NEWS YOU CAN USE

Office Extinction?

By Eva Kaplan-Leiserson

Illustration by Riccardo Stampatori

Recently, a minor surgery kept me home unexpectedly, but I still had to get work (including this column) done. With a borrowed laptop, I was able to log onto our network remotely to check email and share documents; I could also dial into my voicemail and confer with my boss over email or on the phone.

If I could get that much done with little planning and no fancy equipment, it makes me wonder why anyone goes to the office at all. Throw in videoconferencing technology or collaboration software for at-a-distance meetings, add instant messaging tools to replace pick-up hallway conversations, and I could be the world's most productive worker without ever leaving my house.

That will come as no surprise to some of you, whose daily routine I'm describing. A recent study by the Society for Human Resource Management found that the number of its members offering telecommuting grew from 20 to 37 percent of its total membership over the past four years. (That was the largest jump of any flexible work arrangement.)

In the United Kingdom, the number of teleworkers has risen by 70 percent over the last five years, according to

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that country's Office of National Statistics. All told, 7.4 percent of the total U.K. workforce telecommutes.

Although telecommuters may miss in-person interaction and feel isolated, many people would be willing to chance it. Positively Broadband Campaign ◁ᵢᵢᵢ positively-broadband.org reports that 54 percent of Americans think telecommuting would im-

prove the quality of their lives, 46 percent think it would improve the quality of their work, and 46 percent think it would enable them to be a better spouse or parent.

Companies may benefit as well. According to the International Telework Association, ◁ᵢᵢᵢ www.telecommute.org businesses report cost-savings of up to US$10,000 per teleworker and a 63 percent re-

duction in absenteeism.

All in all, telecommuting is a trend worth taking notice of for workers, managers, and training departments. Two new resources can help answer the myriad questions that telecommuting raises. "A Guide for Telecommuters" and "Managing Telecommuters: A Guide for Remote Managers" are asynchronous Web-based courses created by

Work & Family Connection.

As for me, I'm back in the office, getting lots of sympathy from co-workers on my bandages. Hey, maybe this going to the office thing isn't so bad after all.

◁ᵢᵢᵢ **Source/Nua Internet Surveys**

For more on telecommuting
"Observations of a Telecommuter" (July 2001 _T+D_).

HowTo

Here are 10 tips on developing a successful succession program.

By Tracy Burns-Martin

1. Ensure buy-in from senior management. Tie the cost of replacing workers in key positions to the bottom line by using turnover ratios, cost per hire, and training costs to support your case.

2. Set a goal. Making your goal specific (for example, reduce turnover by 50 percent or increase internal promotions by 20 percent) will help you show the impact of the program.

3. Design the program. Who will be involved? How often will you conduct review meetings? Consider company culture and timelines (for example, avoid review meetings during peak sales seasons).

4. Determine assessments, and create templates. Keep assessments of employee performance simple while promoting manager objectivity. Multiple assessments may be necessary. We use competencies, performance reviews, 360 analysis, sales performance, and goal achievement. Our templates include a forced-choice ranking, four-quadrant matrix, and employee profile sheets.

5. Design reporting. What do you want to know? Regardless of design, you'll want to track such info as career progression, history, terminations, and performance development.

6. Train your managers. Educate managers on how to approach employee rankings objectively while you build value in the program. (What's in it for them?)

7. Pilot the program. Test it in one or two business units or departments to work out the kinks. Getting senior managers involved in the pilot is another way to ensure buy-in.

8. Evaluate the program. Make sure your program is flexible enough to withstand changes in your business environment. Review the process, and measure the impact based on the goals you set in step 2.

9. Revise as necessary. Take feedback seriously. If the program isn't working for some groups, modify it. As long as the core elements remain consistent, you will be able to measure impact.

10. Measure and celebrate success. Did you achieve your goals? If not, identify the obstacles. If so, celebrate.

Tracy Burns-Martin _is HR manager at The Boston Beer Company (brewers of Samuel Adams); tracy.burns-martin@bostonbeer.com._

Two, Four, Six, Eight, Let's All Collaborate!

The numbers are in: After 9/11, businesspeople *are* using collaboration technology more and traveling less. Wainhouse Research examined use of collaboration tools such as Webconferencing, videoconferencing, and even voice conferencing before and after 9/11. Specifically, Webconferencing increased 61.5 percent, videoconferencing increased 24.5 percent, and voice conferencing increased 11.7 percent. The number of respondents who said access to collaboration technology was important to them increased from 44.3 percent to 63.9 percent after 9/11—almost a 20 percent gain.

Policy News

A snapshot of U.S. federal legislation and policy affecting workforce development and the HRD profession.

Hearing Held on WIA Reauthorization

The first congressional hearing on the reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) was held in September. WIA was passed in 1998 to consolidate a fragmented public-sector employment and training system and to better serve workers and employers. Congress will reauthorize the act in 2003. Testimony was provided to the House Committee on Education and the Workforce and focused on strengthening the WIA system.

These issues were highlighted during the hearing:
- the need to improve employer input and participation in the system
- the need to strengthen the performance measurement and accountability of the system
- the feasibility of integrating WIA and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) programs
- the need to examine funding levels for the system.

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NewsFlash

Got a bright idea? Need one? Go to newideatrade.com, an online forum that uses the reach of the Internet to connect intellectual property buyers and sellers. Membership and browsing are free; listing an idea for sale or posting a request for an idea costs a small fee. According to the site, the worldwide intellectual property market is worth more than US$100 billion. Get a piece of the action for yourself.