



Case Study: Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council

“Since the inception of our telework program and the development of our initiatives, we have realized many positive goals.

First, we have seen an increase in productivity. Productivity has increased due to the fact that staff can complete tasks at home which require complete concentration without the everyday distractions of the office. When office distractions are removed, the time to complete such tasks is diminished considerably. Further, our staff has a tendency to perform some of the workplace tasks, such as checking email, from home. This technological ability to retrieve emails from home has also allowed for more productive time while in the office.

From a community standpoint, and through teleworking, we are doing our part by contributing to the reduction of traffic congestion and pollution. By allowing our employees to telework we are reducing the amount of vehicle miles traveled for our region and community.

And finally, the telework program is an integral component of our continuity of operations strategy to more successfully overcome natural and man-made disasters by allowing our employees to work from home or a satellite office in the event of such a disaster.”

-Manny Pumariega, Executive Director

Telework Program Summary:

The Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council (TBRPC), in cooperation with Bay Area Commuter Services and the Florida Department of Transportation created *Telework Tampa Bay* as a regional program to help employers explore teleworking in the workplace. In support of the program, TBRPC decided to test the concept of teleworking as a part-time work from home option for TBRPC employees. Management felt that teleworking could help reduce congestion, enhance employee productivity and strengthen employee morale.

FAST FACTS:

Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council

Industry:

A regional planning organization that provides a forum for planning the community's future and sharing solutions among the 43 jurisdictions in the Tampa Bay region.

Location:

Pinellas Park, Florida

Statistics:

- Eleven active teleworkers in the pilot program, 20 employees
- Telework twice per month, more at the discretion of the manager.
- Program was formalized in 2004

Business benefits:

- A happier and more committed workforce
- A decrease in the cost of hiring and recruiting
- Reduced commute times for employees
- More efficient and productive employees

Challenges:

- Ensuring seamless communication between teleworkers and the public
- Ensuring communication between teleworkers and managers

Transportation impacts:

- Reduced vehicle miles traveled by 8,500 annually
- On average, teleworkers save 48 minutes each day and spend that time with their family, working more, and/or taking care of personal business

A six month pilot study was completed in early 2005. Results showed a positive response from both managers and employees on issues ranging from communication to productivity. Employees were especially appreciative of the reduced commute time – saving an average of 48 minutes each telework day. Additionally, the 2004 hurricane season presented TBRPC with an opportunity to use teleworking as a component in the agency's emergency preparedness plan. Working from home during severe weather occurrences kept cars off the road and employees productive and less stressed.

How was the pilot started?

A steering committee was created that included staff from senior management, human resources, legal and IT. The committee appointed a telework coordinator, Jessica White, to guide pilot efforts. A series of meetings of the steering committee in mid-2004 focused on a variety of issues including liability, connectivity, participant selection and evaluation. These discussions led to draft policies and an agreement.

Once the final policies were approved, a total of 11 employees and three managers were identified for the pilot study.

Teleworkers were given the option of starting in September 2004. Frequency of teleworking was offered at 2 days per month and left up to the managers' discretion if additional days were requested by the employee. All participants were required to attend a training session that outlined the program policies and procedures; explained technology requirements; and defined the management-by-objective principles that would be implemented in outlining work tasks to be completed from home.

"We felt that most employees should be offered the option of teleworking," states Jessica White. "We needed to see how it worked and sort out any kinks during the pilot phase. I wanted this program to be a success for each participant, for TBRPC and for the community."

What hurdles needed to be overcome?

Three key areas required additional attention during program planning. These included:

- ✓ Maintaining telephone response turnaround. Employees needed to either check messages on a regular basis when working from home or set up their office phone to forward to the home office. Having seamless communication was a priority for the steering committee.

Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council

Reasons for implementation:

- Improve recruitment and retention
- Reduce employees' commute
- Reduce absenteeism

Selection criteria for teleworkers:

- Volunteer to participate in pilot
- Manager approval
- Continuity of work product remaining the same or increasing
- A home office with proper equipment meeting the minimum requirements set by IT Manager

Staff teleworking:

- Executive Staff
- Professional
- Managers
- Technical

Elements of the program:

- Policy and program guidelines
- GoToMyPC

Annual emissions savings (adjusted for 2005 factors):

- VOC (Volatile Organic Compounds): 21,760 grams / 47.6 pounds
- CO (Carbon Monoxide): 233,580 grams / 515.1 pounds
- NOx (Nitrous Oxide): 34,017 grams / 74.8 pounds



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- ✓ Compliance with the “Sunshine Act”. As a public agency, TBRPC staff must comply with open record laws. To ensure that all records remained available, employees were not allowed to save documents to their home computers.
- ✓ Non-exempt participation. Federal Fair Labor Standard Act requirements place additional responsibilities on the employer for time monitoring. Only exempt employees were selected to participate.

Telework Program Results:

Three managers participated in the study. Each was given an opportunity to report on employee performance and related issue for the telework pilot. None of the managers had previously supervised teleworkers. All managers agreed to participate because of a desire to see gains in productivity. Other reasons included improve morale, recruitment, and reduce vehicle miles traveled throughout the region.

In the survey, all managers reported no problems with communication or completing work on time. One manager expressed some concern about a teleworker’s ability to effectively interact with office staff while working from home. Most felt that the program was good for the organization and one manager reported gains in productivity. The one challenge most managers reported related to the ability to hold group/staff meetings.

All 11 teleworkers completed the six month survey. Results were very positive.

The principle tasks performed when working from home include: writing, word processing and research/reading. Two-thirds of the participants report that the time saved from not commuting gave them more time to complete work.

Of the 11 participants, only one reported no gain in morale. All felt that both the quality and timeliness of completing work had stayed the same or improved. Only one participant reported challenges in communicating with the manager regarding the teleworking arrangement. Most participants felt that teleworking was good for the organization and five felt that their productivity had increased.

If all teleworkers were to work from home one day each week during the year, the reduction in commute related travel would equal approximately 17,000 miles reduced.

What are the benefits for Emergency Preparedness?

Being prepared for an emergency, whether related to weather or other site disasters, is an important element to consider for all businesses. TBRPC found teleworking offers the option of allowing employees to work from home during emergencies. In 2004, the Tampa region was faced with four major hurricane alerts. Many schools were closed. Residents were encouraged to stay off the roads and bridges. Working from home gave employees an option to work and avoid the challenges of getting into the office.

“Being prepared is critical for Bay Area businesses,” reports Betti Johnson, TBRPC Emergency Management Planner. “It has been a unique opportunity for me to both try teleworking as an employee and to promote it to local businesses for emergencies . . . Recent weather related events have heightened interest in emergency preparedness strategies and disaster recovery.”

For more information about *Telework Tampa Bay*
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Case Study Prepared by *Telework Tampa Bay*

Telework Tampa Bay is a program of the Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council, Bay Area Commuter Services,
and the Florida Department of Transportation