

## **Telecommuting: A Quarter of U.S. Workers Do It Regularly**

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A survey released Tuesday by Citrix Online found that 23 percent of American workers regularly do their jobs from someplace besides the office, and that 62 percent of respondents who cannot work off-site would like to.

The survey also found that workers prized the ability to telecommute more highly than stock options or on-site child care.

Mike Amble, a former senior vice president of operations and engineering for a major American financial company, said telecommuting fits well into the mission of corporate IT departments. The most skilled employees may not live in the immediate area, for one thing, and second, such departments are constantly on-call and therefore “working on a 24-hour clock,” he said.

But feelings are different in the corner office, from Amble’s perspective. “I think generically, at a higher administrative level, there just isn’t a clear understanding of the value of people working remotely,” he said. “There’s still this historic perception on the part of management in general that [telecommuters are] not working. Conversely, there is a very low percentage of people who take advantage of their companies.”

Amble knows this all too well. He recalled taking over a department and subsequently learning one work-at-home employee had two other jobs, a revelation that traveled fast. “That one example went through the organization like wildfire,” he said.

Jim Bird, founder and CEO of WorkLifeBalance.com, a training and support company based in Atlanta, said telecommuting requires “the right mindset and the right skill set. Either you can’t get work done, or you never stop working and it consumes you.

“Even if you don’t have a telecommute program, your people are working at home,” Bird added. “They’re answering those e-mails at 10 o’ clock, they’re working on the weekend.”

Bird said companies should recognize the business value of off-site employees, and suggested this has already been widely put to the test. “When we’re outsourcing technology jobs 10,000 miles away, we certainly should do it 10 minutes down the road,” he said.

The study was conducted by the polling company, inc. and sampled 600 adults who are either working now or plan to within three years. The firm conducted additional interviews with 100 small-business owners. The poll has a margin of error of plus or

minus 4 percent within the main sample, and 6.8 percent within the small-business sample, according to the organization.

Citrix Online makes a line of hosted software that caters to off-site workers.