

By Susan Sales Harkins

You want to work from home, but your boss might not support the idea. Don't blame your boss -- it's a lot of change. Don't make the mistake of telling your boss that you'll be happier, and therefore more productive, working from home. Your boss won't care about your state of mind. Instead, spend a little time researching telecommuting statistics that your boss *can* care about. In short, show your boss how telecommuting will improve or help business.

#1: Your place is cheaper than theirs

Office space doesn't come cheap. Rented office space runs the extremes, but with an average of \$33 a square foot (per year), it adds up. According to [InnoVisions Canada](#), organizations can eliminate one office for every three telecommuters. Just a few money-saving examples should encourage any manager to consider your proposal:

- AT&T reduced office-space costs by 50%.
- IBM saved \$56 million a year after reducing office space by 2 million square feet.
- Merrill Lynch saves \$5,000 to \$6,000 a year for each office it eliminates.
- Georgia Power saves \$100,000 a year after reducing office space.
- The March 2008 issue of The TeleWorker reports that Dow Chemical's administrative costs dropped 50% and it attributes 1% of those savings to telecommuting.

Realistically, you're just one person, but you could start a trend. The movement has to start somewhere. If it's good for big business, why not yours?

#2: Your productivity will increase

It's hard to convince some managers that you'll be more productive at home. Seeing your little bobblehead lends comfort, albeit false security. Just because your boss can see you doesn't mean you're working. If your word won't get the job done, try statistics:

- According to a [2008 survey by Computing Technology Industry Association](#) (CompTIA), 67% of respondents said their organizations were productive thanks to part-time and full-time telecommuting.
- In the March 2008 issue of The TeleWorker, American Express claims its telecommuters produce 43% more business than officer workers.
- A [survey by the Massachusetts Division of Energy Resources and the Massachusetts Highway Department](#) reported an improvement in productivity: 82% to 87% of telecommuting employees felt they were more productive; 96.7% to 100% of supervisors reported increased productivity for their telecommuters.

Then there's the creative aspect, which is hard to quantify. Frankly, some of us get more work done between 3:00 AM and 5:00 AM than those at the office working 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM. Now, this is more about you than the business, but it won't hurt to let your employer know that you often work those extra hours, if you do.

The word is out: Telecommuting employees spend more time working when they're not commuting and interacting with co-workers.

#3: Employee retention will go up

Threatening to quit if you can't work from home is a bad idea; few of us are indispensable. However, if you have a long commute, working from home is a reasonable request. If you're a valued employee, working from home a few days a week is preferable to losing you to a company that's closer to home.

In CompTIA's 2008 survey, 37% of respondents said telecommuting improves employee retention. Another 39% said they have access to more qualified personnel, who don't always live within commuting distance, thanks to telecommuting.

A recent [study by The Journal of Applied Psychology](#) found that stress due to tense relationships at work is a major factor in the decision to quit a job. These people aren't hard to get along with, they just don't like office politics. Telecommuting, at least part-time, can reduce that stress and keep key people from leaving your organization. That kind of give and take has the added bonus of building company loyalty.

#4: You'll increase your billable hours

Anyone who bills clients directly knows how difficult it is to differentiate billable tasks from non-billable interruptions. When other people have access to you, they access you! At the end of the day, how much time did you actually spend on billable tasks? At home, you have fewer interruptions and that adds up to more billable hours. That means more revenue, quicker solutions, and more time for new clients, which means more money.

#5: You'll be running with the crowd

Everybody's doing it. [Robert Half Technology](#) surveyed 1,400 CIOs and found that 47% offered more flexible schedules, including telecommuting, to improve job satisfaction and build loyalty. Here are a few more national statistics from [WorldatWork](#):

- 12.4 million U.S. workers telecommute at least one day a month.
- The number of employees who telecommute one day a month increased 25% from 2004 to 2005.
- WorldatWork estimates that 100 million U.S. workers will telecommute by 2010.

#6: Your relationships will improve

The Journal of Applied Psychology study mentioned earlier found that telecommuting helped improve relationships between supervisors and staff. In a telecommuting environment, everyone works hard to stay in touch. They see each other less, but they often communicate more effectively than people sharing the same office space.

#7: It's the green thing to do

Being green isn't just trendy, it can save your company money. A study commissioned by the [US Consumer Electronics Association \(CEA\)](#) reported that telecommuting saves 9 to 14 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity per year -- the equivalent of one million U.S. households. That equates to energy savings for your company. How much will of course depend on the company's size and the number of employees who are telecommuting. The study also estimated that 3.9 million telecommuters reduce fuel consumption by about 840 million gallons and carbon dioxide emissions by nearly 14 million tons. While that won't change your department's bottom line, with today's gas prices, your boss might decide to start telecommuting too!

Traffic isn't just about fuel and emissions. [The Texas Transportation Institute concluded](#) that gridlock (traffic) cost \$78 billion annual, or 4.2 billion lost hours. Instead of sitting in traffic, you could be working, if you worked at home.

#8: Politicking will go down

It's hard to share gossip from a home office. Yes, there's always e-mail, IM, and phone calls, but it just isn't the same. You might not be prone to participating in office politics or gossip, but sharing the same space with those who are affects your attitude and even your work. Nothing zaps productivity and morale like gossip and rumors. A home office can filter (protect you from) the undesirable aspects of sharing space with miserable human beings. If this is a problem, believe me, your manager already knows it. Showing sensitivity to the issue and wanting to separate yourself from it is admirable and professional.

Warning: Not every boss will agree with you. Some believe you should be above such shenanigans and you will appear petty if you even hint at such problems. Know your boss before you put this one on the table.

#9: You'll be more accessible

In an episode of *Seinfeld*, George napped under his desk. Everyone thought he was *very busy* because he was never available. He was really just asleep. If you're not in your office, maybe you're in the copy room, or a conference room, or the library -- there are many places to hide at work.

If your boss calls your home office and you don't answer, just where are you? Realistically, you could be busy with a biological call, letting the dog in, letting the cat out, and so on. The point is, you can't hide at home for very long. You must return a voicemail or e-mail quickly because your boss knows you're not in the copy room, a conference room, or the library. You're at home, and your boss knows where you live.

Not only are you more accessible to your boss and co-workers, you're more accessible to clients. Business hours and time zones don't limit you. (On second thought, maybe you might want to keep that benefit to yourself.)

#10: It's a weather-proof arrangement

In January 1994, my employer shut down for a full week after Mother Nature dumped about 20 inches of snow on the region. Depending on where you work, this might be an important issue. Weather won't disrupt your commute across the hall.

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