

Case Study



Employer Profile

The National School Boards Association (NSBA) is a not-for-profit federation of state associations of school boards across the United States. The organization's mission is to foster excellence and equity in public education through school board leadership. NSBA has a staff of approximately 150 employees at its headquarters in Alexandria, Virginia.

NSBA's Telework Team

NSBA's Director of Human Resources served as the organization's telework coordinator. Other staff involved in the development of the telework program included the Manager of Human Resources, the Manager of Training and Support, and the Director of Management Information Systems.

Assessment and Implementation

NSBA decided to implement its telework program as part of an ongoing effort to bring innovative concepts to their employees. Specific objectives included:

- Retaining skilled employees.
- Providing a better work/life balance.
- Increasing employee productivity.
- Reducing real estate and parking expenses in the future.

Through their own initiative, NSBA created a team, surveyed the workforce, developed a policy, and implemented a pilot program. This became the foundation on which the Telework!VA program was conducted between November 2004 and November 2006. Thirty-five employees participated in the pilot program.

The consultant provided the following assistance:

- Reviewed the existing telework policy and provided recommendations for improving the policy and guidelines.
- Provided a telework application and agreement.
- Presented two briefings to senior and middle management.
- Conducted four training sessions for teleworkers and supervisors.
- Conducted two focus groups.

KEY FINDINGS

Overall, the findings were very positive and prove that teleworking has been well received and is having a beneficial impact on the employees and the organization.

- Half of the participants worked at home one day per week. The frequency for the others ranged from full time to ad hoc. These varying schedules demonstrate NSBA's ability to be flexible with telework.
- All of the participants had a formal telework agreement with their supervisors.
- Supervisors stated there was more communication taking place with telework due to the inability to "observe" the employee working.
- Teleworkers reported an average increase in productivity of 17%, while supervisors said they saw an average increase in productivity of 15%.

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Work was delayed several times due to unforeseen situations at NSBA, including the need to assist schools affected by Hurricane Katrina. However, NSBA remained committed to the implementation of its telework program.

Program Evaluation

The consultant evaluated the telework program by conducting two focus groups approximately three months after employees began teleworking. Twelve teleworkers and eight supervisors participated.

Results

NSBA was able to realize the objectives they wanted to achieve from teleworking. Employees and managers are very satisfied with the telework program and feel it is quickly becoming part of their corporate culture. The goal of employee retention has already been reached by providing better work/life balance and employees are more productive. The program is being expanded and offered to additional employees so space savings are possible in the future.

Recommendations

Telework Education

- Education on the policies, guidelines, and participation in the program should be provided to all NSBA employees.
- To address middle management resistance, educate managers on the business reasons and benefits of teleworking. Include success stories and demonstrate commitment to the program.
- Continue to offer telework supervisor training for new managers who will be supervising teleworkers.

Core Office Day/Meetings

- Try to reduce the number of meetings conducted and continue to encourage conference calls.
- Assign a “core day” when everyone is expected to be in the office (e.g., weekly, bi-weekly, or fixed dates of the month).



KEY FINDINGS (continued)

- Teleworkers and supervisors reported the ability to take on more work, which was important because NSBA was short-staffed and the workload had increased.
- Supervisors pointed out that being able to retain staff was a direct benefit of telework.
- Supervisors appreciated the formalization of the program with clear policies and guidelines.
- Employees felt that senior management was committed to the program; but there was still some resistance from middle management.
- Employees reported less stress, higher job satisfaction, and better organization.
- One challenge encountered was the ability to conduct meetings, since supervisors were still not comfortable with conference calls.