

# Telework: The World Is Your Office

A spate of recent news appears to signal that telework's time has finally come:

- In March 2009, the Senate Homeland and Governmental Affairs Committee cleared a bill that would expand teleworking opportunities for government workers.
- In April 2009, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) announced a plan to jumpstart agency telework programs, including a requirement to tie them to Continuity of Operations (COOP) plans.
- In May 2009, the General Services Administration challenged its offices to get half of their employees telecommuting by 2010. Currently, 43 percent of the agency's employees work offsite.
- The OPM says 103,000 teleworkers in 78 agencies telework at least once a month.

## From Nice-to-Have to Must-Have

"Telework is becoming a part of agency missions rather than exception," says Dave Rubal, unified communications regional manager for federal government, Cisco. Its major advantages for government include:

- **Continuity of operations:** Government workers can continue to work from home if they are kept from the office by weather, disasters, or pandemic, a risk underscored by the 2009 H1N1 flu outbreak. In an emergency, agencies can mobilize personnel with telework setups at any time of the day or night, even if weather, road damage, or building damage prevent them from getting to the office.
- **Recruiting and retention advantage:** Offering a telework option helps government attract new college graduates and offer an appealing part-time option to retirees with valuable skills. In an internal survey conducted by the Patent and Trademark Office, 90 percent of employees said that their participation in the Trademark Work-at-Home program influenced them to stay with the office.
- **Improved morale:** Avoiding lengthy and expensive commutes improves job satisfaction, and satisfied employees are generally more productive. In the Patent and Trademark Office survey, 99 percent of employees reported increased job satisfaction from participating in the work-at-home program.
- **Environmental sustainability:** Reducing the number of trips to the office reduces government's carbon footprint.
- **Reduced contact center costs:** The telework option is particularly compelling for contact center agents because it reduces office space costs. New contact center technologies such as Cisco Unified Contact Center direct calls to the first available qualified agent in any location.

## Replicating the Office Experience at Home

Agency managers and workers accept telework only when the experience replicates the office experience with no tradeoffs for application performance or tools availability. "Just being able to answer office phone calls at home or connect securely to agency databases is not enough," says Rubal. "A successful telework program must exactly duplicate the experience that employees have when they're sitting at their desks at agency headquarters." That includes the same quality voice and video, access to the same collaboration tools, and a simple sign-on process.

## What to Look For

Telework solutions have two parts. Agency headquarters needs a router and management software. Employees need a broadband connection, PC or laptop, router, and IP phone.

To deliver the user experience that makes telework appealing for employees and viable for COOP, look for a solution with the following characteristics:

- **Reliably excellent voice and video quality:** Smooth voice and video require a solution with quality of service (QoS), which is the intelligence to recognize different types of traffic and assign priority based on the application type, sender, or recipient. Voice and video, for example, need priority over other types of application traffic sharing the same network. During disaster response, you can assign priority to all traffic to and from commanders and executives, making sure that these messages don't have to compete with less urgent communications.
- **Security:** Agencies need to extend the office security posture to employees' homes.
- **Mobility:** Employees don't want to be tied to their desks at home any more than they do in the office. Look for a solution with integrated wireless access.
- **Easy setup:** Agency IT groups don't have the time to manually configure hundreds or thousands of employees' routers and IP phones. The solution should be easy for employees to install and use.

The Cisco Virtual Office solution provides all components required for telework, from the VPN router and management software at headquarters to the IP phone and router with integrated wireless at the employee's home. Setting up employees as teleworkers does not impose a burden on agency IT groups. "You just hand the employee two lightweight boxes, one with a router and another with an IP phone," says Rubal. The employee connects the router to an existing home router, enters a URL, and then the solution connects back to the agency network to automatically provision itself.

To watch a video called "The World Is Your Office," visit: [www.cisco.com/go/cvo](http://www.cisco.com/go/cvo)

To read a case study of Cisco's own deployment of Cisco Virtual Office, including metrics on reduced carbon emissions, visit: [www.cisco.com/web/about/ciscoitwork/downloads/ciscoitwork/pdf/Cisco IT Case Study Cisco Virtual Office.pdf](http://www.cisco.com/web/about/ciscoitwork/downloads/ciscoitwork/pdf/Cisco_IT_Case_Study_Cisco_Virtual_Office.pdf)



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