



How Tele-working Works Best: *Preparing Organizations for the Future of Work*

What is a Research Working Group?

A Research Working Group (RWG) is a collaborative project at The Conference Board that brings peer companies together in a rapid deep dive and targeted focus on a compelling business issue. When firms across industries with similar concerns come together and are guided by subject matter experts, there is a rich transfer of ideas and knowledge. The result is a comprehensive report or other deliverable designed to shape a platform for enterprise-wide action and impact.

Research Brief

As corporations strive to improve productivity and collaboration among their workforce, the trends of the future predict a workplace in which many more employees are virtually tethered to their companies, rather than geographically onsite. As a result, companies need to prepare for a rise in tele-working. Studies show that between 2005 and 2008, the number of Americans working remotely at least one day a week rose by 74%, and nearly half the US workforce may be viable candidates for tele-working. It is also increasingly seen as a highly desired workplace benefit.

For some organizations, challenges include corporate culture changes and revamping facilities and support systems. To expand or implement a successful tele-working program, both talent management processes and technology infrastructure need to be evaluated. All companies need to take a human capital perspective on this issue, as the greatest change will be in the relationship between employer and employee. The business case for tele-working includes benefits ranging from a reduction in real estate costs, to an assurance of business continuity, to an enhancement of the employer brand and attracting a new generation of innovative workers. Sustainability can even play a role, such as when Booz Allen Hamilton recently instituted remote working in their Washington, D.C. offices to lessen the impact of commuting on the environment and on their staff members.

The Conference Board is launching a Research Working Group in March 2013 to explore how corporations can gain advantage from increased use of tele-working and receive the highest benefit for both the employee and the employer. This Working Group will investigate strategies for designing best practice tele-working programs, leveraging technology, measuring the impact of tele-working, gaining competitive advantage in talent recruitment and retention, and supporting managers to derive productivity from increased tele-working across the enterprise in the future.

We seek to address the following business questions in three broad categories:

- **How we function currently:**
 - Reviewing the trends for tele-working in the United States by industry, job function and demographics, which roles and skill sets are best fit for tele-work programs?
 - What is the business case for tele-working? Who are the key stakeholders? What is the impact to a company's culture?
 - What organizational conditions and technology tools best facilitate collaboration and productivity for a remote, distributed workforce?

- **What about the human factor:**
 - How can tele-working programs enhance talent acquisition and development, including the impact on employee engagement? How can it help retain employees at different life stages?
 - How do social collaboration providers impact on your capabilities and team dynamics?
 - What training and support do employees need as the structure of the workplace changes? What communication methods, employee evaluation methods and performance metrics are most effective?
 - How do managers need to shift how they supervise people remotely?

- **Aspirations for the future:**
 - Where is this leading? How should workforce strategists be thinking ahead? What can we look forward to in the future of tele-working?

Led by Alice Snell, former Vice President, Research for Taleo, this working group will convene 15-20 companies that seek to develop a competitive advantage by being on the forefront of this seismic change in the workplace. Supported by The Conference Board's Human Capital and Labor Market teams, the group will produce both hard data to help companies plan their organizational structure, as well as identifying an array of promising practices to facilitate their transition to this growing working style.

Format& Takeaways

Launching **March, 2013 in New York**, this Working Group will be last about 6 months. The group will meet 3 times in-person to share their own practices and challenges in a confidential, hands-on environment. Together with top specialists, thought leaders and researchers, they will build tools and frameworks to effect change throughout their organizations. This collaboration will result in a comprehensive summary report comprising detailed findings, conclusions, and recommendations for action.

Each company will send two participants from their teams, and substitutes are welcome to attend meetings, if needed. There will be virtual meetings and small group teleconferences in between to continue the Group's collaboration. The participants typically commit 2-4 hours a month to the project, outside of the in-person meetings. The working group will conclude in the early summer with the release of the report of findings.

Participation fee: \$18,000 per company covers all materials, access to the research, meetings and meals. This fee enables two executives from each company to participate in the meetings, but does not include travel & hotel to in-person meetings. RWGs are only open to member companies of The Conference Board.

To join or for further information, please contact Daria Lamb, Director of Research Working Groups: Daria.Lamb@conference-board.org or 212-339-0428.

The Conference Board is a global, independent business membership and research association working in the public interest. Our mission is unique: to provide the world's leading organizations with the practical knowledge they need to improve their performance and better serve society. The Conference Board is a non-advocacy, not-for-profit entity holding 501 (c) (3) tax-exempt status in the United States of America.