to the classified network.

Program Outlook

The telework SWAT team was established to forecast the way ahead for the telework program office. Although nothing has been set in stone they have made several recommendations for the program as we prepare for our move to Fort Meade Maryland. A listing of the recommended initiatives are:

- A. Exploring the possibility of establishing telework centers that will accommodate employees requiring access to the classified network
- B. Including managers in the telework program

Most Helpful Resources

To assist DISA in making the telework program successful, it was instrumental for all managers and supervisors to be on board with the program. The telework program office provided training for

managers and supervisor within each directorate on the policies and procedures of DISA's telework program. They also expressed to reluctant managers the benefits of teleworking, so they could adapt with the changes of their employees not physically located at their official duty station. Through the training, managers were able to express their concerns and successes of allowing their employees to telework. If it weren't for managers taking the initiative and adapting to the changes in this ever changing environment the program would not be a success.

Success Tips

The benefits of telework to both our employees and agency are listed below:

- A. Increased employee productivity

- B. Increases in retention, recruitment, and employee satisfaction are directly attributed to DISA's teleworking program

- C. Improved quality of life, job satisfaction and transportation cost reduction

- D. The ability to have a large portion of the workforce continue to be available and productive during emergency situations

And Telework is workingjust do it.

Copyright © 2009 Commuter
Connections/Metropolitan
Washington Council of Governments

800-745-RIDE

www.commuterconnections.org