

Get ready to work from home!



In a downturn, where the environment is all gloomy, employees still walk in their workplaces with a smile on their face. How they wish they could work from home instead! Well, they don't have to worry as many companies are now allowing employees to function from home

Get flexible

A broadband internet connection, telephone connection, a laptop and a mug of piping hot coffee! Sounds great, doesn't it? Imagine yourself having access to all this within the confines of your home. Gone are the days when working from home was a distant dream. Most companies, these days, especially in order to cut costs are offering a flexible working model to let their staff operate out of office. And employees are responding well to the signal of trust and confidence indicated by the employer's adoption of more independent work styles.

"In cities like Mumbai or Bangalore, where commuter congestion is a serious problem, remote workers avoid travel time and the interruptions of an office environment. This can enhance productivity," opines Varghese M. Thomas, Head - PR, Cisco – India & SAARC.

It's all about technology

While most companies allow their employees to manage work from home they also provide technical support for the same. With the advent of leading technology, many companies believe in the fact that operating from home has certainly become easier and faster.

"Companies provide employees with technical assistance such as broadband connections and telephone for easy communication. Companies also take virtual office memberships on behalf of their employees and encourage them to operate from a virtual environment rather than from a physical office infrastructure," agrees Meenal Sinha, general manager, Servcorp India, a global company which offers serviced and virtual offices worldwide.

offers 'Hottdesk', a unique internet based platform which allows the delivery of services and products online and in real time. "Servcorp clients can access 'Hottdesk' wherever the internet is available. On just a click of a mouse, clients can share data, hold online meetings, book boardrooms, request translations, utilise a remote data storage system and print to various locations worldwide. They can book a courier in another country and manage important calls 24X7," notes Sinha.

Hottdesk includes applications such as Microsoft Office, WebEx, File Transfer and Thru," she further adds.

Cisco encourages its work force to telecommute from their private space. "We provide equipments like PDA phones, Data card, Cisco Virtual Office home routers that enable wireless access to Internet, Wi-Fi-enabled laptop, Cisco IP Communicator (Software phone) on laptop, Cisco Unified Video Advantage (CUVA) as a desktop video conferencing solution as well as Cisco Unified Wireless IP Phones to employees," says Thomas.

"Cisco Virtual Office allows businesses to extend their enterprise – and productivity – by 'bringing the office' to employees who regularly work in a variety of remote settings, such as branch locations or from home," adds Thomas.

Physical presence matters

On one hand where most companies are letting their staff work from home, there are others who believe they can achieve business objectives only within four walls of the office space. Perot Systems grants work-from-home facility on a case-to-case basis. "We firmly believe that we can achieve our business objectives and desired client satisfaction scores only when we meet them with responsible and adequate preparation," confirms Dr. Pallab Bandyopadhyay, VP & head-HR, APAC, Perot Systems.

"Majority of our workforce is young and the desire for them to be 'visible' on a daily basis is significantly compared to more seasoned associates for whom completing a project successfully is a high in itself. This instantaneous recognition is possible only if one comes to office daily," adds Bandyopadhyay.

Working from home brings along with itself a lot of merits and a few demerits of which the most important one, the traditionalists would say is nothing can replace physical presence. However, if we take into account the existing economic climate, coupled with the advancement in the area of technology, we are not too far from the days when 'working from home' will be a common practice.