



Employer Telework Case Study

Employer

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Background

GeoConcepts Engineering, Inc. (GeoConcepts) is a woman/minority-owned business that provides professional geotechnical engineering, hydrogeologic, and environmental consulting services to private and public sector clients. Our headquarters is located in Ashburn, Virginia, which provides convenient access to downtown Washington, D.C. and surrounding metro area. GeoConcepts is a certified 8(a) firm with the Federal government and is certified as a disadvantaged business enterprise (DBE) by local government and public agencies.

GeoConcepts provides professional geotechnical engineering services for projects during design and construction. In addition to geotechnical engineering services, we provide a wide range of environmental and hydrogeologic services.

The Telework Experience

GeoConcepts was one of the first firms to join the Telework Virginia! Program in 2000. Vivian Lewis, the President of GeoConcepts, had prior experience with telework and decided that the benefits could be leveraged into aiding in the start-up of their new business. GeoConcepts' telework program officially began in 2001.

“Telework Virginia! was a great mechanism to help us jump start our business, attract employees and increase morale.” GeoConcepts' primary goal for their telework program was to retain and attract highly qualified employees who might otherwise be concerned by the length of their commutes. GeoConcepts is a family oriented company that is committed to being an employer of choice in the Metropolitan Washington region. At the conclusion of the two-year pilot program with Telework Virginia! GeoConcepts had five people teleworking, mainly women who were allowed to balance their work and family requirements more easily and improve their quality of life.

Geo Concepts allows employees to include schedule flexibility into their program to increase its effectiveness. “We have an administrative assistant who can get a jump start on typing and data entry early before her kids wake up. This benefits her and employees who can have their work completed before they get into the office. With the availability of remote workstations and the ease of being able to scan and PDF, we have been able to allow employees to Telework with minimal investment in technology.”

“Gas prices are rising and the commute is getting worse. Some people are better served logging in and being productive than spending all of that time in traffic.”

Challenges & Investment

The most significant challenge to Geo Concepts’ program was the unknown of how much initial investment and time that might be required to kick-start the program. As a relatively new firm the costs of hiring a consultant and purchasing the necessary hardware and software were a potential obstacle. However, Telework, VA! via MW-COG were able to help mitigate this cost and advise on how to best start the program.

A disadvantage to the program is that some of Geo Concepts’ employees do not live in Virginia, but in outlying areas in Washington D.C., Maryland or West Virginia and thus are not able to participate in the Telework Virginia! program. “The fact that Telework Virginia! has a two-year limit may have kept us from expanding the program to a larger extent.”

Program Outlook

Geo Concepts continues to expand the program by identifying additional job-types that are suitable for telework. Field Inspectors have been the latest addition to the program. Field Inspectors are able to complete their paperwork remotely rather than traveling through congested traffic to enter data or drop off their paperwork in the office. This saves them time and increases their productivity. They are also able to use their laptop as a means of communicating to the office via email as well as taking pictures of a site and transmitting them to the office.

Helpful Resources

The staff at MW-COG was a very effective intermediary between MW-COG, Geo Concepts and the Telework Virginia! program. The assistance in funding for laptops was instrumental in building support for the program, especially during its early stages.

Success Tips

Take the time to develop policies for the teleworking employee so that there is a clear understanding of expectations. Also, envision how best to incorporate the Telework VA! Program into your firm’s business plan and determine how it can impact and aid in your firm’s growth. As it is only a two year program, one needs to take advantage of all of the benefits from the onset. Clearly defining the program from the get-go is key. Telework VA! Is a win/win for everyone!