# KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY

# Telecommuting Guidelines

## Managers and Supervisors

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# Telecommuting Guidelines

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A key to telecommuting success is an effective leader.   This booklet is designed to provide an understanding of telecommuting from the manager's and supervisor's perspective.   Telecommuting is a management technique, proven to improve results and morale.

# Steps to Implementing Telecommuting

Employee may submit a Telecommuting Application as an initial step.  Once you decide to offer telecommuting, following this six step action plan will help ensure success.  A formal program is recommended because it provides the necessary structure and direction to make it easier for employees and supervisors to understand and participate in the telecommuting process.

**Step 1**:     Read the Telecommuting Policy and Procedure Manual and the Telecommuting Agreement.  Have a clear understanding of the telecommuting parameters.

**Step 2:**     Select the employee(s) to whom you want to offer the telecommuting option.  Select employee(s) who can work independently and with a minimum amount of supervision … employees that can set priorities and get things done on time and with quality.

**Step 3:**     Equip your teleworkers.  Most employees need equipment to do their job, no matter where they work.  Make sure your telecommuters have the equipment and services required to do their job.

**Step 4:**     Train your telecommuters.  Training improves successful telecommuting.  Before your employees start telecommuting, we recommend you develop goals and expectations, communications plans, and reporting methods.

**Step 5:**     Keep Lines of Communication Open among all Employees.  A key to a successful telecommuting program is adequate communication.  A kick off meeting with co-workers before telecommuting starts is suggested.  At this meeting, or any time they arise, discuss questions and concerns openly and resolve them quickly.

**Step 6:**     Evaluate Performance by Results.  Evaluate telecommuters and non-telecommuters the same.  Determine up front how you will define success of your telecommuting efforts.  Whether working in the office or out, management by results is best.

## What Telecommuting Offers You, the Manager/Supervisor

- ➢ Improves effectiveness and work quality.

- ➢ Provides an opportunity to be a more innovative and progressive.

- ➢ Increases ability to attract and keep valued employees.

- ➢ Reduces sick leave and reduces absenteeism.

- ➢ Provides the ability to work during unusual circumstances (i.e. blizzard, flood).

- ➢ Reduces office and parking space needs.

- ➢ Enhances productivity

- ➢ Improves employee morale

- ➢ Improves employee health and decreases stress

- ➢ Allows for flexibility

## Selecting Your Teleworkers

Telecommuting is a management option. It is a privilege, not an entitlement. Not everyone wants to telecommute. Not everyone's position is right for telecommuting. Not everyone has the right work environment or can function effectively in a remote environment.

Suggestions to increase the ease and accuracy of selecting successful teleworkers:

- ➢ Choose telecommuters who are self-motivated and responsible, well-organized and self-disciplined. The telecommuter should be familiar with the position requirements, knowledgeable about procedures and policies, and be an effective communicator with a history of dependability, reliability and responsible discharge of work duties.

- ➢ Choose positions that have clearly defined tasks and essential functions whose results can be measured effectively without frequent and regular direct supervision.

## Typical Telecommuting Tasks

Analysis - Auditing Reports - Batch Work - Budget Preparation - Calculating - Computer Programming - Conducting Business by Phone - Contract Preparation/Monitoring - Database Maintenance - Data Entry - Design Work – Dictating – Drafting – Editing - Evaluations - Field Visits - Graphic Design - Project Management - Record Keeping - Research - Sending/Receiving E-mail - Spreadsheet Analysis – Typing – Word Processing - Writing (freelance writers or bloggers)

## Possible Equipment Needs for Your Telecommuter

Most employees need some equipment, no matter where they work. Equipment expands the types of work they can do away from the main office, which enables them to telecommute more effectively. The telecommuting agreement needs to detail who is providing and paying for the equipment or communication lines.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Additional phone line(s) | Cell Phone | Computer | Email |
| Fax machine | Modem | Printer | Software |
| Technical support | Telephone | Voice mail | |

## Options for Handling Equipment Needs

Some telecommuters do not use computers in their positions.  Others use them at the office, but could arrange to do non-computer work on their telecommuting days. Here are some ways to handle equipment needs:

- Telecommuter plans telecommuting days so he or she does not need additional equipment.

- Telecommuter uses his or her own computer.

- Department may provide some things, such as a modem, broadband connection or a second phone line.

- Department may provide laptops for employees to check out on telecommuting days.

- Department may provide or purchase equipment for telecommuters.

## The Telecommuter's Office Environment

It is important to both employers and employees that the office be designed for safety, ergonomics and comfort.  Data security must be a top priority.

## Training Your Telecommuters

Training is vital to telecommuting success.  Proper training helps reduce the number of potential problems by providing telecommuters the opportunity to:

- learn about departmental policies

- ask questions and raise concerns

- develop workable solutions

- understand what makes telecommuting successful

Subjects to cover in training may include the following:

- The Telecommuting Agreement

- Tasks to be done on telecommuting days

- The telecommuting schedule

- Equipment use

- Designing the workplace for safety, ergonomics and efficiency

    Provide access to ergonomic information

- Information security

    Review PPM 3430 Security for Information, Computing and Network Resources

- Communication schedule and procedures

- How and when to report results

- Troubleshooting and problem solving

- Maintaining team participation and visibility

## The Kick-Off Meeting

Hold a staff meeting before telecommuting begins.  Ask your employees to share their expectations about telecommuting and how it will operate.  Invite employees to air their feelings and make suggestions so you can address concerns before they become problems.

You and your telecommuters should develop strategies to make sure co-workers are not inconvenienced. Include subjects like message taking, notifying others of telecommuting days and contacting telecommuters.

## Managing Your Telecommuters

As technology evolves, the manager's role is changing.   Today's managers and supervisors are challenged to:

➢ manage by results as opposed to observation
➢ act as a facilitator, rather than a superior or "boss"
➢ push responsibility to the lowest practical level
➢ support employee efforts to achieve a fulfilling balance of work and family life.

Tips to make it easier to manage telecommuters:

- Manage your telecommuters the same way you manage your other employees. Telecommuters are not doing different work; they're doing the same work in a different location.

- The best way to judge any employee's performance is by looking at results.  Even when an employee is in the office and looking busy, you really don't know what they're accomplishing.  No matter where or when the employee works, management by results is best.

- Provide clear instructions and deadlines, interim checkpoints and regular feedback. Communicate clearly, maintaining your meeting schedule with telecommuters. Build in regular progress reports.

- Schedule team meetings and events that include your telecommuters (including virtual participation if needed) so that co-workers know that telecommuters are still part of the team.

- Track how the team feels about telecommuting by talking with your employees.  Bring up the subject of telecommuting at staff meetings and invite open, honest communication.