

Paid to Work from Home

There's no question about it; the home is fast becoming the workplace of the future. Many companies are saving millions of dollars by employing some or their workforce from the comfort of their own homes.

About 25 percent of IBM's 320,000 workers worldwide are paid to work at home, according to Jeanette Barlow, marketing manager for IBM Lotus. This means that they telecommute, working from their home offices. IBM estimates total savings of \$700 million in real estate costs as a direct result.

Telecommuting jobs can bring big companies, such as IBM, additional benefits. There are strong indications that telecommuting jobs can result in higher worker productivity and a happier work force. Since this effect can snowball, offering opportunities to work from home can promote a kind of symbiotic effect that works well with the company.

As Barlow said, IBM's initial success with telecommuting jobs has resulted in the company expanding its virtual workplace program. Since the launching of the program in 1995, an increasing number of their employees are now working from home.

Following the success of IBM, hundreds of businesses both big and small have decided to tap into the job market for telecommuting opportunities. Many have launched formal telecommuting programs during the past decade to help increase productivity in the workplace.

In Texas, big companies such as Mobil, Texas Instruments, Frito Lay, Xerox, AT&T, J.C. Penney, and hundreds of small businesses now allow their workers to telecommute or engage in work at home jobs.

To be sure, it's fast becoming the norm to offer work at home opportunities in the work force. In fact, some companies even consider it simply a normal part of doing business to offer telecommuting or paid work at home programs. Pharmaceutical companies such as Abbott Laboratories have been using mobile workers for years. Since this type of employment gives them an edge in productivity, they have also joined the work at home bandwagon. Now, sales representatives can start their morning in their home office and then spend their day making sales calls to doctor's offices. One of the biggest advantages of work at home jobs is that workers can carry out the same tasks they do in a regular office job, but with the increased efficiency that comes from working from home.

Environmentally Friendlier, Too

Even government agencies, such as the Texas Workforce Commission, Texas comptroller's office, and Texas Department of Transportation also have formal work at home or telecommuting programs. Encouraging telecommuting can reduce pollution and time wasted in traffic.

According to a Texas Transportation Institute study that was released in June, two out of every three cars on the road in the United States hit congestion each day. The study further said that this costs U.S. commuters \$67 billion in lost time alone, not counting wasted fuel and wear and tear on vehicles. Taking or creating a telecommuting job not only reduces traffic but reduces noise and air pollution.