

A Telecommuting Checklist

Benefits, Downsides and Strategies

Virginia Tech University Ombuds Office

The Virginia Tech University Ombuds Office, as much as other Ombuds Offices in campuses and organizations nation-wide, has been hearing an uptick of concerns from employees about the challenges surfacing with telecommuting plans being implemented by their supervisors.

The following checklist is not meant to be an all-inclusive list, or even viewed as authoritative guidance, for when leaders and supervisors decide on telecommuting plan for fall 2021. It is simply designed as a beginning list of benefits, downsides and strategies for leaders and supervisors to consider, and hopefully, begin the conversation with their employees.

- Benefits of allowing telecommuting and factors to consider in deciding plans:
 - Morale increase
 - Reduces turnover
 - Better work-life balance
 - Increased flexibility
 - Reduced expenses for employees (gas, clothing, wear & tear on vehicle, etc.)
 - Reduced expenses for employers (less electricity, less office equipment, etc.)
 - Less stress
 - No commute
 - Higher productivity
 - Possible distractions
 - More privacy
 - Employees feel safer (not as exposed to Covid)
 - Fewer employee sick days
 - Flexibility in hiring better talent from different locales
- Downsides to telecommuting to manage and factors to consider in deciding:
 - Decreased productivity
 - Procrastination
 - Accountability
 - Risk of favoritism if some employees are physically at work while others are not and so feedback may not be equal
 - Disconnect between teams, customers, Tech community, etc.
 - Perception that people are not working or department/teams not responsive
 - Inadequate technology and resources at home to get the job done
 - Possible distractions

Continued on other side

A Telecommuting Checklist
Benefits, Downsides and Strategies
Virginia Tech University Ombuds Office

- Strategies that might help manage downsides and action items to implement in decision-making:
 - Utilize a decision-making model such as Values-based decision making that identifies values to be honored, ultimate outcomes to be achieved by plan and outlines a transparent process encouraging dialogue from appropriate stakeholders, transparency and that is communicated to all impacted
 - Provide right resources
 - Agreed upon schedule for work day
 - Agreed upon deadlines for projects/tasks
 - Adequate technology
 - Identify a project management tool/app everyone agrees to utilize
 - Clear roles and responsibility for team members
 - Clear communication
 - Expectations on projects/tasks
 - Metrics for success
 - Accountability
 - Conversations go both-way. Be open to feedback and calibrating strategies
 - Create new habits
 - Help establish new routines, periodic check-ins, etc.
 - Open to changing landscape
 - Solutions do not have to be an either/or solution
 - Be open to a variety of options and reassess as events/milestones occur