



Has Telecommuting Finally Become Mainstream?

News

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The article, "Has Telecommuting Finally Become Mainstream?" featured in *CIO*, discussed how as the desire for workplace flexibility continues to be an accepted fact of contemporary working life, more and more businesses are wrestling with how exactly to embrace – or curtail – telecommuting as the new norm.

Kathie Caminiti discussed some of the benefits of telecommuting and how to properly implement a work from home policy.

It's a very good thing for employers in certain instances because they're saving on rent and real estate costs," said Kathie. "Where they're using a bull pen of desks for employees but they don't have to have a desk for every employer on their roster – that's a significant cost savings."

Kathie said that the employer needs to set clear guidelines of "that the job duties and responsibilities in performance are adhered to" in the form of a telecommuting policy. "The employer needs to make clear that job duties, responsibilities, job expectations and adherence to company rules apply to employees in the brick and mortar office as well as remotely."

The employer also needs to make clear – and the employee needs to understand – that the "work at home arraignment is not a substitute for other personal obligations" like child care or elder care. "They are working and they are expecting to be at work fully attendant to their time."

Any work-from-home policy should also address who's going to pay for what -- including the cost of equipment and technology and maintenance of those materials -- and the at-home office space. If an employee is not salaried, how will the company and employee determine a clear line of what's work and what's not? "That's important because if somebody is working off the clock just because they happen to have a home office, they should be paid for their time worked," she said.

The company and employee should also review the employee's homeowners' or rental insurance, and that any policy "require the employee working at home to indemnify the employer if an accident were to happen," she noted. "To use a very simple example: If somebody trips over your laptop cord in your home office on your premises, the telecommuting agreement would likely include a duty to indemnify the employer so the employer doesn't get sued by the person who tripped over the cord."

She also recommended adding a clause that the employer can end the work from home agreement at any time. Because while trends are shifting away from the commuting into the office, it's not going to work for everyone.

"Technology allows us to work from just about anywhere. From an employee perspective that's a real advantage. From the employer perspective, there is an absolute advantage, but the risk is that the employee's not dedicating full intention to the job," said Kathie. "That's why you need a clear understanding of the arrangement."

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