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Welcome to the world of teleworking, an innovative work arrangement that has been successful for a lot of people in a lot of organizations. The video “The Key To Telecommuting Success” provides an overview of the elements that you, as a Teleworker, need to address to make telework successful for you and your manager/supervisor.

The Telework Video can be viewed from the Caltrans Intranet site at Employee Resources/ Telework: http://onramp/resources.htm use the Telecommute link.

Desired Teleworker Skills

Before we address employee skills, you need to first answer the question, "Is telework right for me?" As a prospective teleworker, you should ask yourself:

* How comfortable am I working away from my manager/supervisor and coworkers?
* What is the impact on my career, assignments, or promotions?
* Do I have the capability and work habits to work independently? Let me be honest with myself about this.
* Do I need the interactions of the traditional work environment to get me going?
* Are my personal circumstances (my home, near a telework center, family issues, etc.) suitable for teleworking?
* Do I really like the idea of teleworking and not having my coworkers close at hand?
* Do I have or can I master the skills necessary to perform my job away from the amenities at the traditional office?
* Does my job include the kind of work that I can perform at an alternate worksite? Or does my work require that I be bound to the traditional office?
* Am I comfortable with the telework policies/procedures established by the Department of Transportation?
In order to be successful in a Telework environment you need to have work habits that support independent task performance. These may include:

* The ability to work with minimal direct supervision,
* Organized work practices,
* Productive work skills,
* Good planning skills,
* The ability to meet schedules and deadlines,
* Effective time management skills,
* Effective communication; and
* The ability to handle work tools (computers, e-mail, printers, etc.) independently.

These work habits help in any job but they are particularly important for successful telework.

Approaching Your Manager about Telework

Some managers/supervisors have concerns about managing teleworkers. They worry that employees will be unavailable when an important assignment or question comes up, that teamwork may suffer, that productivity will drop, etc. And, of course, there may be other management issues that are potential hindrances to your teleworking. Help yourself by trying to become fully aware of these issues and management concerns and then help your manager/supervisor become a supporter of your teleworking. Work to identify any issues that will need to be corrected and proactively. Think of solutions.

Your Telework Agreement

You and your manager/supervisor should become familiar with the Department Telework Policy and Procedures booklet contents of typical telework agreements. A telework agreement describes your work schedule, work plans, communication avenues, performance objectives, and other details of your telework arrangement. You should be an informed and active participant in the agreement development process. Such steps may include:

* Work with your manager/supervisor to determine if the proposed arrangements meet the Department of Transportation's business needs and requirements.
* Reiterate the performance goals already in place for your job.
* Discuss equipment, software and other requirements.
* Be flexible in setting/proposing your telework schedule.
Plan your telework days to make sure:

* You have enough work to keep yourself busy.
* You have the necessary equipment and materials to do your work.
* Your work schedule meets your divisions and personal needs.
* You understand the your general work responsibilities?
* You understand your evaluation criteria that will be used to assess progress and quality of your work.

Now that you have identified the amount of time you spend on teleworking tasks, you must decide your schedule. One of the benefits of teleworking is that it allows you to get your work completed while offering some flexibility in your work schedule. You may be able to arrange your teleworking day to make the most of your productive periods and meet your personal needs. Ideally, a Teleworker will be available to his or her clients, co-workers and supervisor, and still have flexibility. Establishing a regular routine on teleworking days will help you get into a work frame of mind and stay on your schedule, so you can make the most of teleworking freedom and flexibility.

Preparing to Work in Your Home

Working at home, even if it is only one day a week, represents a change from working in a traditional office. Before you start working at home, plan about exactly how you will want to set up your home workspace. Keep in mind that many of the considerations for working at home may also apply to working at a telework center or any alternative work location.

Select the areas listed below to see what you need to consider.

Identify a suitable work location that includes:

* Adequate work space,
* Control of over head lighting and sound,
* Access to telephone and electrical outlets; and
* Safety and security of work materials.

You'll need to plan ahead before taking files and materials home for your telework day(s).

* As you go through the week, make a “to do” list of appropriate tasks for teleworking days.
* The prior afternoon, make a “to take” list so you have everything you will need.
* Designate one place (e.g., a box, a spot on your desk) to set aside the materials you'll need for teleworking days.
Large equipment budgets aren't necessary for teleworking, but the right equipment can make your telework easier and more productive. Make sure you understand your division's and Caltrans's equipment policy and the answers to these questions:

* What equipment is available for teleworking?
* What other equipment is necessary or desirable?
* Will your division provide equipment and materials? If so, what?
* Who provides technical support?

The Department of Transportation service desk available for assistance with connectivity, remote access, repair and maintenance of State-owned computer equipment and peripherals. Teleworkers who choose to use their home computers for teleworking will be required to secure these services on their own.

If you are using a State-owned computer, security is important. You should create backup copies of computer data in case of a power surge or hardware crash. You can save your work to a backup CD or an encrypted portable drive (every hour in some cases).

It is your responsibility to help protect against software viruses:
* Do not load unlicensed software or products not on the Caltrans approved software standards list. Never download software from the internet.
* Do not log on to a private bulletin board while actively connected to the Caltrans network or use peer-to-peer connections (i.e., instant messaging, virtual machines, etc.)

**Important Points To Remember:**

* If you decide to work at home, a telework center, or an alternative work location, you will need to identify a suitable work space and determine what is needed to perform your job.

* If necessary, work closely with your manager/supervisor, telework administrator, and IT Support Staff to identify, obtain, and implement any technology you need to perform your job.

* Develop work plans and task schedules to help you improve your time and task management skills.
Establishing Communication Procedures

The key to succeeding as a teleworker is communicating clearly and often with your manager/supervisor, coworkers, and customers. Tailor that communication, depending on whom you are contacting. Some managers/supervisors may require you to check in on a daily basis to review what you are doing or have done that day and what your next task is, and to discuss problems you may be experiencing. Other managers/supervisors may require you to check in less frequently. Team members may be in constant contact or may meet once or twice a week and then work independently. When establishing your communication protocol, be clear about:

* What type of information needs to be communicated?

* Who do you need to communicate with: (manager/supervisor, coworkers, and customers)?

* How will you communicate (e.g., phone, voice mail, e-mail)?

* How often should you must communicate?

* When is direct communication necessary.

In some situations, you may want to have your work phone calls forwarded to your home phone. Check with your division to see if this is an option and your division would pay for that feature.

Management By Results

The best way to determine employees performance is by measuring results. This management style is equally effective when employees work off site. It’s smart to apply the same management approach to everyone. Whether in the office or out, management by results, not by appearance, is best. The success of your work depends on the efforts of everyone, teleworkers and non-teleworkers alike. Managers/Supervisors should understand what makes the team successful, making sure that non-teleworkers aren’t expected to do extra work and don’t feel left out.
This training guide provides a general overview of the skills you will need to become a successful teleworker and the processes for an effective telework program.

Certain work habits support independent task performance and will contribute to your success as a teleworker. Prior to approaching your manager/supervisor about telework, determine if your job duties are suitable for telework and if you have the right work habits to be a good teleworker.

When approaching your manager/supervisor about telework:

* Consider preparing a written telework proposal,
* Do not request telework as a substitute for childcare, elder care, or other home responsibilities,
* Be flexible.

It is your responsibility to:

* Understand the Department Telework Policy and Procedures booklet and Deputy Directive DD-14, Employee Teleworking,
* Work with your manager/supervisor to establish a comprehensive telework agreement and monitor the agreement,
* Maintain communication with your manager/supervisor, coworkers, and customers,
* Be flexible in your telework schedule.
This training guide provides an understanding of Caltrans telework principles and procedures, and provides you with tips and resources for teleworking successfully. Telework can offer many advantages to you such as decreasing stress, decreasing or eliminating commute time and expenses, and increasing job satisfaction. Telework may allow greater flexibility to balance your personal and professional duties, and also permit both you and management to continue working during emergency situations.

Don’t let traffic delay the work day

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