

# MAILBOX

**RESPONSES** sent to Mailbox are considered available for publication and may be edited for length and clarity. Please send comments to

**Email:** mailbox@astd.org. Provide your name, organization, and location. Your email address will be published unless you request otherwise.

**Mail:** T+D, 1640 King Street, Box 1443, Alexandria, VA 22313-2043  
**Fax:** 703.683.9591

**Website:** www.astd.org

**Contact the Staff:** Our email addresses are the first initial of the first name followed by the last name and @astd.org.

**Contributors' Guidelines:** Visit www.astd.org, click on T+D Magazine.

**Submissions:** Send to submissions@astd.org.

**For made-to-order or electronic reprints:** Betsy White, The Reprint Department, 800.259.0470 (bulk) or Advanced Information Consultants, 800.929.3789 (single copies)

**For permission to photocopy:** Copyright Clearance Center, 978.750.8400, www.copyright.com

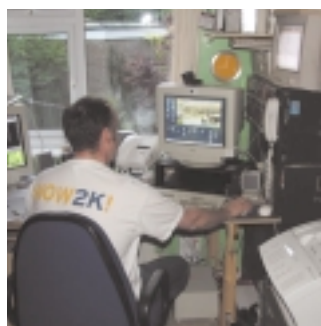
**Request back issues:** ASTD's Customer Care Center, 800.NAT.ASTD

**Questions about your subscription?** Contact 800.NAT.ASTD or subscriberservice@astd.org.

## Dear Telecommuter,

"Observations of a Telecommuter" by Darin Hartley [July] is outstanding, especially since he references my pesky midnight call. I'm the overseas fellow who just wanted to leave a voicemail. Never thought I'd make it into print.

If I wasn't a telecommuter already, the relaxed tone of the article would make me want to become one. Stuff that I've read about telecommuting so far seems to put the concept out of reach for



Toby in his home office

mere mortals by [implying that] one has to take somber telecommuting vows and commit one's life to strict discipline before being deemed fit to join the club.

I've been telecommuting for 18 months with EDS University, and I endorse Hartley's points about work and life becoming a "soluble mixture."

Working for a U.S. company in the U.K. means lots of work in the evenings, and a rigid work-life compartmentalization doesn't help overcome feelings of unfairness that occasionally arise.

Thanks for the useful resources section and the helpful hints.

*Toby Thompson  
EDS University  
Birmingham, United Kingdom  
toby.thompson@eds.com*

I enjoyed the telecommuting article in *T+D*. I telecommute about 50 percent of the time for an organization that has mixed emotions about telecommuting. Some of my time at the office is spent on visibility visits to address the very real issue of out-of-sight, out-of-mind.

I didn't know there were organizations to support telecommuting such as the two Websites Hartley mentions. I'll be sure to check them out.

*Laura Lucas  
llucas@mit.plant.mit.edu*

"Observations of a Telecommuter" is so focused on [home office] equipment (usually provided by the company) that Hartley misses some key points and glosses over others. Telecommuting can be an isolating and uniquely non-social way of working that many people are not suited for. The out-of-sight, out-of-mind problem should have been expanded on. Spontaneous conversations and meetings we take for granted when working in an office must be planned for when telecommuting.

Hartley would also serve telecommuters better by stressing the importance of establishing boundaries with

children. Others begin to question how much work is accomplished if the telecommuter is also babysitting. Not everyone is patient when trying to conduct business amidst a child's cries for attention.

The biggest disservice, however, is the photographs that [influence] the reader's first and possibly lasting impression of telecommuters. The pictures [convey] that telecommuters really are what everyone thinks—slipper-clad, bon-bon eating babysitters. The fine print in the corner and the editor's note in the front do little to detract from that.

In each picture, Hartley visually supports the negative label telecommuters fight so hard to overcome. Not all telecommuters work in jeans and Hawaiian shirts. Some actually dress for the office and set specific times for work.

I appreciate *T+D's* attempt to address some of the challenges faced by telecommuters. However, I believe Hartley's article did little to encourage companies to explore this alternative work environment.

*Judith Henry  
Independent Consulting  
Greeneville, Tennessee*

## Correction

The photo in CC:You (August) was not of World Famous Pike Place Market, the subject of the article, but of another fish market.