



Employer Telework Case Study

Employer

Clean Currents
155 Gibbs Street
Suite 425
Rockville, MD 20850

Contact

Brian Eglsaer, Operations
Manager
beglsaer@cleancurrents.com

Tanya Gulnik, Operations
Associate
tgulnik@cleancurrents.com

“Allowing employees the option to telework helps cut our company’s carbon footprint.”

Background

Clean Currents is a green energy company that was founded in 2005. Clean Currents provides affordable green energy options to

residential customers including windpower options through the grid as well as solar panel installations for on-site energy generation. Clean Currents also provides energy efficiency and environmental consultation services. As a green energy company, Clean Currents works to ensure that its operations are environmentally responsible. The option for employees to telework is one of these efforts.

In addition to providing environmental benefits, the telework program is also used to ease Clean Currents’ demands for office space. Other benefits include a positive impact on employee work/life balance and Clean Currents’ recruiting efforts. Telework is also promoted during bad air quality days as a way to further reduce the number of automobiles on the road and air pollution.

In addition to telework, Clean Currents also promotes biking to work, mass transit and carpooling. One way in which mass transit is promoted is by providing a higher subsidy for bikers and employees who take the Metro than for parking at the worksite. Approximately 40 percent of Clean Currents’ employees use the Metro to get to work.

The Telework Experience

Clean Current's telework program essentially began when the company was launched in 2005. Several founders of the company had experience with telework and the Internet connectivity systems provided by MyRAMLink™. Having experienced the benefits of telework, implementing a program at Clean Currents was a natural decision.

Employees are trained on Clean Currents' remote desktop system, MyRAMLink™, when they join the system. This software allows them to access a shared drive and their documents from any computer, greatly facilitating the telework option. Software programs and data are stored on a shared-drive that employees can access remotely. As program software is available on the shared-drive, employees can use software that is not available on their computers, making IT setup and maintenance much more seamless. Remote employees also have access to printers in the office. This allows employees to print documents for co-workers in the office or print documents that will be available when they return to the office. Clean Currents also uses eFax, reducing the need for employees to have fax machines available and making it simpler to send, receive and share faxed documents.

Clean Currents' VOIP system allows calls from an employee's extension to roll to personal cell phones, making it easy to be available anywhere. Conference rooms at Clean Currents' facilities include conference call hardware and software that allow employees to call in for meetings and participate remotely.

New employees are typically required to spend six months at the worksite before they can join the telework program. This allows employees to become familiar with the IT systems, establish relationships with co-workers and become familiar with their job-duties. Teleworkers are required to maintain their performance levels while teleworking in order to continue participating in the program.

Employees may telework for full or partial days. Employees wishing to miss peak commute hours, have meetings off-site or have an event to attend often combine partial or full telework days with those efforts to reduce their time spent driving during the day, further reducing air-pollution.

Several part-time employees telework a majority of the time allowing them more flexibility in being available and productive when they are needed and eliminating the requirement to provide permanent desk space. Most full-time employee's telework one or two days per week. Employees who are often on the road or telework frequently use a rotating desk system that allows them to have a place to work in the office without needing a permanent office location. The move from a dedicated workspace to the rotating desk system is determined by an employee's needs and a mutual agreement with their manager.

Clean Currents provides a \$250 credit for employees who wish to purchase a new computer as part of the telework program. The computer must be Energy Star or EPEAT certified and Employees are required to dispose of old computers and any other hardware through an electronics recycling program. Clean Currents has an

“Ecycling” program in place at the worksite, augmenting these efforts.

Currently, Clean Currents has 21 full-time employees that telework at least one day per week and six part-time employees that telework more often, including full-time.

Challenges and Investment

Clean Currents provides and funds monthly usage fees for a RAMink license and VoIP setup for each teleworker. Clean Currents also pays up to \$50 for teleworkers’ cellphone coverage during their first year of employment. After the first year Clean Currents pays for teleworkers’ entire cellphone costs.

When technical problems arise, designated employees in the office troubleshoot the issues. MyRAMLink™ also provides rapid-response customer support.

Program Outlook

Currently, conference calling is the most frequent method for remote collaboration. An investigation to add video-conferencing is underway. Video-conferencing will allow a higher level of remote collaboration and may increase the amount of work that can be done remotely.

Most Helpful Resources

MyRAMLink™ customized their systems for Clean Currents and provides a high level of customer support. As a result, all of Clean Currents remote access, training and support needs are met and supported with less effort.

Success Tips

A telework program must be part of an employee’s daily routine. Providing remote access that provides direct access to a teleworker’s computer reduces the need for redundant software and learning new access protocols.

Teleworkers and their managers benefit from performance goals and expectations for the type of work that can be done remotely. This mutual arrangement provides teleworkers with guidance and allows managers to gauge employees’ telework efforts and performance.

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United States Nuclear
Regulatory Commission

Contact

Sandra L. Johnson, Senior
Program Analyst
U. S. Nuclear Regulatory
Commission
Office of Human Resources
Employee/Labor Relations Work
Life Branch
(301) 492-2284
Sandra.Johnson@nrc.gov

Background

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) was created by Congress in 1974 as an independent agency to regulate the commercial nuclear industry to protect public health and safety against radiation hazards from industries that use radioactive material.

The NRC has over 4,000 employees located at headquarters in Rockville, Md.,

four regional offices and 65 nuclear plant sites.

Nuclear safety is at the core of all the agency's work in licensing, oversight, inspection, enforcement, research, and emergency response.

The Telework Experience

NRC's telework program began in 1997 to allow employees to work away from the traditional office and provide a practical solution to environmental and other quality of life issues. Allowing employees to telework also helped address work life challenges.

After a period, the NRC has recognized a number of benefits from telework. It helped reduce employee stress, provided freedom from office distractions, and saved time and money by reducing commuting costs.

NRC offers employees three options for telework: 1) Fixed Schedule, 2) Project Based, and 3) Special Circumstances.

Fixed Schedule Telework

Fixed telework arrangements allow employees to telework on a regular

schedule. Employees may telework one to five days per week. Employees under fixed telework arrangements can work from home or from one of the telework centers available in the Washington Metropolitan area.

Project Based Telework

An employee may be approved by their supervisor to telework on a project basis for a specified project to be completed within a short period of time at home or telework center. This option is usually for a project covering a few hours or a few days.

Special Circumstances Work at Home

Employees who are incapacitated or who face a significant hardship may be approved to work at home continuously or intermittently during their period of incapacitation or hardship.

Telework in General

Telework is also a critical part of NRC's Continuity of Operations planning. Critical positions have been identified that are required to be available during a pandemic or other type of emergency.

All requests to telework must be approved in advance by the employee's supervisor. Employees submit the appropriate documentation based on the type of telework requested and the duration of the agreement.

New employees are given information about NRC's telework program at orientation. The Office of Human Resources meets annually with the office and regional telework coordinators and briefs them on legislation, policies, procedures and other issues related to the program.

NRC does not provide any equipment, computers, Internet access or cellphone coverage. These costs are the responsibility of the teleworker.

In order to access the NRC intranet, teleworkers are provided with Citrix Online remote access software. The license fees are funded by NRC.

Flexible work schedules are also available at NRC allowing employees to start and end their workdays earlier or later, enabling them to miss peak-commute hours and/or address personal needs.

Program Participation

As of January 2010, 17% of NRC's work force was participating in the telework program. A small number of employees are ineligible to participate in the telework program because their job-tasks are not portable. This includes those employees whose duties require, on a daily basis, direct handling of secure materials or on-site activity that cannot be performed remotely, such as face-to-face personal contact or other duties which require that the employee be onsite.

Participation in NRC's telework program has continued to expand. Since 2007, the number of employees who telework has steadily increased.

Challenges and Investment

While most of NRC's managers actively support the telework program, there are

some who are resistant to change or not as supportive of a telework environment because they feel that they need to see their employees in order to ensure they are working. NRC addresses this challenge by continually educating managers and employees about the benefits and merits of the program.

Program Outlook

Recently, NRC successfully negotiated the telework program with the National Treasury Employees Union and from this effort the agency expects to see the numbers grow.

NRC's telework program is periodically communicated through the Intranet website, posters and in-office communications (emails to the coordinators, annual telework coordinators' meeting) "The Teleworker" magazine is distributed to the telework coordinators in each office to keep them abreast of activities and developments in other government agencies and private companies. Providing this information helps to increase the coordinators knowledge which they then share with managers and employees.

In 2003, the Partnership for Public Service and the American University Institute for the Study of Public Policy began conducting the "Best Places to Work" survey of Federal agencies. For three consecutive years, 2007, 2008, and 2009, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission has been the top-rated large agency. The NRC's telework program is one of the key contributors to the agency's ranking because of the flexibility and benefits provided by the telework program, the agency expects the program to continue to grow.

Most Helpful Resources

NRC provides a direct link on its internal website to the Office of Personnel Management's telework website where employees can find relevant information, Federal telework updates and links to online training.

The NRC has a dedicated Telework Coordinator who advises employees and managers on the program. The Telework Exchange is also a good resource that provides useful information and announces telework conferences that are attended by NRC managers and staff.

Success Tips

We have found that the most important factor for success is to obtain top level management support for the telework program. Sufficient IT resources and support are also critical in ensuring a smooth transition to a remote work arrangement and continued productivity and collaboration with employees in the office.

Developing appropriate communication tools and opportunities to market the program are also keys to a successful program

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United States Pharmacopeial Convention
12601 Twinbrook Parkway
Rockville, MD 20852

Contact

Elizabeth L. Singh, SPHR
HR Director, Training &
Organizational Development

301-816-8205
els@usp.org

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.

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 and supervisors about the program and set expectations.

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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