

# Workplace Flexibility and Telecommuting

Workplace Flexibility and Telecommuting have become increasingly popular among women in the workforce because both options allow women to balance full time work and family. Parents having the ability to work flexible hours or work from home improves the overall well being of the entire family.

While workplace flexibility and telecommuting are two separate ideas, they have many similarities. Telecommuting is a form of workplace flexibility. Both allow the option of working in or out of the office at different times.

## Workplace Flexibility

- 70 percent of families with children in 1960 had a parent (usually a mom) home full-time. Today, 70 percent of all families are headed either by two employed parents or a single parent who is in the workforce.
- Productivity of working parents suffers as a result of stress caused by inflexible jobs and inadequate after-school options.

\* Information according to *A Real Mother's Day Gift: Flexibility, Economic Security, and a Good Night's Sleep* by Karen Kornbluh



## What is Workplace Flexibility?

Workplace flexibility is when employees set their 40 hour work week both in and out of the office. This includes jobs that don't require you to work from 9-5, job sharing (two people share a job designed for one person) and salary paid positions that do not require you to come in at certain times during the week.

## Advantages:

- Women with families can spend more time at home with their children.
- When a woman has a flexible work schedule, she is less stressed and able to perform better.
- Working flexible hours reduces the risk of burn-out and loss of employees.
- It is beneficial to both the employer and the employee as flexibility leads to productivity.

## Challenges:

- Some employers value "face time" (time where they actually see you in the office) over the amount of work completed.
- Finding the time to do work when you are already busy with family obligations can be tough when you make your own schedule.

## Ways to get Started:

Check with your current workplace and ask them if they have a workplace flexibility policy. Employers are becoming increasingly more aware of the benefits of workplace flexibility. They are learning that when their employees are rested and not preoccupied with things going on outside of the office, that they perform better at work. Try and talk with your employer about being a little more flexible in your work schedule.

Employers are now seeing the benefits of flexibility, yet they are only going to allow their employees who are personally motivated to have that option. While it is your employer's job to make sure you have the resources to perform your work well, it is your job to prove to the employer that you are capable of this privilege.

## Telecommuting

- An estimated 17 million teleworkers work from home at least once a month.
- A much larger number (29 million in 1999) are “day-extenders,” catching up on reading, email, and other tasks from home instead of staying longer at the office.
- Some 8 million full-time workers, work from home locations all the time.

\* Statistics taken from [eworkingwomen.com](http://eworkingwomen.com)

### What is Telecommuting?

Telecommuting is working from outside of the office made possible by technology. It is a form of workplace flexibility in that it allows the employee to make their own flexible schedule. It also requires a lot of motivation. As technology has become easier to use and more readily available, telecommuting has become a much more popular way of working. Both employers and employees see the benefits of this type of work and embrace it.

### Advantages:

- There is no commute to work eliminating hours each week in transit.
- You are free to complete your work on your time.
- You can work comfortably in your own home.
- Allows the employer to focus on the outcome of the work rather than tracking the time the employee is actually present in the office.

### Challenges:

- It takes a lot of self-discipline to work from home and be productive.
- You have to be self-motivated as there is no one supervising you on a daily basis.
- There are no coworkers to become friends with.
- You need a space at home for all of your work, and this space must be organized to be productive.

### To telecommute from your current job:

If you're already working in a job, and want to start telecommuting, you need to find a way to convince your employer that telecommuting will help you do more work or better work. It will also help reduce the need for office space along while attracting and retaining a high quality workforce.

### To find a new job:

In order to find a job that will allow you to telecommute, you must first evaluate yourself and your skills and begin searching for jobs that match your expertise. Once you are hired, you may have to work in the office for a while to build a trust level, and then suggest occasionally working from home.

A lot of times if you have the appropriate skills, you may be able to find a telecommuting job right away. However, the company may require that you spend anywhere from three months to a year training in the office before being able to telecommute.

## Legislation

While there are no federal laws that deal directly with telecommuting, there are other laws that all employers must follow. Some laws have been made, and then overturned concerning telecommuting. A good example of this is the **Occupational Safety and Health Act** which said that employers were responsible for the working conditions of employees who work from a remote location. This was overturned. As telecommuting

becomes increasingly popular, more attempts will be made to protect the rights of those who work from home.

In March 2001, Senator John Kerry (D-MA), chairman of the U.S. Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship written and introduced the **Small Business and Telecommuting Act**. This law has not yet been passed, but it is a step in the right direction for women wishing to work from home.

Some states have laws concerning telecommuting and workplace flexibility. To find these laws, go to your state's Department of Labor website and search for laws concerning the workplace.

## Book Resources:

*Work+Life: Finding the Fit That's Right For You* (April 2004)  
by Cali Williams Yost

*Telecommuting Success: A Practical Guide for Staying in the Loop While Working Away from the Office* (February 2001)  
by Michael Dziak, forward by Gil Gordon

*101 Tips for Telecommuters: Successfully Manage Your Work, Team, Technology and Family* (August 1999)  
by Debra A. Dinnocenzo

*Mompreneurs: A Mother's Practical Step by Step Guide to Work at Home Success* (June 2002)  
by Patricia Cobe, Ellen H. Parlapiano

*The Stay-at-Home Mom's Guide to Making Money from Home, Revised 2nd Edition : Choosing the Business That's Right for You Using the Skills and Interests You Already Have* (May 2000)  
by Liz Folger

## Web Resources:

### **e-working Working Women**

<http://www.eworkingwomen.com/experts/telecommute.html>

### **Monster**

<http://wlb.monster.com/articles/workfromhome/>

### **Quintessential Careers**

This website gives advice as well as ways for women to obtain telecommuting jobs.

[http://www.quintcareers.com/telecommute\\_jobs.html](http://www.quintcareers.com/telecommute_jobs.html)

### **Mommy's Place**

This website is very informative and gives a variety of tips concerning finding employment from home.

[http://www.mommysplace.net/what\\_is\\_telecommuting.html](http://www.mommysplace.net/what_is_telecommuting.html)

### **Women's Career Center**

<http://jobsearchtech.about.com/cs/womencareer/>

### **Women Entrepreneurs Inc.**

<http://www.we-inc.org/flex.html>

### **National Partnership for Women and Families**

This website includes links to information concerning legislation that can help working women.

<http://www.nationalpartnership.org/Default.aspx?tabid=48>

### **When Work Works**

<http://familiesandwork.org/3w/research/status.html>