



Two Years of Telework in Poland

Constant labour market

In October 2007 telework was introduced to the Polish Labour Code. This new form of employment means that employees perform work on the basis of an employment contract outside the company office and turning in work results electronically. Market research showed that in 2007 only about 2% of Polish employees have worked in this system. This result placed Poland at the end of the list of EU countries, where teleworkers often constitute just over 10% of the work force.

After two years of the validity of the telework regulations, the situation on the labour market has not changed significantly – only a slight increase in contracts and job offers for teleworkers has been noted. The number of Poles who have never heard about such an employment form has slightly decreased and amounts now to over 40%.

Why is the popularity of telework not changing? Firstly, this employment form is useful only for certain positions, mainly in the service sector. The most popular telework areas in Europe are IT & internet services, graphic design, and financial and analytical services. Secondly, propagation of telework requires a change in the mentality of both employers and employees. Finally, the scope of employer's knowledge of legal, financial and organisational implications of telework is very limited and thus they are afraid to take a risk.

Pluses and minuses of telework

Telework has real advantages for employers: cost savings on office space (up to 20-30%), increase of productivity (at the level of 15-30%) and employee satisfaction resulting from wider autonomy.

Telework provides a possibility to attract new staff categories, e.g. young mothers, physically disabled persons, people in retirement age or living outside large cities. A challenge for managers might be leaving the standard model of team management providing for direct supervision and face-to-face communication.

Employees also benefit from teleworking – they may freely arrange work time, save on time and cost of travel to work. However, this requires independence and self-discipline. Negative implications may include risk of social isolation and limited career development opportunities.

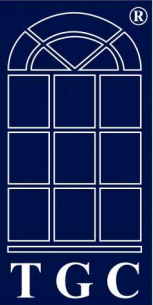
Flexible management

Teleworking is a modern solution, which to spread on the Polish labour market needs to breach of psychological barriers of both parties in the employment relationship. First of all, a new management approach will be required as well as the implementation of supplementary employee supervision methods – work results shall be measured by productivity instead of hours spent in the office.

Managers must learn to show more trust in delegating work and increasing independence of the employees. It is also necessary to have a good internal communication system, considering the lack of direct interpersonal contacts.

Before implementing a wider range of telework in the company, line managers must be provided with specialist training in effective communication, work coordination, use of ICT equipment as well as employee supervision and performance appraisal. Similar training should be offered to the teleworkers.





Ideal teleworker

Telework is not an appropriate work system for everybody – people having poor time management skills, low self-discipline or problems with sharing family life from business, will operate worse without permanent management support. In addition to having the necessary skills and technical knowledge, a candidate for teleworker must present certain personal traits and predispositions, including i.e.:

- ✓ time management skills
- ✓ task-orientation
- ✓ self-motivation
- ✓ independence
- ✓ self-discipline
- ✓ communication skills

Appropriate tests may be used for analysis of personal predispositions, but additionally the current family situation and life priorities of the employee shall be considered. For example, young employees see the possibility of social relations and meeting new people as a natural motivating factor. Prospective teleworkers must be perceived as a part of family – good organisation of family life is important, ensuring that home environment is supporting instead of disturbing the fulfilment of business duties.

How to implement telework

Implementation of telework should be a planned and organised process, including the following stages:

1. **Organisational audit** – analysis of company needs, identification of positions advisable for teleworking, preliminary cost estimate;
2. **Information campaign** – fair and clear presentation of legal and practical implications of telework, purpose and advantages of its implementation, providing necessary support and training;
3. **Organisational arrangements** – consultation with line managers and candidates for teleworkers, analysis of their personal predispositions, proposals for change of employment terms, detailed cost calculation;
4. **Legal procedure** – drafting required documentation (i.e. telework regulations, change of employment contracts, agreements stipulating obligations of both parties and cost reimbursement);
5. **Implementation of telework** – signature of documents, delivery of IT equipment and training to teleworkers;
6. **Monitoring results** – cost and benefits analysis, improving procedures, employee satisfaction survey.

Contact

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