

## Employer Telework Case Study

### Employer

American Speech-  
Language-Hearing  
Association  
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### Contact

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### Background

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) is the professional, scientific and credentialing association for more than 127,000 members and affiliates who are speech-language pathologists, audiologists, and speech, language, and hearing scientists in the United States and internationally.

The mission of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association is to empower and support speech-language pathologists, audiologists, and speech, language, and hearing scientists by: advocating on behalf of persons with communication and related disorders, advancing communication science, and promoting effective human communication. ASHA began planning their telework program in August of 1994 and conducted their first pilot in January of 1995. The

timeline and components of ASHA's telework program are as follows:

- August – October 1994 – form staff team and create plan
- November 1994 – present to executive team and staff
- December 1994 – training, focus groups and data gathering
- January – March 1995 – conduct pilot program
- March 1995 – focus groups, data gathering and presentation to executive team

20% of the staff currently telecommute on a regular basis, but many others flexplace, or work from home in the evenings and over the weekend.

### The Telework Experience

ASHA distinguished two types of telework – flexplace and telecommuting. Flexplace is a cooperative arrangement that allows an employee to work on a specific project from home or other work site outside the National Office on an occasional basis. Flexplace is a less formal arrangement than Telecommuting. All staff are eligible to participate, subject to their coach's approval.

If you are using Flexplace, ASHA's expectations are that:

- You need to work on a particular project or tasks

- You want/need seclusion and may request not to be interrupted. (These requests must be pre-planned and discussed ahead of time with your coach.)
- Someone should be able to contact you in the event of an urgent/critical need.
- Flexplace is not to be used in lieu of childcare.
- Opportunities are granted at the discretion of the coach.
- Your coach may request that you adjust your plans if issues should arise related to providing adequate coverage in your unit.
- Coaches should monitor productivity and availability and address issues that do not further the goals of the team.

Telecommuting is a cooperative work arrangement whereby an employee works from home or other work site outside the National Office for a regularly scheduled portion of each week. An eligible employee can telecommute up to 60 percent of the time he/she is scheduled to work (for full-time employees up to 3 days a week) with the consent of the coach and appropriate Facilitating Team member. It is expected that the employee will be as accessible as his/her on-site counterparts. The employee communicates with other employees in the National Office, members, customers, and other business contacts via computer, telephone, fax, or other equipment.

Eligible employees for telecommuting:

- Can be either full-time or part-time/exempt or nonexempt
- Must have been employed by ASHA for at least 1 year
- Must have worked in present position for at least 6 months
- Must have "meets expectations" on most recent performance management review
- Must have a clearly defined work space

- Must have access to needed references, computer equipment, and telephone systems

If you are Telecommuting, ASHA expects that:

- You will be as available to others in the office as you would be if you were here in the office. You have simply changed your work location.
- Your availability should be obvious, either via a note on your computer monitor, doorway, door, or some other obvious place, so individuals looking for you, get an idea of where/how to find you.
- You should be available for meetings (by telephone).
- You will provide contact information (a phone number) so that someone in the office can contact you, if necessary. (Note: Please do not post your home telephone or personal cell phone numbers...either provide that information to others in your team or to some other staff person(s) with whom you are working, and post a note to let others know who has your contact information.)
- Your voicemail message should indicate that you are working away from the office and provide contact information for the individual(s) who knows how to reach you. Also, provide an indication of how often you will be checking your voicemail, and make sure you check your voicemail regularly.
- Your telecommuting days/times should be regular.
- Telecommuting is not to be used in lieu of childcare.
- Opportunities are granted at the discretion of the coach.
- Your coach may request that you adjust your plans if issues should arise related to providing adequate coverage in your unit.
- Coaches should monitor productivity and availability and address issues that do not further the goals of the team. customer service from customer service

representatives who telework. The theory is that teleworkers have fewer distractions when working remotely. For teleworking employees, relief from worsening congestion and the increasing costs of commuting have provided increased employee morale and satisfaction.

## Challenges & Investment

As telework is considered a natural fit for the culture of ASHA, there was very little management resistance to the program. In most cases, teleworkers are responsible for acquiring all of the hardware and software necessary for their participation. However, in accordance with their goal to keep staff technologically up to date, ASHA offers a benefit that allows employees to purchase computers and related equipment/software, etc. through a payroll deduction plan for their use at home. Employees choose their purchases, have ASHA produce a check for payment, and then pay back ASHA over the course of 26 pay periods or less.

## Program Outlook

A number of organizational conditions are changing at ASHA that make this an ideal time to reassess their needs and how well they are being met. ASHA will be moving to a new building requiring a longer commute for some staff. In addition, ASHA will no longer be assessable by Metro Rail. Commuting time in the area is also on the rise due to traffic congestion. The cost of gas is increasing resulting in increased commuting costs. Aspects of ASHA's disaster recovery plan rely on staff being able or perform crucial portions of their jobs from home.

A Remote Access Team was established in 2007. The team has conducted a thorough survey of the staff to find out what teleworkers need to be able to

perform their key responsibilities from home for their position. ASHA is assessing which of these things are currently available and rank what else might be needed in the order of importance/greatest impact. Modifications to the program will be made according to the impact of each change and investment in time and resources.

## Success Tips

- ✓ The early development of a cross-functional team responsible for designing and piloting the telework program was critical to it's success.
- ✓ Formalizing participation requirements and expectations was important in focusing the program on the most suitable employees and job-tasks. Not excluding any positions by team or title helped to place the focus on meeting ASHA's business needs.
- ✓ Collecting data on the success and any issues with the program paid off by giving the team objective data on which to base the decision to continue the program and what modifications needed to be made.