

WORK UNCHAINED: Workshifting and the Competitive Edge of The Anywhere Office®

by:

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TheAnywhereOffice.com



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TABLE OF CONTENTS:

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	2
INTRODUCTION	2
BENEFITS OF WORKSHIFTING	5
THE PROBLEM: AD-HOC IMPLEMENTATION OF MOBILE WORK	7
EXECUTIVE LEVEL SOLUTION: ICC WORKFLOW AUDIT™	8
KEY TOOLS TO CONSIDER.....	10
INFORMATION, COMMUNICATION, AND COLLABORATION ASSESMENT	12
INFORMATION	12
COMMUNICATION	15
COLLABORATION.....	17
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	19
ABOUT PHIL MONTERO	21
ABOUT CITRIX ONLINE	21
REFERENCES:.....	22

Work Unchained: Workshifting and the competitive edge of The Anywhere Office®

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Business as usual no longer involves working in a traditional workplace at set hours. Today's workforce is more mobile than ever, and every day more people are working from virtual offices, client sites, home offices, coffee shops, airports, hotels, and any number of remote workplaces. Companies that take an ad-hoc approach to this work-style will struggle, while those with a strategic, planned approach will reap the benefit and flexibility of distributed work.

Phil Montero, Founder of YouCanWorkFromAnywhere.com and TheAnywhereOffice.com, explains how you can analyze your organization's workflow and turn your ordinary office into *The Anywhere Office*®, giving you the ability to work with people around the world as if they were across the hall.

This eBook will discuss:

- ✱ The competitive edge to be gained through workshifting.
- ✱ The biggest mistakes we make when mobilizing our workforce.
- ✱ How to evaluate your needs for information, communication, and collaboration to create a flexible work-style.

INTRODUCTION

Jack Nilles, physicist and engineer, coined the terms *telecommuting* and *telework* in 1973, during the first documented pilot telecommuting project (with a major national insurance company). In the almost 40 years since, we have seen the terminology change and multiply: workshifting, mobile work, remote work, ework, road warrior, digital nomad, home office executive, virtual team, distributed team; as we have discovered that there are many different shapes and approaches to working digitally across time and distance.

After ten years into the 21st Century, one thing is very clear: This is an idea whose time has come. We appear to be at a crossroad where the functionality and affordability of available technology is finally meeting or exceeding the demands of today's globally dispersed and faster paced business.

But what worked before doesn't always translate. One of the main shifts is that employees and individual team members need to make *constant* choices about how to move a project forward, and they need to be *good* choices. Project groups, who have often never met face-to-face, have to share a vision of the final goal or completed deliverable, and they need up to the minute information so they can make the best possible decisions toward the mutual goal. They have to trust each other and they have to be connected no matter their location.

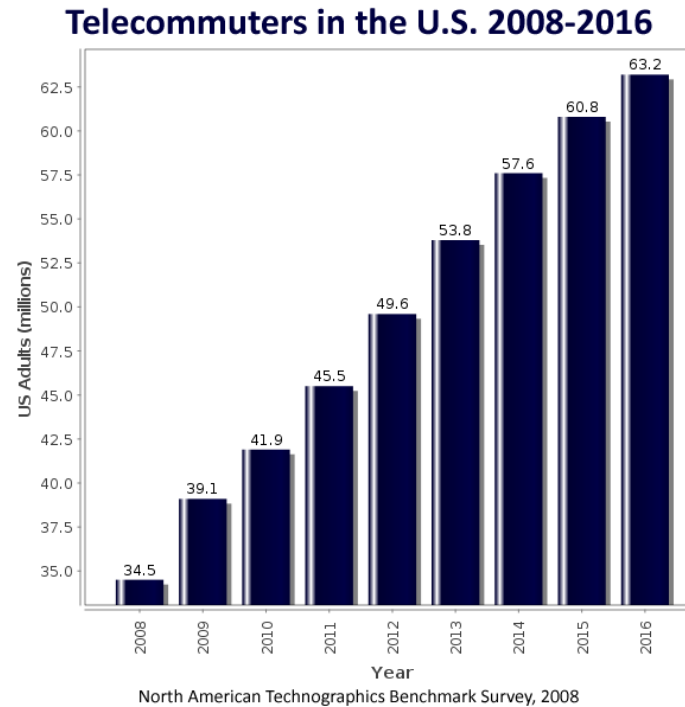
"In knowledge work the task is not given; it has to be determined. 'What are the expected results from this work?' is the key question in making knowledge workers productive. And it is a question that demands risky decisions. There is usually no right answer there are choices instead. And the results have to be clearly specified, if productivity is to be achieved."

Peter Drucker: writer, teacher, and consultant specializing in strategy and policy for businesses and social sector organizations.

International Data Corporation (IDC), in a forecast released in February 2010, *Worldwide Mobile Worker Population 2009-2013 Forecast*, projects that the world's mobile worker population will pass the one billion mark this year and grow to nearly 1.2 billion people - more than a third of the world's workforce - by 2013.

The scenario in the United States alone is no less striking: Forrester Research Institute reports, 'Today, more than 34 million U.S. adults telecommute at least occasionally. Fueled by broadband adoption, better collaboration tools, and growing management experience, the

U.S. telecommuting ranks will swell to 63 million, from 15.4% to 25.9% of US adults, by 2016. Those 29 million new telecommuters lined up five abreast would stretch from New York to LA! (*US Telecommuting Forecast 2009 To 2016*, March 2009)



Incidentally, flying ONE of those workers the same distance for a business meeting (from NY to LA, approximately 5000 miles roundtrip) puts roughly 1 ton of CO₂ into the atmosphere. Over 25% of many corporations' carbon footprint is travel. Eyenetwork estimates that if a third of business meetings were held virtually, it would reduce annual global emissions of CO₂ by over 120 million tons.

But even these mounting statistics don't tell the whole tale. The argument continues over what constitutes a telecommuter and who and what is being counted and measured – hoteling, office sharing, day extenders, home based businesses – all of these phrases describe different types, or flavors, of remote or distributed work.

Even if it's not your own teams that are dispersed you are likely working with clients, vendors, consultants, and outsourced departments who are distributed. I've heard it said that if more than 90 feet separate two employees they are more likely to use communication technology than to interact face-to-face. The bottom line is that we don't really need a special word for it any more; this is just the way we work.

BENEFITS OF WORKSHIFTING

So this should be good news, right? After all, a recent report from the Conference Board, *Meeting the Challenge of a Dispersed Workforce* (Nov. 2009), finds 80% of employers in agreement: The payoff for enabling employees to work at a distance is such that it's worth the extra cost.

When measured empirically, or even just weighed pragmatically, the benefits of distributed work are clear – and include real dollars and cents savings, increases in productivity, and softer benefits such as greater employee satisfaction and work-life balance; which for organizations translates into lower absenteeism, less turnover, and better recruitment potential.

According to the International Telework Association and Council, on average, workshifting yields:

- ✿ 22% increase in employee productivity.
- ✿ 20% decrease in employee turnover.
- ✿ 60% decrease in employee absenteeism.

It's no surprise when you consider the myriad of tangible ways which remote work can impact an organization:

1. **Reduce workforce support costs** – both the cost of real estate or physical office space and the travel expenses involved in getting everyone to the same place.
2. **Increase productivity** – a recent Telework Survey at Cisco Systems (2009) resulted in approximately 69% of the employees citing higher productivity when working remote, and 75% saying the timeliness of their work improved.

3. **Business continuity** - reducing the risk of disruption from terrorism, natural disasters, traffic congestion, and other physical site related events.
4. **Improve recruitment, decrease attrition** - attract and retain better employees without geographic limitations, giving your businesses access to a larger and more varied workforce. 72% of employees say flexible work arrangements would cause them to choose one job over another. (*The Edge Report* - Robert Half International Survey, 2008)
5. **Get people's best efforts** - empower staff to plan their workload and segment their working day in a way that suits them and their own working style.
6. **Reclaim travel time** - allow staff to dedicate a greater proportion of the working day to value-added activity. Research by the Trades Union Congress, representing nearly seven million working people from all walks of life, revealed that UK workers spend 21.8m hours travelling to and from work every day, with £266m worth of working time lost to travel each day.
7. **Increase organizational agility.**
8. **Reduce absenteeism.**
9. **Improve employee satisfaction** and work/life balance.
10. **Establish a positive reputation** as a great place to work.

Workshifting Savings Assumptions

- Productivity Increase = 27% • Reduction in Real Estate = 18% • Reduction in Office Building Electricity = 18% (calculations are net of extra home office electricity) • Reduction in unscheduled absences = 63% • Reduction in attrition = 25%

Workshifting Individual Savings Assumptions

- Save employees between \$1,800 and \$6,800 in transportation and work-related costs • Commuting miles enable employees to gain back the equivalent of 2-3 weeks worth of vacation time per year — time they'd have otherwise spent commuting

Lister, Kate, *Undress For Success -The Naked Truth About Making Money at Home*, John Wiley & Sons (2009)

So why is it that so many businesses, organizations, and individuals continue to struggle with workshifting? If this new work-style is so pervasive, and benefit ridden, why are we not on the golden road to new heights of productivity and job satisfaction?

THE PROBLEM: AD-HOC IMPLEMENTATION OF MOBILE WORK

The problem is that most organizations didn't PLAN to implement distributed work; the transition was often gradual, and without premeditation. By that, I mean that their approach to working as dispersed, virtual teams was born of need, and typically just made use of the tools available.

People were increasingly required to work together across greater time and distance and they adopted tools and methods ad-hoc; it was not deliberate, and not undertaken with any real strategy.

- ✱ People are thrown technology and expected to sink or swim.
- ✱ Little thought is given to how tools can best be used.
- ✱ Trust and teamwork break down over distance.

Meanwhile, the businesses and organizations yielding the benefits that resound from the studies and surveys have typically implemented programs methodically – recruiting individuals suited to the work-style and utilizing confirmed best practices like formal telework agreements and pre-determined guidelines.

Of course, if you find yourself working this way out of necessity – and it just sort of ‘happened’ - you can’t just stop the flow of business and start over with a brand new plan. But you also can’t just lumber forward and say to your people, ‘Work virtually better.’ What you CAN do is take a step back to get a perspective on your process and workflow in order to isolate and highlight areas for improvement and adjustment.

The majority of struggles and inefficiencies faced by distributed employees and teams can be addressed by strategic decision making about how to use which tools and technology to communicate, collaborate, and share information.

EXECUTIVE LEVEL SOLUTION: ICC WORKFLOW AUDIT™

Regardless of what stage of distributed teamwork you’re in, or which flavor your individual remote work comes in, you can benefit from this simple exercise to organize your thinking. Look at your workflow and work-style, and separate all of your tasks and responsibilities – the day-to-day functions of your job – into 3 categories: information, communication, and collaboration.

Then, with those lists in front of you, consider what tools and technology you are using and how; think about what types of strategies and guidelines you have in place or need to institute; and think about how to better manage your process and solicit feedback from your team members and distributed employees.

Also, the listing process can be enlightening – you will find overlap and it will raise questions. Does that weekly meeting belong in communication or collaboration? Maybe a regular conference call that you thought was communication turns out to be simply an information-sharing event – and some report or document creation that is being handled as information sharing would actually be more effective as a collaborative meeting.

I developed the Information, Communication, Collaboration (ICC) Workflow Audit™ as a way to wrap my mind around the *methods* of an organization's distributed teamwork, regardless of specific field or industry. Virtual teamwork is not a one size fits all scenario: So rather than say, 'use this tool for this purpose and this tool for this purpose, and have this guideline in place for communicating, etc...' the ICC Workflow Audit™ is about knowing what questions to ask and what limitations and abilities to consider when workshifting. This will allow you to examine YOUR work in light of its mobility, and determine how best to conduct that work when distributed – after all, you know the demands and requirements of your work and your business better than anyone.

Choose tools and processes that will:

- ✱ Streamline information flow.
- ✱ Improve decision-making.
- ✱ Enhance productivity.

It's important to realize that there's more to remote work than just having the right technology in place. The strategies you use and the guidelines you design are just as important as the tools you choose. Many companies initially see virtual teaming as a technology challenge, but it is at least as important to remember that any kind of teamwork is primarily a human endeavor and the tools should be used to bring the people together.

A shift in management perspective is also necessary to guide the process and work through the transition and any unforeseen, which is not to say unexpected, complications. You are going to have to adjust your initial decisions and choices moving forward, and refine the way you use your technology. This is normal and natural and the necessary path to actualizing all of the benefits of making this workshift.

KEY TOOLS TO CONSIDER

The most obvious place to start is with mobile computing devices; these are now permanent fixtures of the business world and can practically be considered 'givens' – but take the time to consider the software and services that connect the people behind these devices.

When choosing technology it is important to note that one tool can often address numerous needs or challenges in each category. A shared, Web-based office space can contain discussion boards, document sharing, calendars, contacts – and a remote access service can address file sharing, program access, email and calendar access, and may even take the place of a VPN.

Remote Access: This allows you to access your office computer from any location connected to the Internet. Get reliable, convenient, and secure access to email, files, programs, and network resources from home or the road at anytime. You have full control of the computer; you simply work on your PC or Mac as if you were sitting in front of it, even though you may be thousands of miles away. You can either work on your computer remotely or transfer files between the computer you're using and the one you're accessing. With remote access you have the full resources of your office computer from anywhere.

Instant Messaging (IM): Being able to send a quick message to someone and have a real time chat is much easier than sending a bunch of emails back and forth. IM is a great tool for having an impromptu meeting or quickly getting questions answered. It also has a high level of presence because you can see when others are available or working.

Virtual Offices: A Web-based virtual office, or intranet, is an ideal online communication tool for businesses, departments, groups, and teams. These password-protected Websites can serve as a secure, online virtual office and central location to share documents and contacts, hold conferences, track appointments, and have discussions. They are the perfect tool to keep everyone synchronized and in touch. Most virtual offices will include the following basic features:

- ✱ **Announcements:** let everyone know the latest news or the next deadline. Link to press releases, new policies, or other important information.
- ✱ **Calendar:** organize, coordinate, and moderate projects and teams.
- ✱ **Contacts:** store contact information for customers, co-workers, clients, suppliers, vendors, and partners.
- ✱ **Discussions:** an electronic forum for ongoing discussion on the Web.

- ✱ **Document Library:** create folders for sales brochures, project reports, form-letter templates, policy and procedure guides, graphics, and photographs.
- ✱ **Polls:** choose the questions and answer choices and everyone can vote online. Results can be automatically tallied and displayed.

The best thing about these services is that because the virtual office exists on a secure server on the internet, all members of the team can access the project information from any PC or Mac that has Web access whether they're at the office, at home, or on the road.

VIRTUAL MEETINGS

Did all of these meetings need to be face-to-face meetings? That's a question I find people don't ask often enough. Could some of them have been just as effective without everyone in the same physical place? Our natural reaction is to always meet face-to-face if it is possible; but quite often there is a cost in both time and money just getting to and from these meetings.

Online Conferencing: A meeting space online where you can present a slide show to the group of people you invite to a meeting. Other features like real time polling for feedback and complete real-time document sharing (any file or application on your system, not just slide shows) make this an ideal way to have a meeting and collaborate without all the travel. Screen-sharing can transform a normal conference call by allowing everyone to share visuals and adds the benefit of ensuring they are all on the same page.

Conference Calls: A simple 30 minute meeting can take 2 ½ hours depending on where you live and the length of your commute. Many times these meetings could easily have been conducted with a simple conference call. They are affordable and easy to setup.

As you can see, there are a lot different ways to meet and collaborate digitally. The key is to think about the purpose for the interaction, and what level of 'functionality' would best serve the productivity of that time. If you are discussing sensitive issues, or this is the first meeting for a new team, it might be best to meet face-to-face. But if the point of the meeting is to brainstorm, discuss ideas, or create and edit a group report or document, there may be ways to do that without all the wasted time and money of everyone converging in a central location.

INFORMATION, COMMUNICATION, AND COLLABORATION ASSESMENT

I will briefly outline below the thought process and the key questions and consideration involved in performing your own ICC Workflow Audit™. It is intended to allow you to take a step back and get a perspective on your workflow process and the mobility of your work.

- ✱ Initial assessment:
 - Information
 - Communication
 - Collaboration
- ✱ Choose the right technology.
- ✱ Apply it thoughtfully.

Take a deliberate and systematic approach:

1. Ask questions to choose the right technology.
2. Develop strategy and guidelines for thoughtful application.
3. Isolate key points for management to consider.

INFORMATION

When it comes to your information needs, your primary concern is access to files, data, and research. How it will be synchronized, updated, and exchanged. If you are someone who works from the road or remote locations often, the challenge is how to access your files or take your data with you when you are away from the office.

QUESTIONS

- ✱ What does your team need?
 - Documents



- Contact management
- Shared calendars
- Group project management/task lists
- Research
- Reports
- Marketing documents
- ☼ Are special programs or data needed?
- ☼ Should data be centrally located?
- ☼ How do you edit data & synchronize information?

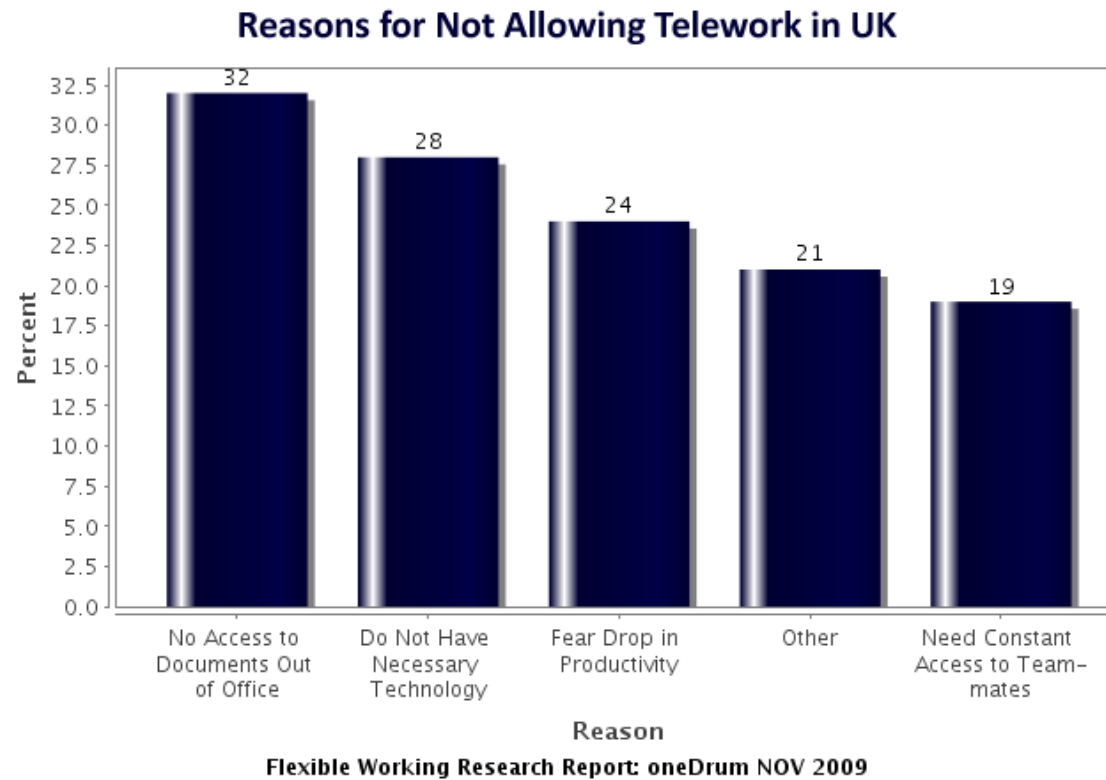
STRATEGY / GUIDELINES

- ☼ Minimize “sequential use” information. It often needs to be gathered and passed on, creating a waiting period where people can’t move forward until they get the information they need. This causes bottlenecks and decreases productivity.
- ☼ Create a centralized knowledge base where project teams and management can share best practices across the organization. This will help with the learning curve as you hone and refine distributed teamwork within the particular context of your structure and organizational culture.
- ☼ Look for opportunities to improve the method or speed in which information flows throughout the organization; these opportunities can often be found in a new or unknown function of a piece of technology or service.

MANAGEMENT

- ☼ Is the data that your group needs as current and easy to find as possible?
- ☼ If the amount of data is great, are there team members that can serve as topic experts or gatekeepers? This can speed the research and delivery of certain types of information. You can cut down redundancy of work by putting the most requested information together in various formats.
- ☼ Review information needs on a regular basis. Information needs can change frequently depending on the nature of your teamwork.

In November 2009, oneDrum – a software development firm headquartered in London, England – commissioned a survey of office-based small and medium businesses (SMBs) in the UK to find out what was driving remote work, and what was holding it back. The results of this survey, *Annual Flexible Working Research Report: The Key to Competitive Advantage for the UK's SMBs*, revealed that many SMBs do not allow their staff to work from home because of poor access to documents or improper technology.



COMMUNICATION

Choosing the right tools is only part of communicating well. It's also important to discuss certain communication guidelines within your organization or team.

Setting up these simple guidelines will make sure there is no miscommunication and that everyone has a clear understanding of expectations. These strategies and the right choice of tools will help you avoid a common cause of stress and frustration among mobile workers and virtual teams.

It is also important to consider your needs for informal communication when choosing your tools and technology. A lot of organizations make a big mistake by not giving attention to the importance of informal communication. Knowing other team members and building rapport and trust are vital to success. You have to be pre-meditated about nurturing informal communication when your teams or project groups are distributed. How will you replace some of the team building and water-cooler chat that happens organically on co-located teams?

You won't choose just one type of communication; you will choose the right method for the right project. Your type of projects and type of work you do will dictate what tools you use.

QUESTIONS

- ☀ Methods/Tools
 - Phone
 - Instant Message
 - Text Message
 - Email
 - Discussion Board
 - Voice Mail
 - Conference Call
 - Online Meetings

- ✱ Timeliness
- ✱ Presence
- ✱ Clarity
- ✱ Synchronous vs. asynchronous
- ✱ Access to project/task accomplishments

STRATEGY

- ✱ Preferred methods of communication – Some people conduct all business by phone; others prefer email as their primary form of communication. Find out the communication styles of your co-workers and let them know which forms of communication you prefer.
- ✱ Use a mix of communication methods – This keeps open channels of information flowing and allows individuals to gravitate towards their preferred forms of communication when appropriate.
- ✱ Message turnaround time – You might email someone expecting a quick reply only to find that they only check email once a day. Making these expectations clear can avoid a lot of problems.
- ✱ Encourage informal communication:
 - Team building conference calls
 - Virtual happy hour or lunch
 - Discussion boards for movies, books, music, hobbies
 - Share photos, bios, and personal interests of team members
- ✱ Which methods work better for individual tasks/projects?
- ✱ Having set hours of availability.

MANAGEMENT

- ✱ Clear communication guidelines.
- ✱ Communicate about how you are going to communicate.
- ✱ Create an environment that supports open and free exchange of ideas.
- ✱ Develop trust:

- Trust that you and teammates are reachable when needed.
- Encourage informal social interaction and community building.
- ☀ Meetings and schedules – have regularly scheduled times for conference calls, reports, and updates. By having these meetings at a set time each week, or month, it's easier to schedule your other duties around them. It also helps keep project goals focused and everyone on the same page.

COLLABORATION

Look at synchronous vs. asynchronous methods of collaboration and try to incorporate both – especially if you work across time zones and/or shift changes. People often fall back on email for asynchronous collaboration, but it is not always the best tool – consider discussion boards and the use of online meeting recordings for review.

It is also important to determine if decisions are often made as a group during meetings. If so, you'll want to consider tools that support live polling or other features that support rapid decision-making.

QUESTIONS

- ☀ Asynchronous or synchronous?
- ☀ What styles of collaboration are needed?
- ☀ What are the sizes and functions of your teams?
- ☀ Are decisions made as a group during meetings?
- ☀ The level of a team's collaboration will increase the more they are comfortable with their tools. With what style or tool does your team seem to be most comfortable? What do they need?
- ☀ Do project teams work as unified groups? Or do these teams tend to get broken down into smaller groups that work in tandem?

STRATEGY

- ☀ Choose the right combination of tools for each project or type of team. Not only are there different types of projects but different teams have different natures and needs depending on their responsibilities.

- ✱ Consider whether customers, clients, vendors, and outside consultants often need to take part in the collaboration that brings a project through to success. This may change your decision about the best approach or tools to us.
- ✱ For many teams, collaboration is enhanced by developing more structured policies. Look for things the group is doing successfully and use these as models and ideas for future development and best practices.

MANAGEMENT

- ✱ Use face time to focus on relationship building rather than filling it with things you can do apart, like reviewing documents, etc... This builds important trust and respect which increases the effectiveness of collaboration.
- ✱ Solicit feedback on what can be done to improve collaboration. Use informal questions, evaluations, and/or project reviews.
- ✱ Encourage information exchange - rewarding groups more for collaborative efforts than individual achievement helps to encourage that atmosphere.

Collaboration Tools Anchor Telecommuting Success

One of the keys to telecommuting success is collaboration tools: eliminating the strictures of distance and bringing people and resources to employees wherever they are. Four key technologies will make the difference between a lonely, disconnected telecommuter and an energized, plugged-in information worker:

Instant messaging is the linchpin of remote worker success.

Meeting-centric collaboration suites unite conferencing, messaging, and information tools. (cont . . .)

Telephone support brings the human touch to lonely home workers.

Social networks and rich employee profiles supplant the water cooler.

Schadler, Ted *US Telecommuting Forecast, 2009 To 2016*; Forrester Research, Inc. (March 11, 2009)

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The global economy and increasing speed with which we conduct business makes the rise of distributed work and virtual teamwork inevitable. What is more, the benefits of workshifting are real.

The key to success is taking the time to really think about *how* you work. Choosing the right tools and thoughtfully applying them to how you handle information, communication, and collaboration can turn your office into *The Anywhere Office*®, allowing you to work with people around the world as if they were across the hall.

Once you've chosen the best tools for your work-style, learn to *really* use and manage them. Get some training or coaching to help you master the features and maximize your efficiency.

Also, remember that technology changes daily and new tools are cropping up all the time, so it is important to make your assessment an ongoing process. Periodically perform an ICC Workflow Audit™ to re-assess the needs and functions of your team and organization.



Choose the appropriate **technology**.

Implement the right **strategy**.

Manage the process effectively.

Ten Ways The Telecommuter Surge Will Define The Future

When one in four U.S. adults — almost 26% of working adults — is working from home, the very nature of work and life is transformed. Over the next decade, we will see 10 big changes:

NUMBER #1: Companies' digital footprint will become as important as its physical footprint. When companies interact with their employees as well as their customers and partners online, the corporate digital footprint becomes more important than its offices. Instead of investing in that new office lease, a firm should be spending its money in team sites, online conferencing solutions, extranet collaboration services, and, eventually, online meeting spaces.

Schadler, Ted *U.S. Telecommuting Forecast, 2009 To 2016*; Forrester Research, Inc. (March 11, 2009)



ABOUT PHIL MONTERO

An advocate of working virtually? It would be more precise to say that Phil Montero is an evangelist for distributed work. He's been the spearhead of the remote work movement for more than a decade: teaching how to work effectively from a home office, the road, or practically anywhere.

The consultant, writer, speaker, and coach is the founder of YouCanWorkFromAnywhere.com – a site that assists organizations to leverage mobile work technology and create effective virtual teams.

His blog, TheAnywhereOffice.com, takes a big picture approach to the philosophies and strategies of navigating today's digital lifestyle and the changing world of work.

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ABOUT CITRIX ONLINE

Citrix Online provides secure, easy-to-use online solutions that enable people to work from anywhere with anyone. Whether using GoToMyPC® to access and work on a remote PC, GoToAssist® to support customers or GoToMeeting® to hold online meetings and Webinars, our customers – more than 35,000 businesses and hundreds of thousands of individuals – are increasing productivity, decreasing travel costs and improving sales, training and service on a global basis. A division of Citrix Systems, Inc. (NASDAQ: CTXS), the company is based in Santa Barbara, California. For more information, visit www.citrixonline.com or call 805-690-6400.

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