



# TeleWork Case Study

## IBM - Tucson

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**Industry:** High tech  
**Computer Storage,  
Product  
Development,  
Engineering &  
Programming**

**Location:**  
**9000 S. Rita Rd.  
Tucson, AZ 85744**

**Contact:**  
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**Phone:**  
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**Employees  
reporting to Site:**  
**1634 in 2002**

**TeleWorkers:**  
**286 in 2002**

**Days/week  
TeleWorking:**  
**1-3 days per week**

**Year program  
began:** 1994

**Other IBM  
statistics:**  
**Approximately 33%  
of the IBM  
Marketing & Sales  
office in Phoenix  
teleworks.  
IBM has  
approximately  
65,000 mobile  
employees around  
the world – over  
20% of our total  
global workforce.**

*“IBM Tucson is proud to be a part of the Arizona TeleWork program. Across our division and site, we have trained over 1300 employees to telework, and those employees are now saving countless miles daily in traffic commuting, while remaining productive within their teams.” --- Roger Vogel, IBM Tucson Site General Manager*

### **Why did IBM begin a TeleWork program?**

IBM Tucson's mobility program began in 1994 as one of our divisions (Storage Systems) examined ways to reduce employee commuting, increase morale, and improve our retention rates. Nationally, IBM had implemented a Mobility Program structured toward full-time mobile workers. We had the challenge of maintaining a high level of team interaction while creating a way for our employees to telework.

### **What are IBM's selection criteria for teleworkers?**

- Exhibit high level of productivity
- Possess strong time-management skills
- Have high level of skill and knowledge dealing with work-related responsibilities
- Possess good communication and networking skills
- Be willing to be flexible
- Secure management approval & trust to participate

### **What tasks are performed by IBM's teleworkers?**

Tasks that IBM employees do while teleworking include: programming, information and programming design, handling customer's critical situations, information development, and administrative tasks.

### **What are the elements of the program?**

Teleworker must meet selection criteria, complete “Telecommuting Self Assessment”, and discuss results with manager.

- Teleworker must attend formal 2-hour training.
- Agreement is signed by Teleworker & Manager.
- Management commitment exists at all levels.
- Internal marketing occurs via e-mails, internal website, and TV screens.

### **How did IBM implement a TeleWork program?**

We studied many programs, consulting with nationwide experts like Gil Gordon and local experts like Eddie Caine. From the information gathered, we crafted a set of policies and practices for our telework program and proceeded to obtain executive commitment. One of our guidelines was a suggested maximum of 1 to 3 days of teleworking each week in order to minimize the amount of time employees were physically away from of their teams or off site. IBM developed a training program for both employees and managers that is designed to enlighten prospective teleworkers about how the program works, coach managers on their new management challenges, and provide helpful tips and suggestions for employees to maintain high levels of productivity while teleworking. We also advise teleworkers of potential downsides to telecommuting so they can telework more efficiently and continue contributing to both their professional growth and team productivity. We explain clearly and concisely what the company will pay for and what expenses teleworkers bear, what we provide and what teleworkers must provide, and any other requirements as they pertain to teleworkers. To keep our guidelines and policies current, we have a steering committee.

### **What effects has the teleworking program had on the ...**

- **Organization:** Better able to retain key employees, same or increased productivity
- **Teleworker:** Higher morale, more control over workload, more flexible schedule, less business interruptions, better work-life balance
- **Coworkers:** Less physical interaction with teleworker, and sometimes more focus needed to maintain contact
- **Management:** More work to keep in contact, but continued employee productivity
- **Customers:** No significant impact; communications mostly via phone or e-mail

**IBM Tucson's long-term goals are to steadily increase the number of teleworkers at our site, continue improving our training program, and continue balancing the costs of the program with gains to IBM.**

**The majority of IBM managers and employees positively view our current telecommuting program, and our goal is to maintain or improve that view of the program. The opportunity to work from home gives our technical population more control over their demanding workload, more flexibility, and better work/life balance. "People are our most important asset," says Roger Vogel (IBM Tucson Site General Manager), "We need to ensure that really talented people enjoy working at IBM, perform at their best, and stay to build their careers with us."**

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### **Is there a steering committee? If yes, from what departments?**

- Information Technology Project Management
- Human Resources
- Community Relations
- Communications
- Real Estate Site Operations – Environmental Programs
- Leadership Development & Career Services

### **What equipment is used by teleworkers?**

In some cases employees have Thinkpads assigned to them at work and carry them to their homes for telecommuting; in other cases, employees provide their own equipment. In general, IBM does not provide computer equipment, but we do reimburse employees for connection charges. We stress to teleworkers the importance of being accessible to their teams, managers, and customers. As part of this, we require they maintain connection paths while working at home. Employees are provided with SameTime instant messaging technology, enabling employees to stay in touch with their entire team in real-time conversations. We also strive to remain current with technology and now reimburse approved teleworkers for high-speed access to the Internet. We provide teleworkers with the software required to perform their jobs efficiently, but require teleworkers to install and troubleshoot their own personal computer systems.

### **What were the benefits of starting a TeleWork program at IBM?**

- Reduced impact of office consolidation and relocation
- Improved employee morale and retention
- Improved employee effectiveness and productivity
- Contributed to community well-being by reducing commuter traffic and air pollution
- Reduced real-estate expenses
- Supported IBM Travel Reduction Plan

Specifically, in 2002 IBM saved approximately 1,800,000 commute miles, 90,000 gallons of gasoline, 70,000 pounds of pollution and \$900,000 through the telework program. In December 2002, IBM Tucson joined the Commuter Choice Leadership Initiative, a program jointly supported by EPA and DOT to recognize employers who meet a high national standard of excellence for commuter benefits. Each company who joins must demonstrate at least one significant primary commuter benefit to EPA. IBM's primary commuter benefit is teleworking.

### **How has the program changed since the beginning?**

- Employees are now provided with SameTime instant messaging technology, enabling employees to stay in touch with their entire team in real-time conversations.
- We strive to remain current with technology and since 2000 have reimbursed approved teleworkers for high-speed access to the Internet.
- We provide teleworkers with additional software required to perform their jobs efficiently.

### **What challenges arose along the way?**

- Less employee visibility means teleworker must work harder to stay connected to team, manager, etc.
- Teleworkers must furnish their own office equipment (unless management has assigned them a laptop)
- Minimal support services; teleworkers must often troubleshoot their own computer problems
- Increased self-management responsibility

### **What successful program tips would IBM offer?**

- Well-rated, constantly-updated training class that is mandatory for each teleworker
- Website and handbook for Teleworkers for up-to-date, easy-to-find information
- Management support at all levels
- Appropriate publicity
- Proper home office equipment/connections
- Selecting the right employees who are good telecommuting candidates.