



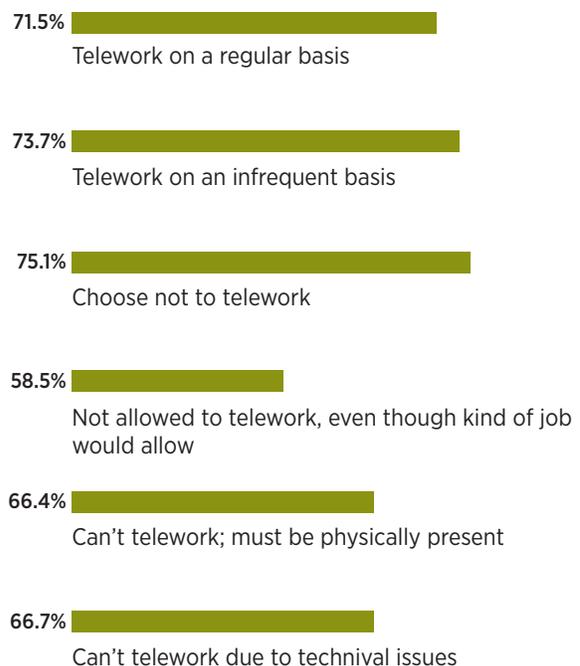
TELEWORK CHOICE ENHANCES EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION

As part of the *Best Places to Work in the Federal Government*® analysis, based on the Office of Personnel Management's (OPM) employee survey, the Partnership for Public Service and Deloitte set out to understand the relationship between telework, job satisfaction and commitment.¹

Using the analytical framework from our 2010 *Best Places to Work* rankings, we found that employees who have at least the choice to telework – whether or not they do so – are more satisfied than those who do not have that choice. Employees who were not allowed to telework even though their job would allow it are the least satisfied.

In addition, we noticed large differences in responses for two questions. When asked about recognition received for doing a good job, teleworkers rated their satisfaction a full 15 points higher than those who are not allowed to telework, suggesting flexible work arrangements may be a powerful and low-cost performance reward. When asked about their satisfaction with involvement in decisions that affect their work, teleworkers were a full 16

FIGURE 1
Best Places to Work employee satisfaction scores by telework situation for all federal agencies



¹ Partnership for Public Service, *Best Places to Work in the Federal Government*®, 2010. bestplacestowork.org

points more positive than those not permitted to telework.

The survey data also reveal that teleworkers feel they are held accountable to the same degree as those who work in the office. Results for each group are over 80 percent positive — a finding that counters the view held by some government managers that those who work remotely cannot be held as responsible for their performance as those who are based in the office.

Likewise, we found relatively small differences between teleworkers and non-teleworkers on the question, “I know how my work relates to the agency’s goals and priorities.” This suggests that concerns by some managers that teleworkers can become disconnected from their agency mission may be overblown.

The *Best Places to Work* analysis is based on OPM’s Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey of more than 263,000 civil servants across government, and is designed to measure employee satisfaction and commitment.²

The survey data, a representative sample of the 2.1 million member federal workforce, found that 20 percent of the respondents work remotely at least some of the time. Another 21 percent said they want to telework, but are not allowed, while 11 percent choose not to use this flexibility and 40 percent said they could not telework because of physical or technical limitations. Eight percent did not respond to the telework question.

Case Study

Nuclear Regulatory Commission

The *Best Places to Work* employee satisfaction scores across different teleworking and non-teleworking groups were relatively positive at the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), with the exception of those who are flatly barred from working outside the office even when there is no apparent reason for the restriction. So even at the top ranked agency, the same overall pattern holds.

NRC employees who could not telework because their job requires their physical presence and because of technical and security limitations, and those who voluntarily decided not to telework, all had *Best Places to Work* satisfaction scores between 75 and 85. But those who were simply not permitted to telework had an aggregate score of 57.9. These results suggest that agencies may have an opportunity to improve employee satisfaction by making telework an available option when possible.

² Office of Personnel Management, Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey, July 2010. fedview.opm.gov

Conclusion

Telework is an invaluable tool for managing the government’s 21st century workforce, as recognized by Congress through passage of the 2010 Telework Enhancement Act and by the Obama administration’s goal of increasing the number of federal teleworkers by 50 percent by the end of fiscal year 2011.³

By looking at teleworkers within the *Best Places to Work* framework, managers can see how telework positively influences overall job satisfaction. We recommend that agencies analyze the work being performed and whether or not that work could be done virtually. Managers should have conversations with employees about telework opportunities, keeping in mind the value of this flexibility. Just having that option available, regardless of whether it is actually used, can have a positive impact on employee satisfaction, and ultimately on job performance.

This Best Places to Work in the Federal Government® snapshot was made possible with the generous support of Deloitte.

³ Telework Enhancement Act of 2010. <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/BILLS-111hr1722enr/pdf/BILLS-111hr1722enr.pdf> and Office of Personnel Management, 2010-2015 Strategic Plan. http://www.opm.gov/strategicplan/pdf/StrategicPlan_20100310.pdf