



# Employer Telework Case Study

## Employer

**United States Pharmacopeial Convention**  
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## Contact

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## About USP

The United States Pharmacopeial Convention (USP) is a scientific nonprofit organization that sets Federally recognized standards for prescription and over-the-counter medicines and other healthcare products manufactured or sold in the United States. USP also sets widely recognized standards for food ingredients and dietary supplements. USP sets standards for the identity, as well as the quality, purity, and strength of these products—critical to the

public health. These and other USP standards are used in more than 130 countries around the globe. These standards have helped to ensure public health for close to 200 years.

USP's mission is to improve the health of people around the world through public standards and related programs that help ensure the quality, safety, and benefit of medicines and foods. USP's activities have a significant impact on promoting quality and protecting the public health worldwide including:

- Product Quality—Documentary Standards
  - For Medicines, Dietary Supplements and Food Ingredients
  - Related Reference Standards (materials) for use as a comparison standard for tests and assays specified in documentary standards
- Product Quality—Verification Services
- Education and Events
- Healthcare Quality and Safety
- Promoting Drug Quality in Developing Countries

## Background

USP's Information Technology department initiated a pilot telework program in the early 2000s. The program was in place with no formal policy or structure until early 2007. In July 2006, new leadership in Human Resources determined that USP would benefit from formalizing its telework program. The goals of adding flexible work arrangements are to respond effectively to the competitive hiring climate in the area, increase USP's position as an employer of choice and to improve staff morale, retention and productivity. In early 2007 the new, formal telework program was implemented. During the application process, which is outlined in the employee handbook, interested employees must sign both a:

- telework agreement
- legal agreement

Training is mandatory for both teleworkers and supervisors.

Adding structure to the telework program has benefited USP by allowing the organization to track participation and more actively assess returns from the program. It also benefits teleworkers by providing structure and training.

## The Telework Experience

USP has two types of telework programs that an employee may apply for:

### **Ad-Hoc Telework**

An ad-hoc telework arrangement is one in which an employee works remotely based

on their project demands and on an as needed basis. Teleworking in a less disruptive environment during these focused periods allows ad-hoc teleworkers to increase productivity while their collaboration needs with co-workers are much lower. Ad-hoc teleworkers do not have a set teleworking schedule. The ad-hoc program is not available as a situational program for employees with sick dependents, during bad weather, or to accommodate other personal needs.

### **Regular Telework**

A regular telework arrangement is one in which an employee works remotely on a set schedule no more than 50% of their regular work period. Teleworkers must work remotely for half or full day increments. Teleworking for less than a half-day is not allowed.

An exception to the 50% telework limit has been made for a small number of employees who do not live near USP's geographical worksite. These employees telework up to 100% of the time and travel to USP headquarters as needed.

### **Application Process**

Employees must have worked at USP for a minimum of six months before they can apply for the telework program. Employees begin a telework arrangement with a three-month trial arrangement. If the employee and supervisor agree that an employee's telework arrangement has been successful after the three-month trial period the program is extended indefinitely. If an employee changes jobs or supervisors the teleworker's participation in the program may be evaluated to determine if the arrangement is still suitable and/or needs to be modified.

Employees applying for the program do so with the following procedures according to USP's employee handbook:

- The employee must read and understand USP's telework policy to ensure that they can comply with the participation guidelines, rules and regulations. The employee also identifies the type of work that they will focus on while teleworking.
- The employee must read, understand and sign the telework agreement. At this point the agreement is sent to HR so that they can evaluate whether the employee meets all of the telework requirements. Once signed off by HR and the employee's division Chief the employee's telework arrangement has been approved.
- The employee must sign a legal agreement.
- Employees and supervisors who manage teleworkers must view and acknowledge training of an online telework training program. The program details many aspects of a successful telework arrangement, including how to effectively manage time, report on deliverables and communicate well with colleagues. It also emphasizes tips for effectively supervising teleworking employees.

Teleworker and management training was developed internally. Components of the training programs were developed through best practices and research with external training curricula.

A Citrix license is provided for each teleworker to allow secure access to USP's communications and data systems. Regulations for handling any sensitive and/or proprietary information are detailed

in the employee handbook and must be followed as a condition of continued participation in the program.

Teleworkers are responsible for any DSL and phone expenses occurred as a component of participating in the telework program. Teleworkers are also responsible for any furniture or computer equipment that are necessary as part of the telework program.

Some jobs at USP are not suitable for telework, specifically those that include the need for specialized equipment or the use of chemical materials. Non-exempt employees are required to follow the same overtime and other regulations as are applicable at the office. These requirements are included in the telework policy.

## Program Participation

Currently, approximately 100 employees are participating in the telework program, with about half involved in ad-hoc arrangements, and half involved in regular telework arrangements. This constitutes about 20% of USP's workforce based in the United States. Two members of the executive management team are also participating in USP's telework program.

During the critical period of the H1N1 pandemic alert the telework program was utilized as part of USP's business continuity plan. First and second level managers as well as critical staff were identified to participate in the telework program as a method to prepare for this emergency. IT ensured that enough Citrix licenses were on-hand and critical employees were

prepared to work remotely in case of an emergency.

and supervisors about the program and set expectations.

## Challenges and Investment

A challenge for USP while implementing its formal telework program was developing the buy-in of supervisors. USP managed a cultural shift for some supervisors who were apprehensive about maintaining productivity and workgroup collaboration. This challenge in shifting this culture was addressed in several ways:

- The telework program was supported by the executive team during the development and implementation of the program. This was critical in clarifying the structure of the program and created an open partnership between the HR team developing the policy and executive management.
- The development of the telework policy in the employee handbook assured supervisors that an appropriate level of structure was in place to ensure that only employees who had previously received adequate performance evaluations and had suitable job-tasks and collaboration needs were participating in the program.
- A communication plan was put in place to convey USP's goals for the program, the structure put in place and that the program was supported by executive management and supervisors for employees with suitable jobs. The teleworker and management training were developed to educate employees

## Program Outlook

The program is in place for any employee who wishes to apply as long as they meet the participation criteria. Participation levels and compliance are monitored by human resources.

## Most Helpful Resources

The teleworker and management remote workforce training, developed internally, prepared both teleworkers and supervisors to work in a remote work environment.

## Success Tips

Acknowledge that telework is a cultural shift for employees and supervisors. Actively addressing this culture shift is critical in gaining acceptance for a new telework program.

Communicate the structure of the telework program and that it is a benefit to the employee AND the organization. Work/life and cost benefits to the employee are augmented by employee retention, recruiting and productivity gains for USP.

The implementation of training is also crucial in preparing employees and supervisors for telework. In addition, providing practical tips, information and performance expectations to employees

and supervisors ensure a successful and equitable program.

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