



IN THIS EDITION

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EDITORIAL

With summer behind us, we're back with our e-newsletter to tackle one of the issues that concerns our clients: Teleworking.

Though this isn't a detailed analysis of the subject, we're taking stock of this hardly-used work mode within organizations, discussing certain aspects to be examined, and providing food for thought.

Teleworking can be a major asset for employers and employees alike. However, major issues are to be considered and our discussion on this topic provides a brief overview, including steps to follow in order to adequately integrate teleworking into your resource management.

Reading our e-newsletter will help you reflect on the subject so that you can make up your own mind about the possibilities of integrating this worker category into your team.

Please keep sending us your suggestions for themes to be discussed in our future e-newsletters. These help us better meet your needs.

Enjoy!

Isabelle Côté, President

AT WORK... WITHOUT TAKING THE SUBWAY!

Gone are the days of traffic jams and time wasted shuttling—you finally have the chance to manage your own time! Let's admit it: we all feel at bit tempted by teleworking! And yet, according to Statistics Canada, even if about 55% of the Canadian population claims to want to work from home during their career, barely 9% of them were teleworking in 2005 with only 6% in Québec. If the idea is so attractive, why are there so few actually doing it? Is it because employers are resistant to the idea, do they lack the time to adapt to this work mode... or is it that teleworking does not suit everyone? We will attempt to answer these questions by defining teleworking as it is today, its advantages and disadvantages, the key personal traits of an effective teleworker, as well as teleworking issues for employers and effective teleworking management.

Teleworking in the business world

Though we expected a teleworking revolution in the 1990s and 2000s, Statistics Canada estimates that access to this work mode only affects 9% of the population and notes that we've actually experienced a slight decrease since 2000.

Workers most concerned with teleworking are persons aged 55 and over, with professional workers and managers making up about 38% of teleworkers (according to CEFRIO). They are followed by office employees, notably in the technological and administrative fields. On the other hand, statistics show that the average number of teleworking hours per week reached 17 hours in 2005, while there were only 3% full-time teleworkers.

These numbers are way below what was expected at the time... And the phenomenon is just as rare elsewhere in the world with about 4% of teleworkers in the United States and barely 1% in the European Union.

What are the Advantages and Disadvantages for Employers?

Teleworking is often used as a promotional tool by employers to attract a specific category of workers, since the personal advantages of working from home are quite obvious. In the past, IBM in the United States and Bell in Canada really took advantage of these work conditions. And yet, this option remains rare and a good number of employers are less than enthusiastic when employees

suggest the idea: the myth of unproductive teleworkers endures.

But teleworking provides employers with major advantages. Here are just some of the benefits that we've come up with:

- **Greater flexibility:** Both parties benefit since employees can better balance their personal and professional lives, while employers can take advantage of the greater availability of their employees who are more flexible with regard to their work schedule.
- **Savings:** It's a major advantage for employers with savings on workspace, equipment provided to employees, travelling, and often employee benefits, since employees often see teleworking as a major advantage with regard to their quality of life and so they often use less benefits. Moreover, if employers can also provide them with the income tax status of a self-employed person (though there are other criteria to fulfil), they can make significant savings on their employer's contribution and tax deductions.
- **Environnemental impact:** With companies more and more aware of their ecological footprint, reducing employee travelling to a minimum allows them to achieve a much greener energy balance.
- **Efficiency and gain in productivity:** This fact may surprise many of you. Bell Helicopter conducted a teleworking assessment and development project with a group of seven employees over a three-year period. At the conclusion of the project, 74% of the supervisors believed that employee productivity remained the same and 26% that it had improved. None thought that it had decreased. This result is attributed to strong feelings of belonging and a deep sense of satisfaction with regard to work among teleworkers who wanted to preserve their quality of life and thus achieve all of the objectives set by their employer.

On the Other Hand, Disadvantages Remain...

- **Lack of control — a major challenge for supervisors and managers:** Teleworking does not



Who are the teleworkers of Quebec?

(Excluding self-employed people)

According to an universal assessment realized during the past decade, the majority of Quebec's teleworkers are professional workers and managers.

Those teleworkers have evaluated to realize between 11% and 20% of their professional tasks at home.

What is the importance of teleworking for each category of employees?

37,5 % - Executives and managers

35,2 % - Professionals

16,2 % - Office employees

8,3 % - Technicians

3% - Other categories

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Or suggest a topic for a future e-newsletter?

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suit all types of workers nor all types of supervisors and managers. Inevitably, day-to-day control of the teleworkers' schedule and completed tasks is lost for example and sometimes different kinds of abuse can arise.

- **Lack of cohesion:** Teleworkers interact less with the rest of their team and evolve less within the company. Indifference or letting go of corporate values can be observed and this can cause prejudice to employers.
- **Isolation:** Teleworkers can lose their sense of team spirit.

What are the Personal Traits of a Teleworker?

Teleworking does not suit everyone. To implement teleworking within your company, it's important to do so on a voluntary basis, according to a well-defined process. In fact, teleworking can't be imposed since many aspects need to be considered, including supervision which will no longer be direct. It is also important to be able to recognize the profile of a competent teleworker so as not to provide this opportunity to just anybody and to maximize your company's chances of benefiting from the advantages of teleworking. What are the personal traits of such a teleworker?

- **Discipline :** Teleworkers adhere to and respect their work schedule to avoid being overwhelmed by work;
Tip : Determine teleworker deadlines as for office workers so that they reach their objectives without being overloaded with work;
- **Organization :** Teleworkers meet deadlines and reach objectives so that they don't jeopardize their job or their employer. They properly organize their workspace in order to separate their professional and personal lives, and protect the confidentiality of their employer's files ;
- **Contact with the company :** Isolation is a risk associated with teleworking, as well as the loss of cohesion with colleagues and corporate values.
Tip : Organize work or knowledge-transfer meetings between colleagues (on a weekly or monthly basis) to make sure that everyone stays in touch.

What are the Conditions for the Successful Management of Teleworkers?

Once employees with the appropriate teleworker profile are identified, you still need to

know how to manage them. Indeed, the fact that they work outside the office forces managers to change their way of doing things, including their management philosophy. Here are a few tips to help you manage teleworkers:

- **Implement proven work processes:** These processes are critically important, because teleworker roles and responsibilities need to be clearly defined, as well as the supervisory structure.
- **Organize regular team meetings** to foster team spirit, as well as teleworkers' cohesion with their colleagues and corporate values and ways of doing things.
- **Change evaluation method:** For teleworkers who manage their schedule and productivity, adopt an evaluation method per objective and per project rather than based on daily performance. It is therefore important to establish a clear teleworking policy from the start, and to define objectives and expectations. This will allow you to do an adequate follow-up with teleworkers by evaluating their performance, productivity, and professional development.

Careful consideration of this work mode within your organization seems important and you would like to provide some of your employees with this opportunity? **SSA Solutions can help you analyze this option and adapt your organizational processes, which serve as the basis for a solid teleworking structure.** As well, we can **coach your managers** to help them adopt an objective and project-based management method. It is especially important to remember that the implementation of a solid teleworking policy results from careful consideration. It must be applied and managed in such a way that your company, as well as your resources, can fully benefit from all of the advantages that teleworking has to offer.

In the 1980s and 1990s, a vast revolution in the workplace was expected with a spectacular rise in teleworking. Today, in spite of the technological advancements that should facilitate this work mode, the phenomenon remains relatively rare. And yet, teleworking provides numerous advantages for employers who know how to manage issues associated with this type of management. Maybe we should give it more importance by leveraging its benefits without pretending that it's the ideal work mode for everyone. The secret is to carefully target organizational needs, as well as the employees capable of teleworking, and to implement teleworking according to well-established processes.

SURVIVOR'S SYNDROME

The recent economic slowdown, as well as technological advancements that allow us to do more with less personnel, has led to many reorganizations within companies of all sizes. Job cuts are obviously difficult for those who are laid-off, but we often minimize the impact on the remaining employees who worry about their future and must often deal with new tasks and new processes.

What are the personal or professional impacts on the "surviving" employees?
How can their development be encouraged during reorganizations?
How can companies and employees overcome these turbulent periods?

We will discuss this topic at length in our November issue