



Go Green Via Mobile Commuting

Tech View

By Cliff Miyake

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As anyone who reads this newspaper knows, the price of oil, airplane tickets, food, electricity and just about everything else is going up. I believe businesses can start saving money and going green by leveraging the Internet as a squeaky clean, low-carbon footprint form of communications.

That's where mobile commuting fits in. This means working anywhere outside the office using Ethernet or wirelessly enabled laptops, PCs, Blackberries and other mobile devices to stay in touch.

Here are some of the ways that mobile commuting can work:

» **Telework:** Instead of facing gridlocked roads, designated employees can work out of the home. All you need is a broadband connection, a PC and a VPN (virtual private network) to secure your connection. This saves money and energy on office space, commuting, parking, etc.

Hawaiian Electric now allows up to 250 employees to telecommute on an incidental basis. This includes off hours, weekends and partial days to avoid traffic. HECO plans to roll out a program in November that will entail 100 employees working out of their homes three to five days per week.

» **Videoconferencing:** Videoconferencing is a thrifty alternative to air travel. One of the more highly rated PC applications is SightSpeed, which offers both great audio and visual quality at very little cost. For high-end business use, you'll want to consider Hi-Def teleconferencing which has the same clarity as your Hi-Def TV at home. A system costing \$50,000 or more only a few years ago now sells for as little as \$5,000. Combined with an off-the-shelf TV screen from Costco, Best Buy or the like, it can provide first-class Hi-Def or DVD quality presentation.

It's not just private industry that is saving money and resources by leveraging the Net. Our city government's first responders such as police officers, firemen, and paramedics are using mobile devices that allow data and voice transmission to and from their offices. HPD patrol officers, for example, regularly access drivers licensing information, motor vehicle data and juvenile-offender reports from their squad cars.

I'm certain as energy costs climb, employers will see the wisdom of allowing their employees to commute in a more flexible manner. In the meantime, it often takes the employee to raise the issue with the boss.

Kaneohe resident, Pat Katepoo, founder of Workoptions.com and an authority on telecommuting, says that Hawaii people who wait for their employers to implement a mobile-commuting policy will be sitting on the H-1 until their retirement.

Let's hope this situation changes. With our roads clogged and energy prices going nowhere but up, it's about time we got serious about mobile commuting.

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