



Teleworking

Tips and recommendations for employers and employees

By Peter Arnfalk, IIIIEE, Lund University.

Telework has been around for several decades, but with the current Corona virus epidemic, a large number of people who are unexperienced with working remotely have now started to do so. With today's tech tools and digital maturity, working outside the office is really not a big deal.

Still, I'd like to share with you a few success factors that I've learned through my research, working as a consultant in the field of virtual collaboration, and as a regular teleworker myself. I've divided the recommendations in two sections - what to consider as a teleworker - and what to consider as an employer with teleworking employees. If you are self-employed, you take on both roles (but you probably know this stuff already).

WHAT TO CONSIDER AS A TELEWORKER

- *Make clear what is expected from you, what output to produce and when. Plan your work and schedule accordingly. Uncertainties here often lead to a situation where you (or your boss), worry that you're not doing what you should or enough, in time. So you risk ending up working too much, on the wrong things.*
- *Report regularly what you do and what you have achieved to your group and/or your boss. Establish a reporting routine that you've all agreed upon. And Yes - it should preferably be your boss who should take responsibility for setting up this routine. But as they often miss out on this, and it is particularly important for you as a teleworker - you may suggest a routine for this yourself.*
- *Make an effort to be available as much as possible during working hours, for telephone calls, chats and on-line meetings. Not being able to get hold of people working at a distance is a great source of frustration and mistrust among colleagues.*
- *Be professional - you're working. Dress up as if you should go to the office, work regular working hours. Then stop, change clothes, get off work.*

WHAT TO CONSIDER AS A TELEWORKER, CONTINUED

- *Be professional - communicating with colleagues and business contacts.* Use on-line meetings if possible (e.g. Skype for Business, Zoom, GoToMeeting) regularly as they offer you a powerful way of collaboration. Use a real headset (with a USB-plug - not one for telephone) as good sound is the most important part of the communication, AND use the camera! Most computers have decent built-in camera, but if you don't have one, get an external one. Using the camera enhances the social presence, makes meeting more engaging and efficient. Trust me on this! No excuses that you have a bad hair day... Check out our twelve tips and tricks for successful virtual meetings here.
- *Enjoy.* Allow yourself to benefit from the positive perks of teleworking: take a nice walk instead of commuting, meet friends and family during lunch, take a power nap! DO NOT overwork! Telework generally leads to a higher efficiency, so do not feel stressed that you're not doing enough - then the expectations on you are set too high. (See the first point, above)

WHAT TO CONSIDER AS AN EMPLOYER WITH TELEWORKERS

- *Be extra clear with letting your employees know what is expected from them.* What to do and when. When and what to report, to whom.
- *Let the teleworkers know what kind of support they can get, and how to access it.* For most employees telework is nothing new or strange. For some, it may lead to anxiety and a lot of questions. It's important to offer this group support, and not only technical support.
- *Offer your employees the chance to borrow good tech - laptops, headsets, and cameras.* If that is not an option - allow them to buy at least a decent headset, perhaps also a webcam.
- *Establish routines for communication and collaboration.* It's important that your staff can meet each other, discuss and work together at a distance, as a virtual team. This is important both for an efficient and productive collaboration, but also to maintain the team spirit at work. Routines for when, where and how to meet are therefore crucial.

When having meetings, invite all the meeting participants to join virtually - to be on equal terms. In hybrid meetings, with some persons participating at a distance and some being together in a conference room, you tend to create an A and a B team - with the remote participants being left out of much of the communication.



Tip! Schedule mandatory times for virtual fika - once or twice per week. Create a space for an informal chat.