



## Tech View

Honolulu Star-Bulletin

By Cliff Miyake

December 24, 2007

Telecommuting can help the planet and your sanity.

What does telecommuting have to do with global warming? Plenty.

Working from home means fewer cars on the road - and that translates into both a smaller carbon footprint and less gridlock on our roads. But it's not just a matter of saving the planet. Employees are often happier and more productive if allowed to telecommute.

Having the infrastructure to operate from home is also a great insurance policy for an organization should a pandemic strike our state. At that point, we'll all have to avoid crowds, which means working remotely.

So what kinds of tech tools, in addition to a phone and a computer, do you need to set up your telecommuting nest?

Let's get started:

**A broadband connection:** You need more than dialup to communicate effectively from home. Either DSL, bonded T1s or cable will work fine. Broadband allows for rapid downloads and uploads, VoIP (Voice over IP), online collaboration such as Web conferencing and real-time presentation applications, video conferencing and other advanced technologies.

**A backup system:** If you don't already back up your personal data, you definitely can't ignore company e-mail, word files and other docs. The boss is not going to buy "The dog ate my homework." Get yourself an external drive or an online solution such as Mozy.

**UPS:** Uninterrupted Power Supply provides enough electricity to allow your computer to run for a short time after the regular power is cut off. The goal is to preserve your data by safely shutting down your computer.

VPN: Virtual Private Network is a technology that encrypts and protects your data transmission to and from your home (or wherever you are on your laptop) and your office. It's usually part of a router or, can be purchased separately.

Blackberry: The Blackberry used to be a status symbol for executives but has become a standard part of a road warrior's toolkit. Every manager at our company has one. They were invaluable during last year's earthquake/power outage.

Video-conferencing technologies: The least expensive solution is a Web cam that combines both a video camera and a microphone. The device plugs into your USB port and you can get something that works reasonably well for \$100. If you're serious about high-end teleconferencing, units with full motion video can run into the thousands of dollars and require high bandwidth.

Faxing and scanning: Telecommuters also might find it valuable to have faxing and scanning capabilities. Such a three-in-one (fax/copy/scan) printer is available from companies such as Hewlett-Packard for several hundred dollars.

One last word: I practice what I preach.