

Nomadic workers driving for more productive communication practices

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Nomadic workers driving for more productive communication practices in British companies

Flexible communication tools encourage commitment and hard work, Telewest Business finds

Britain's increasingly nomadic workforce has become a lobbying force to adopt new communications tools that can deliver the same efficiency and productivity benefits remotely as phone, fax and email currently do in the office. That is the primary finding of a detailed study conducted for Telewest Business by Manchester Business School, which questioned mid-level managers at private companies and public sector organisations about how communication tools impacted productivity.

86 per cent of the companies surveyed made remote and flexible working available to employees, with the majority from the manufacturing and public sector. Giving staff more flexibility also makes them want to work harder, makes them prepared to be more accommodating with demands on their time and gives them a greater sense of responsibility.

People are used to being able to access email and IM at home, but organisations are increasingly aware of the need to ensure that staff have the right business-grade tools required to work from anywhere, in order to make the initiative a success. Disadvantages to remote working cited in the survey focused on people not being available and poor technology, highlighting the need for presence-based tools designed for business rather than residential use. IM or person-to-person PC-based videoconferencing, for example, will enable staff to access, share and send information and collaborate with their team wherever they are, without adding to infrastructure complexity.

"The key to making remote working successful is to ensure that staff have the same technology communications available as they would in the office, in order to maintain levels of productivity and maximise investment in the practice," said Julien St.John-Dennis, Director of Voice at Telewest Business. "Remote working is no longer just a home / office divide, it is about being able to communicate with others and work productively anywhere in the world. The tools are available to allow employers and employees to take advantage of new ways of working, to enhance performance and provide a better work / life balance."

"We see particular advantages to certain industries, which could drive adoption," said Prof Margaret Bruce, director of corporate business research at Manchester Business School. "For example, remote working can enable organisations to implement hot desking, which can help optimise use of resources, which is particularly important to the public sector. The advantages of flexible working will be optimised by tools that allow people to manage their time, availability and contact when away from the office, in exactly the same way they could before."

The in-depth research was carried out amongst UK businesses in both the public and private with between 50 and 1000+ employees during January and February, 2005. It attempted to find how productive the current communications tools in use in the workplace were considered to be, and what new technologies were being introduced or contemplated in order to boost productivity. For further information please go to

www.telewest.co.uk/business/resourcecentre.

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About Telewest Broadband:

Telewest Broadband, the broadband communications and media group, currently passes 4.9 million homes and provides multi-channel television, telephone and internet services to 1.74 million UK households, and voice and data telecommunications services to around 67, 000 business customers. Its content division, Flextech, is the BBC's partner in UKTV. Together they are the largest supplier of basic channels to the UK pay-TV market with a portfolio that combines wholly owned and managed channels, including the fourteen joint venture channels with the BBC. For further information go to www.telewest.co.uk/media

In May 2004, Telewest Business was awarded the Communications Management Association (CMA) Chairman's Award for exceptional Customer Satisfaction ratings in the Wireline Services and Internet/Online Services sections of the CMA's "Communications Market UK 2003" report. More information can be found at www.telewest.co.uk/business

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About Manchester Business School:

Manchester Business School is the UK's largest campus-based business and management school. It provides a comprehensive range of undergraduate, postgraduate and custom-made executive programmes, for organisations from both the private and public sectors. www.mbs.ac.uk

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