

Employer Telework Case Study

Employer

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Background

KPMG's telework program allows eligible employees to perform some of their work at home or at an alternative work location. The program is an integral part of KPMG's culture of flexibility and one of the many Alternative Work Arrangements (AWA) available at the Audit, Tax and Advisory firm.

In order to remain a competitive employer of choice in its industry, KPMG decided long ago that it needed to be flexible regarding where and when people work. "We wanted to be more attractive to both potential and current employees," explains Kristen Piersol, Manager of Workplace Solutions – Midatlantic Area. "So much is changing in the way people work, and offering flexibility through telework is just one example of how KPMG adapts to the changing workplace and offers its employees a great place to build a career."

When creating a formal program, KPMG needed to ensure that telework made business sense for the firm and that it would not create a financial disadvantage. Firm leadership also recognized that, because some performance managers might not always be supportive about employees going on a telework arrangement, the firm would need to stand by its commitment to the program. Piersol says the firm's leadership continues to work hard to set the tone, communicate telework's benefits, and encourage local leadership teams to be advocates for the program.

Benefits

Providing a telework program can result in greater flexibility for employees, which can lead to higher job satisfaction and improved retention rates. Many telework participants at KPMG are proud of their ability to work from home. They feel the arrangement binds them to the firm, because telework helps them achieve work-life balance when they need it.

For some employees, the ability to telework helps them navigate through challenging personal times when, for example, an ailing child requires regular doctor visits or an elderly parent needs special care. The telework option at KPMG often provides employees with the flexibility to endure challenging times, while remaining an active contributor to the firm.

Requirements and Eligibility

Eligibility for participation in the telework program is determined on an individual basis, depending on an employee's job description, career development plan, business needs, and other factors. A formal telework policy and "frequently asked questions" are posted on KPMG's Intranet, clearly spelling out participation requirements. For example, performance managers and teleworkers must incorporate one or more of the following considerations and success metrics into their agreement: work volume/productivity, firm member satisfaction, client satisfaction, coworker/team satisfaction, effect on coworkers or team, work quality, work process redesign, senior management perception/buy-in, performance (individual, team), chargeability, attendance/punctuality, morale/loyalty, turnover/retention, recruitment (attraction), public relations, and career development.

Telework Process

Whether teleworking formally or informally, almost all employees participate in the program at some point during their careers at KPMG. For employees located at client sites, participating in telework informally can mean working part of the day at a client site and working the remainder of the day

from home instead of traveling to the KPMG office. For others, informal teleworking might involve occasionally working from home early in the morning to avoid the morning rush hour, and then traveling to the office mid-morning and working the remainder of the day in the KPMG office.

Formalized telework arrangements, on the other hand, are often used by those employees with a greater need for structure and a regular schedule—for example, employees just returning from maternity leave, or pursuing a graduate degree. These formal arrangements require a comprehensive discussion between the employee and the performance manager, using a discussion guide to outline the expectations and parameters of the arrangement as well as periodic reviews.

Formal arrangements at KPMG are intended to be temporary—unless the employee was hired specifically on a work-from-home basis. “Temporary,” however, could mean as long as a few years. The duration of the arrangement depends on KPMG’s business needs and the employee’s needs. A change in the employee’s position or job assignment could mean a change in the telework arrangement.

“KPMG is full of high achievers and career-oriented people,” observes Piersol. “So, both accountability and structure play an important role in the organization—and in the success of teleworking.” Performance managers are required to conduct additional reviews of teleworking employees throughout the year to make sure each person’s performance and productivity meet firm standards. And if an employee is working from home, no one hesitates to call him or her at home.

Helpful Resources

Ceridian Lifeworks provides KPMG with training sessions relating to work-life balance issues. “We have relied on them to do training on telework issues,” says Piersol — especially for any employees who might be interested in learning more about details of the flexible work arrangement program. Training on flexibility is built into our performance manager training.

Success Tips

- ✓ Define rules, policies, procedures and other details when setting up the program.
- ✓ Clarify expectations regarding availability, flexibility within their schedules, and communication

between the individual and their team.

- ✓ Help people understand the big picture. They need to be aware of the overall benefits to the firm, clients and themselves. They will also need to know they will need to be flexible, communicative and carry their fair share of the team’s responsibilities.
- ✓ Teleworkers have to be open and “transparent” about their work arrangements. Team members are watching teleworkers, their hours and their availability. If co-workers think a teleworker is not picking up his or her share or is “pulling one over,” the perception can be detrimental to morale and make the program look bad.
- ✓ Ongoing communication is vital. Employees, managers and coworkers need to know teleworkers’ schedules and how they can be reached.
- ✓ Make an example of those who excel at telework arrangements; it is a good way to dispel myths and encourage others to participate.

Program Outlook

Given the current demand for workplace flexibility, Piersol expects that KPMG’s current – and future – employees will continue to jump on the telework bandwagon. She says, “Over the years, we have been able to retain high-performing individuals, thanks in large part to the flexibility offered by KPMG’s telework program. As our cultural working norms change, KPMG will adapt to meet the needs of our employees in our continuing journey to be an Employer of Choice.”