



Teleworking: Real Value for Virtual Workers

Teleworking is on the rise—transforming the way companies do business and delivering benefits that can lead to competitive differentiation.

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Executive Summary

Teleworking is on the rise—transforming the way companies do business and delivering benefits that can lead to competitive differentiation. But are organizations making as much of their telework initiatives as they could be?

This is a critical question as the number of teleworkers continues to grow. By 2011, more than 122 million employees worldwide will be doing at least some work from home, according to Gartner Dataquest. In the United States, almost 40 million individuals will telework from their homes at least one day a month by this time.¹

With a telework strategy in place, organizations realize a number of key business benefits:

- Decreased expenses on office space, labor, communications, and administration
- Greater ability to attract the best employees by using telework as an enticement

- Enhanced business continuity planning
- Improved productivity, thanks to increased employee satisfaction
- Extended geographical reach of hiring
- Easier compliance with “green” initiatives and regulations aimed at reducing commuting
- Improved customer satisfaction and retention

Unfortunately, many companies are unable to fully realize these benefits. That’s because teleworking initiatives tend to be a patchwork or ad hoc arrangement involving multiple devices, contact points, and communications links—which introduces inefficiencies and negates the advantages companies are seeking.

What’s needed is a way to ensure the ability of teleworkers to communicate quickly, reliably, and accurately at all times. A comprehensive, unified approach comprising products, services, and partners can answer this need—helping organizations maximize the business benefits of teleworking while reducing IT management complexity.

¹ Gartner Dataquest, “Dataquest Insight: Teleworking, The Quiet Revolution,” May 2007



Companies have also found that teleworking can help in cutting labor costs. Since employees who participate in a telework program can reduce or eliminate expenses associated with commuting and purchasing office-appropriate attire, companies are able to offer slightly lower salaries as a trade-off. Businesses can also attract employees in more cost-effective regions, without having a physical presence in that area.

Teleworking is proving useful in enticing and retaining the most qualified workers. Simply put, employees like teleworking, since it offers them a better work-life balance. In one survey of job-seekers' criteria, the option to telework was second only to salary in deciding in whether to take a job.⁷ And AT&T found two-thirds of workers offered jobs by competitors remained with the company, citing telework as a major factor in their decision.⁸

Finally, companies with a telework program in place essentially also have a business continuity plan in place. When employees have complete communications capabilities at their homes, they're ready and able to work in the event of an emergency or disaster.

Greater Productivity

Of course, when employees are more satisfied, they tend to be more productive. And statistics on the relationship of teleworking to productivity bear that out.

The Colorado Telework Coalition, for example, reports that American Express teleworkers produce 43% more business than their office counterparts.⁹ British Telecom found that productivity rose 31 percent among its 9,000 employees who telework, thanks to reduced disruption, stress, and commuting time.¹⁰

In fact, reduction of commuting time by itself can have a direct impact on how productive employees are. Assuming a workforce of 100 employees whose average daily commute is cut by 50 minutes a day equates to more than 22,000 hours of time that could be used productively. Even if just half that time is applied to business, it represents a significant gain in productivity.

Anecdotal evidence also suggests that teleworkers start their days earlier, end them later, or both. Absenteeism and emergency time off are also reduced. The bottom line: The flexibility and better work/life balance that teleworking enables helps make employees more productive—with direct benefits to the business.

Extended Geographical Reach of Hiring

In the traditional workplace, finding new employees follows a simple script: Advertise in the region, hire in the region, and make sure that person lives close enough to make it into the office every day.

But teleworking does away with the physical constraints of recruiting and hiring. Teleworkers can live—and work—literally anywhere. With a much wider net to cast, companies don't have to confine their search for skilled workers to geographic region; that the office is in Philadelphia is no obstacle to hiring the talented candidate in North Carolina who prefers to stay there.

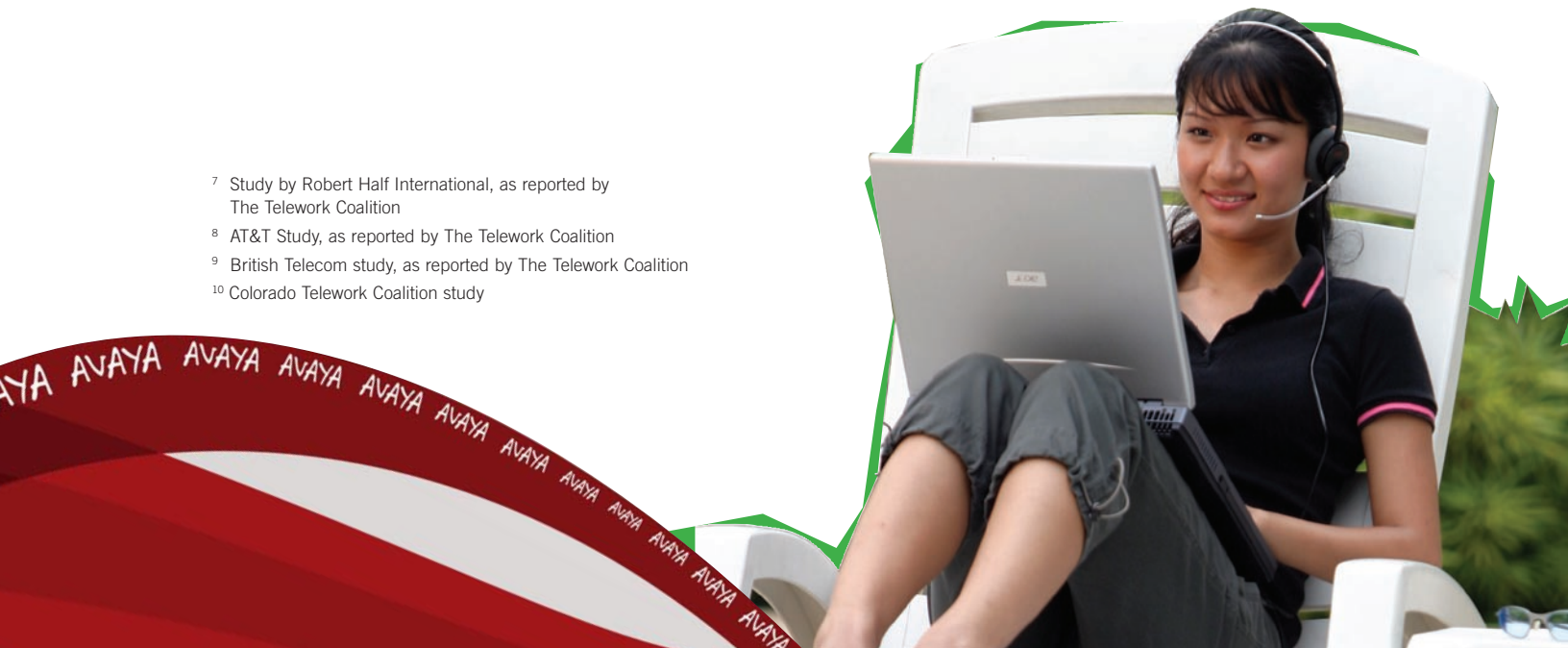
Extending the reach of hiring delivers a couple of corollary benefits as well. It eliminates the expenses associated with physical relocation, and it gives organizations an opportunity to save on labor costs by hiring from areas where salaries and cost-of-living are not as high.

⁷ Study by Robert Half International, as reported by The Telework Coalition

⁸ AT&T Study, as reported by The Telework Coalition

⁹ British Telecom study, as reported by The Telework Coalition

¹⁰ Colorado Telework Coalition study



The numbers paint a compelling case for implementing a telework program. Assuming a carbon dioxide emission rate of 1.1 pounds per mile, a daily 32-mile round-trip commute to work results in 4.4 tons of carbon dioxide annually. Using our example of 100 teleworkers, over the course of a year they will avoid driving 800,000 miles and reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 440 tons.

Easier Compliance With Environmental and Reduced-Commute Initiatives

Governments around the world, at every level, are taking up the challenges of reducing carbon emissions and cutting congestion. What does that mean for corporations? The likelihood that more regulations will be imposed.

But teleworking programs offer companies a clear-cut path to regulatory compliance. And those that act now can get a jump on their efforts—while enhancing their image among partners, customers, and the general public.

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Improved Customer Satisfaction

In a competitive marketplace, companies need to focus even more on forging better relationships with their customers. Ensuring their satisfaction is essential—and teleworking can help.

Teleworking allows organizations to hire and place employees closer to the customers they serve. That proximity makes for faster and more direct communication between staff and customers. And for employees who work at customer sites, the presence applications enabled by teleworking keep them closely linked to their counterparts at headquarters—allowing real-time collaboration and easy access to the resources and information they need to serve their customers even better.

Why Aren't Companies Realizing the Full Benefits of Teleworking?

Teleworking delivers undeniable benefits, but many companies are still unable to take advantage of them. As enterprise employees increasingly work from home, organizations are struggling to address a number of issues—from communications complexity and information security to management objections and employee concerns. These concerns usually arise out of the ad hoc approach to telework at many organizations, where multiple devices, contact points, and communications links pose obstacles.

¹¹ Climatecrisis.net study, 2006



Communications Complexity

From the standpoint of CFOs and CIOs, teleworking may simply seem too unwieldy in terms of management. They believe teleworking is insufficiently scalable and inherently inefficient, because of the need to manage and monitor multiple devices and technologies. They find that it can also be expensive, since teleworkers using residential landlines can't be connected through the corporate long-distance dialing plan. And they feel that tracking employee phone records is burdensome, while reimbursing residential landline, cell, and Internet service expenses is time-consuming, not to mention costly.

Additionally, they note the difficulty in providing teleworkers with a true workplace experience. Missing from most telework arrangements is the secure, seamless environment that really makes a teleworker feel she is in the office, among colleagues, working smoothly and productively without encountering any issues in terms of connections, communications, or compromised data.

Management-Driven Objections

Many executives are accustomed to a traditional workplace environment, where each employee comes to the same physical location at more or less the same time, is physically present (and easy to find) for a full day, and leaves at more or less the same time. Breaking from this traditional view of the workplace (and the work day) consequently presents challenges for managers who may not be as familiar with it—and who thus raise understandable objections.

Among the most common: That it's too difficult to manage employees when you can't see them, and that staff morale suffers from lack of face-to-face contact. In short, many top managers feel the traditional workplace is simply better—which might very well be the case in organizations that haven't implemented a comprehensive, unified telework plan.

Employee Concerns

It's not just senior managers who may have difficulty adjusting to the world of telework. The employees who telework can empower also raise concerns—again, understandable ones, given the fundamental changes that telework brings about.

Many, for example, cite the difficulty in collaborating when working from home, which they also fear could make them less productive than their counterparts at the office. They're also impeded when it comes to smooth communications; teleworkers typically lack standard functions and tools, like voice mail, conferencing, call transfer, and directories. On the other hand, they often have too many phone numbers—from landline to cell phone to home phone—which makes them hard to reach and makes phone tag a regular (and frustrating) part of the work day.

Employees also share with management a dislike of the expense reporting process. Not only does it mean taking time from the work day to deal with paperwork; it also means having to wait to be reimbursed for the money they've paid to their voice and Internet providers.

The Telework Solution

Clearly, companies need to cut complexity and reduce inefficiencies if they want to realize the full benefits of teleworking. They need a better way to manage geographically dispersed teleworkers, through greater end-user visibility and monitoring, better implementation of corporate security standards, and streamlined handling of call records. They need to eliminate the costly and complex processes associated with multiple phone lines, service and support vendors, and expense reports. And, of course, they need to provide a communications experience for teleworkers similar to that of employees in the office.

Addressing these goals—and realizing the full business benefits of teleworking— means selecting a communications partner that not only provides technology expertise, but that also understands the nuances of your business operations and that can provide a communications roadmap to fit your needs and goals.

The Avaya Unified Communications for Teleworkers solution can help companies fully realize the business benefits of teleworking. Comprising a full range of software, hardware, services and eco-system partners, it enables enterprises to meet their teleworking program goals—and gives them the flexibility to choose the capabilities that best meet employees' needs.



Avaya's Unified Communications for Teleworkers delivers powerful headquarters capabilities directly to employees' home offices. It allows co-workers, clients, and vendors to connect with teleworkers as seamlessly and easily as if they're located at a corporate site. IP softphones let teleworkers place and receive calls from any PC—calls that Avaya routes across the public telephone network to ensure the highest quality. Teleworkers can further enhance communications via instant messaging, presence, click-to-dial, and video. And to keep IT management and end-user downloads to a minimum, Avaya also offers a Web-based softphone delivering the same capabilities as software-based applications.

In addition, power users and teleworkers on the go are always connected. Employees who require a physical phone to take advantage of headquarters capabilities can use an Avaya IP telephone—with a VPN tunnel back to the main office—for a complete corporate communications experience. Avaya can also extend desktop capabilities to mobile devices, delivering intelligent communication capabilities such as conferencing, transfer, and call logs. And one-number dialing ensures that teleworkers are always easily within reach—and eliminates the frustrating and time-consuming incidents of phone tag.

Further, integration with leading productivity suites like IBM® Lotus® Sametime® and Microsoft® Office Communications Server means Avaya Unified Communications for Teleworkers minimizes retraining and helps enterprises leverage their existing application investments to reduce costs.

But Avaya also knows that without proper planning and design, a teleworking deployment could suffer from complexities that cut into the very benefits companies are seeking. That's why it also offers comprehensive services as part of the Unified Communications for Teleworkers solution. Specifically, Avaya addresses each of the following stages of a teleworking deployment:

- Teleworker Assessment, begins with developing an understanding of the company's current business strategy and ends with a report highlighting the financial and operational impacts of a teleworker program at that organization
- Installation and configuration, including architecture design, platform integration, test planning, and support strategy

- Diagnostics and monitoring, including end-to-end application monitoring, remote resolution of system-generated alarms, and consolidated reporting
- Support, including proactive technical and product support for IT staff; product patches, updates, and upgrades; remote backup administration; and system/network performance management

Through the Teleworker Assessment, Avaya works to implement each of the following components that are necessary for an effective teleworking program:

- Detailed current-state cost analysis
- Worker segmentation and profile description
- Security, compliance, and business continuity assessment
- Technology, business process, and policy recommendations
- Opportunities for change ranked by complexity and impact
- Detailed business case for change
- Solution design and implementation plan, including resource requirements and timelines

These items underscore the fact that a properly defined and managed teleworker communications project requires a range of expertise. Application specialists, solution specialists, advanced solution architects, and communication consultants must all come together to address the complexity and scope of the teleworker initiative. Equally important is keeping applications current—which requires a software update and service plan. Avaya covers all of these bases, so that companies can be sure they've chosen the right partner for a successful teleworker implementation.

Complementing the Avaya approach to teleworking is an extensive network of partners, ensuring that companies have access not just to best-of-breed technologies at all times—but to the specific technologies that meet their most pressing needs at any given time. These include wireless networking hardware and applications, IP security appliances, toll-free fax communications, and unified security architecture technologies, to name a few.

CASE STUDY

Companies that have put the Avaya Unified Communications for Teleworkers solution to use are reaping the benefits. Consider LifeNet, the nation's largest nonprofit organ donation agency and tissue-banking system, whose work truly is mission-critical. Matching organ- and tissue-donors with designated recipients demands anytime, anywhere connectivity for the teams handling these urgent transactions—and rock-solid reliability to ensure consistent communications service.

LifeNet's Donor Center is on call around the clock, handling 250 to 300 calls every day of the year and linking donor families, doctors, and transplant teams. Speed is clearly essential to the job, but so is easing the stress of the

workers who take these calls. And Avaya's Unified Communications for Teleworkers solution meets both of these requirements.

"The ability to communicate effectively at the office, on the road, or from home provides our people with tools to do the jobs that we feel are so important while offering the opportunity for well-needed mental downtime," says Kevin McPhee, manager of Telecommunication and IS Help Desk Services, LifeNet. "The rapid pace of the healthcare world means we really benefit from these types of advancements."

Deploying the Avaya solution has also helped LifeNet achieve a number of measurable business benefits, including:

- Increased effectiveness. LifeNet saw a 10 percent increase in the number of lives saved and the number of tissue grafts supplied to hospitals and physicians in the last year, thanks to more reliable, effective communications.
- Improved staff utilization. Mobility features and functionality have made it easier for LifeNet to redeploy its workers to different offices and different states, while retaining business continuity.
- Improved responsiveness to donor calls. The reliability of LifeNet's communications infrastructure means that the company is able to efficiently field each and every donor call that comes in.

In short, according to McPhee, LifeNet got exactly what it was looking for. "The five '9s' reliability of our Avaya Unified Communications solution gives us the peace of mind that we'll have dial tone—no matter what," he points out. "We'll always know when an organ offer is being made to us. This lets our supervisors and staff members sleep at night."



Conclusion

Competing in today's marketplace means confronting a number of challenges, and for many companies, teleworking is emerging as a strategic tool for meeting their goals. But even as organizations seek to take advantage of the teleworking benefits—from reduced operating costs and extended reach of hiring to greater employee productivity and compliance with “green” initiatives—they're encountering obstacles. Management concerns, IT complexity, corporate cultures, and even employee reluctance are keeping them from realizing the full benefits of teleworking.

The Avaya Unified Communications for Teleworkers solution provides at-home employees the tools that help them stay connected, productive, and satisfied—and IT staff the technology to minimize management complexity. Comprising a comprehensive suite of software, hardware, and services—and supported by a network of industry leading partners—it enables organizations to harness all the benefits of teleworking, and to leverage their teleworker initiative as a competitive differentiator.

AVAYA INTELLIGENT COMMUNICATIONS

As the leader in IP telephony, Avaya sees the “manifest destiny” of intelligent communications as inevitable: the expansion across the enterprise of communications technologies and applications delivering singular and compound value.

Avaya has and will continue to invest heavily in software research and development to continue to further expand the frontiers of intelligent communications. Nowhere is the trust in Avaya's technology more apparent than in the independent software development community: 4,000 software vendors are currently writing to the Avaya platform, comprised of more than 16,000 developers. In addition, Avaya's support for multi-vendor solutions, such as its rich integrations with Microsoft and IBM, enable organizations to leverage investments already made and have a choice in the business applications they most need to prosper.

Reliability, scalability, security are the bedrock attributes that Avaya will never compromise. In addition, Avaya's adherence to open standards means that enterprises can adopt other technologies crucial to its operations that work in concert with Avaya's complete and innovative solutions. Simplicity is built-in, whether at the infrastructure or the desktop, within the network or for the individual user, making certain Avaya's innovations are equally available, manageable and usable.

Avaya is helping customers realize their vision of a reinvented workplace by delivering on the promise of intelligent communications. The newest communications revolution has begun and Avaya is transforming business and changing lives.