

Who needs an office?

Modern technology allows people to work at home, on the road or even while travelling in the same way as they would work in the office. This is the biggest component of flexible working: whether it's for a day a week or does away with the office completely.

Advantages

For the Individual

- Reducing – or cutting out – travelling time makes a big difference to the amount of productive time in the day
- The time freed up can be used for family, social and community activities – improving work-life balance
- Reducing travel also cuts stress levels
- And the less people commute, the less stressful commuting is for those who do.

For the Organisation

- People who work from home tend to work longer and more effectively. People seem to share the time saved from not travelling between work and leisure
- Illness and absenteeism are reduced amongst remote working staff, too
- Real cost savings can come from having fewer people in the office: reduced utilities bills, smaller premises, less car parking space – even no office at all
- All of which can also reduce the organisation's impact on the environment.

See www.sustel.org for some great examples of all these.

Disclaimer: This leaflet is intended to provide only a brief introduction to aspects of remote working for small businesses and should not be regarded as fully comprehensive advice.

Remote Working

BRIEFING NOTES



Working from home

All you need is paper, pen and a phone. It's a great way of being able to concentrate on a piece of work without distractions. Add a computer and an internet connection to this and all the infrastructure of the office is available at home.

Nowadays this is usually achieved through a Virtual Private Network (see below) to securely connect the computer at home with the computers in the office. Forward their telephone calls and it's almost like being in the office.

Apart from being able to concentrate on work, the big advantage – particularly in London – is cutting out commuting. This can make a huge difference to people's lives, making more time available for home life and reducing stress.

Working on the road

For people whose job means travelling, the same technology lets them use home as a base, rather than the office. Swap the computer at home for a portable laptop and they can connect to the office systems from hotels, coffee shops or even client premises – anywhere there is an Internet connection (an advantage of Wi-fi – see below).

Mobile Working

Going one step further, mobile phone technology allows computers to be connected even while moving or out of doors. The Blackberry device (see below) is a particular example of this. This is particularly useful for reps filing orders, drivers making deliveries, engineers working on client sites and in any job where time is of the essence.

Issues

For the Individual

- Anyone working from home needs the discipline to get on with the work. While there may not be colleagues around, there are plenty of other distractions
- Time management can also be a problem. The flexibility of being able to work at any hour is very useful, but the work still needs to be done
- Losing touch with colleagues and the organisation (and being overlooked for promotion) is a concern many have with remote working. This is something the organisation must tackle as a whole: making sure that all staff remain part of the team and continue to work together.

Organisation

- Managing remote workers is the big issue for many organisations – and managers. It requires a different approach: keeping tabs on what people are delivering rather than whether they're at their desks
- It's also important to make sure that management and staff understand how they will work and what their new responsibilities will be. Remote working is a major change and must be handled as such.

