



Is Telecommuting Risky?

By Karen Burns
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Outside Voices - “Working Girl” aka Karen Burns It’s a dicey economy. And if you are a telecommuter, you may be at special risk.

Fact 1: In these days of economic uncertainty, everybody is looking for ways to cut back. That everybody may include your employer.

Fact 2: Employers are only human. Humans tend to take the easy way out. And it’s easier to lay off someone you only see rarely than to lay off someone you see every day and who has become an integral part of your work life.

You may have fought to earn telecommuting privileges. You may love the savings in gas and wardrobe expenses. You may know in your very soul that telecommuting has made you a more productive, and hence valuable, employee.

But please consider this annoying-yet-true cliché: out of sight, out of mind. It’s human nature. That’s why face time at work is necessary. And these days, it’s more important than ever to maintain a high profile while telecommuting. Here’s how:

Never miss an on-site staff meeting. Always come looking spiffy and professional. During conference calls, be a presence. Speak up often, with a smile in your voice. Send your boss weekly (or even daily) summaries of your work. Volunteer for difficult assignments. What better way to prove you’re indispensable? Finally, and most important, never give the impression that your life is easier or more fun because you telecommute (even if it is). If you work in jammies and bunny slippers—keep it to yourself!

Karen Burns, Working Girl, is the author of The Amazing Adventures of Working Girl: Real-Life Career Advice You Can Actually Use, to be released by Running Press in April 2009. She blogs at karenburnsworkinggirl.com .