

Final Proposal

HVS Memo

DATE: May 12, 2006
TO: Harriet V. Sullivan, President
FROM: Christine Thomas, Systems Administrator *CT*
SUBJECT: The Advantages of Telecommuting

I believe that HVS Accounting Services and its employees would benefit if we permit our professional staff to telecommute one or more days a week. Telecommuting is becoming increasingly common throughout the United States for several important reasons. I have researched the topic and talked with colleagues here and among our competitors. This memorandum presents the results of my findings and proposes that HVS set up a work-at-home program on a three-month trial basis beginning September 1. The trial period would occur well before our busy end-of-year and winter tax-preparation period.

What Are the Advantages?

The program would offer HVS several important advantages:

- Improved employee productivity
- Enhanced ability to recruit and retain good employees
- Mutually beneficial arrangements for employees with special needs

The foremost advantage to HVS is that employee productivity for those in a work-at-home program would very likely increase. I have reviewed a dozen trade-journal articles in our field and several Web sites that show average productivity gains of from 15 to 30 percent. In conversations with other financial-services companies at monthly Accounting Society meetings, they mention gains in the 20 to 30 percent range. This is an area where I believe we need to pull even with the competition.

Preprinted memo stationery

Memo heading

Author initials paper copy

Introduction to proposal for a new program

Heading signals an upcoming topic

List of key points focuses attention on advantages to company

Development of key points

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*Advantages to
employees*

Telecommuting would provide important advantages to the staff that would help us to recruit and retain qualified employees. Several of our employees commute over an hour each way daily. Telecommuting would permit them to save time and money on the days they work at home. They would also be less frazzled on those days. Employees who telecommute report that the time savings and better frame of mind are two reasons they can better focus on their jobs. As you are aware, we have lost qualified job candidates because of their objections to long commutes. Our competitors note that they have an easier time recruiting and retaining valuable employees when they offer telecommuting as an option. This is an important benefit that we can offer to our employees, especially in the current competitive job market.

The program would also be strongly beneficial to HVS and two employees in particular: Bill Mayhue and Mabel Chong. Bill is scheduled for a hip replacement in two months and will be away from work for up to six weeks. Part of this time away could be used productively if he's allowed to work at home. Mabel's baby is due in September. She plans to spend three months at home after the birth and would also be a good candidate for this program. Instead of losing their services for extended periods—and their ongoing contacts with their clients—we would all benefit. This would be a great boost for employee morale, too.

How Would Telecommuting Work at HVS?

Any new program of this kind raises questions about how well it will work in practice. I believe that the key questions are the following:

- How can we track the work of those in the program?
- Should everyone participate?
- Which days of the week would work best?
- Are there startup or ongoing costs to HVS?

*List focuses
attention on
company concerns*

SOURCE: Oliu, Brusaw, and Alred, *Writing That Works:
Communicating Effectively on the Job*

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HVS Accounting Services is in an ideal position to be able to keep track of employees working away from the office. Each member of the professional staff has well-defined tasks in financial and estate planning for families, in tax preparation and auditing for financial and estate planning for families, and in tax preparation and auditing for both families and small businesses. As you know from our monthly reports, HVS currently maintains detailed information that quantifies staff productivity by billable hours. This system would apply equally well to work-at-home employees. Also, with your approval, I will work with Fred Sadowski to set up and maintain measurable goals for those in the program. We would then review these goals in the middle and at the end of the three-month trial period with you. Not all jobs at HVS would be suitable for the program. The receptionist, mail staff, several of our temporary employees, and I need to be at the office during business hours, so we would not participate.

*Development of
key points*

I believe that Mondays and Fridays would be ideal work-at-home days. That would leave Tuesday through Thursday as core business days for staff meetings, client conferences, and other activities better done at the office. Even on Mondays and Fridays, keeping in touch with employees at home will not be difficult in this electronic era. In addition to telephones, everyone eligible for the program already has home desktop computers with Internet access, fax machines, and printers. Several also have small copiers. Essentially, no startup expenses for HVS are associated with the program. The staff can keep a log of long-distance business calls and bring in their telephone bill monthly for reimbursement.

Can We Protect Customer Confidentiality?

*Heading signals
shift in topic*

Customer confidentiality would also be protected. HVS has secure electronic information-exchange software that allows us to send and receive client confidential information electronically. Those in the program can be given password access to confidential and other client information at home using pcEverywhere, our current remote-access software. The software allows employees to connect to and work on their office computers from their home computers.

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Finally, I can post the home e-mail addresses and phone and fax numbers for everyone in the program on our internal Web site and provide that information to the appropriate clients. I will also program everyone's phone speed-dial feature with the home numbers of participants.

Because everyone I have spoken with already maintains a home office, having access to private work space at home is not a hindrance. Having this space also minimizes the possibility of interruptions or other disturbances during the day while still permitting employees to schedule home-repair visits rather than having to leave work to meet a repair person, as happens now. The staff also believes that they would not lose touch with everyone else at HVS if they're gone for only a day or two a week. As you know, the auditing staff is periodically away from the office for a week or two at a time at client sites until an audit is completed. Working away from the office is customary to them and causes few disruptions. Finally, everyone in the program would keep the same business hours, minus the commute, of course. Another indirect benefit of telecommuting is that it allows us to help do our part to reduce air pollution and traffic congestion in the area.

Can We Make It Happen?

Closing

Our staff has a proven record of getting the job done regardless of where they are working, which I believe makes them well suited to a work-at-home program. I look forward to discussing this option with you at your convenience.