



Employer Commute Benefit Program Case Study

Employer

SMECO

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Background

SMECO is an electric cooperative serving Charles, St. Mary's, Calvert, and part of Prince George's counties.

SMECO has three locations in Maryland: two in Hughesville and one in Leonardtown with 534 employees.

The Situation and Solutions

SMECO's contact center experienced workstation shortages during daytime hours. It became necessary for part-time employees to share desks with full-time employees who worked other shifts. This, at times, created conflict and low morale among the employees involved.

Prior to forming a teleworking program, the contact center management found it necessary to utilize its training area and equipment/workstations during storm trouble and other times of crisis, particularly when the Emergency Response Plan (ERP) was activated. This is a time of high call volume requiring "all hands on deck" to effectively manage the number of incoming calls and report the outages in the outage management system. Finding desk space and equipment for the outage calltakers was a challenge at times.

Along those lines, it is critical for the contact center to respond to crisis/outage situations in a timely manner. Teleworkers work from home; there is no commute time or travel in hazardous conditions. They can log in to their phone equipment and begin taking customer outage calls immediately.

The management at SMECO and in the contact center wanted to offer work arrangements that would increase job satisfaction, increase morale and be seen as an incentive for good job performance. The teleworking program was developed as an option for those employees with a history of dependability, reliability, independence, and a certain level of job knowledge.

In May, 2013, SMECO implemented the Flexible Workplace Program, including compressed work schedules and alternate work schedules. Two reasons for offering these options are: The renewed focus and corporate awareness on providing incentives that would improve employees' work-life balance and the possible benefits, such as higher productivity, higher morale, and lower absenteeism. The employees requested having work schedule options similar to other employers in the area. They, along with SMECO management, saw that these programs were managed successfully by other organizations and felt the time was right to develop and implement its own Flexible Workplace Program.

The Impacts and Future

Teleworking: Employees report being more comfortable in their home offices. They appreciate not having to commute to and from work and having more time for the activities they enjoy. Flexible Workplace Program : Approximately 42% of the management employee participate in the program. They love the flexibility; are able to conserve vacation/sick leave by scheduling appointments and activities around their schedule; and enjoy more time with their families and loved ones.

The cooperative has used "word of mouth" to help expand the programs available to employees and the most success has been in the flexible schedule program with 42% of the management employees participating. The

Telework program is going to be offered to part-time employees.

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