



Telework!VA Case Study

Funded by the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation
Administered by RideFinders, a division of the GRTC Transit System
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Organization

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Telework Coordinator

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Testimonial

“The Telework!VA program helped assist in our efforts of providing employees with useful tools (such as laptops and cell phones), while offering a telework program which would allow them to work from home occasionally.

This program was perfect for our organization, because most of our exempt employees are software developers who do a lot of work from home, many times in the evenings and early morning hours, even after working the standard 8-hours in the office. This program basically gave them permission to stay at home a few times per week, because we were able to implement an official telework policy and provide the equipment needed for successful completion of day-to-day office tasks. Our Teleworkers each received new development laptops (equipped with Audio/Video capabilities) and Blackberry Smart Phones to help them succeed in a home office environment.

Additionally, the grant funds received from the program allowed Synergy Systems the finances needed to obtain additional servers, routers, and software equipment to support our remote workers. Not only did this program benefit our organization with useful resources, but we were also able to reduce our employee commuting miles and reduce their burden of fuel costs associated with driving back and forth to the office.

For our employees, this experience gave them the freedom of working from home when needed (without having to report to the office every day). For our executives, it allowed additional funds to give employees well-deserved incentives that enabled their ability to work remotely. For the State of Virginia, this experience allowed our organization to reduce fuel emission through less employee commuting miles driven per month and through alternative commuting options, like carpooling or other programs such as RideFinders.”

Sara K. Anderson, Executive Business Manager

Business Benefits

1. Less stress and quicker response time (due to not having to drive into the office) for workers needing to handle immediate work needs while out of the office.
2. Greater employee satisfaction through their ability to work from home and the added benefit of reduced fuel cost from reduced commuting.
3. The Telework!VA program allowed our organization the ability to provide necessary telework tools and resources to our employees when lack of funds prevented us from doing so.

Background

Synergy Systems is an information technology development company that gives retailers an efficient, online platform to synchronize vendors, vendor partners, and distributors throughout entire retail chains. Synergy Systems’ customers can request service calls, check the status of deliveries, report problems, and handle scheduling conflicts 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The organization has 19 employees at its office in Richmond, Virginia.

Synergy Systems sought to implement a telework program in order to:

- Reduce office expenses.
- Free up space in an already crowded office as the organization continued to grow.
- Handle issues instantly, rather than having to drive to the office before being able to investigate software issues.
- Boost employee morale.

Summary of Assistance Provided

Synergy Systems was accepted into the Telework!VA program in May 2009. Telework!VA provided technical assistance with reviewing the organization's telework policy. Synergy Systems also received \$35,000 in financial incentives. The funding was used to offset costs for laptops (\$10,923) and technical support for remote access capabilities (\$24,077).

Telework Statistics

Synergy Systems conducted the Telework!VA baseline survey in August 2009 and participated in the 2010 and 2011 annual surveys. The most recent survey results showed that:

- There were 8 teleworkers.
- These employees worked at home an average of 1 day/week.
- The average one-way commute distance was 20 miles.
- These participants saved a total of 320 vehicle miles of travel per week, equaling a reduction of 15,360 commute miles annually (based on 48 work weeks in a year).

Obstacles or Challenges and How They Were Resolved

- 1. The cost associated in acquiring the tools needed for successful remote working conditions.**
The Telework!VA program gave us the funds necessary to implement a telework program. Our remote workers received smart phones, AV equipped laptops, and we were able to implement an in-office communication phone system that integrated with our teleworkers, so anyone communicating with our organization seemed to be calling the office (when in fact they may have been calling a remote worker).
- 2. Trust that our remote workers will provide the same level of production as if in they were in the office.**
With continued program participation, management was able to recognize an increase in completed tasks and production from our remote workers, reassuring the benefits of management's decision to implement the telework program.
- 3. Continuous communication with keeping all employees (whether in or out of the office) informed of important activities and tasks. Including the ability to work on teams, even while teleworking.**
Through the equipment obtained by the Telework!VA grant, we were able to quickly learn how to reroute extensions, instant message coworkers, and video conference (both internally and externally). With these resources, we were able to obtain the same level of communication between staff and clients, if not better, than if all employees were working in the same location.

Results

At the time Synergy Systems joined the Telework!VA program in May 2009, a couple of employees worked at home informally. The organization has since implemented a successful telework program and, as of June 2011, 73% of the organization's 19 employees telework on a regular basis. Synergy Systems is still under contract for its current office space for several more years; however, they have significantly reduced the number of employees who are in the office on a given day. Prior to the telework program, at least 25 employees commuted to the office every day, 5 days a week. Now they average about 12 people in the office on any given day since implementing the telework policy.

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