Chapter III

TelewerkForum Stimulates Telework in The Netherlands

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ABSTRACT
Implementation of successful teleworking programs requires a cooperation among organizations, employees, governments and labor groups. This paper presents the model used in the Netherlands that can be adopted by any region, state or country to promote telecommuting for the good of society and the employees. The success of any telecommuting program relies on proactive communications, practical advice, and constant promotion of the concept to the public.

INTRODUCTION
The TelewerkForum in the Netherlands is an independent organization set up by the private sector in 1996 and sponsored by the Dutch Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management. As a nonprofit organization, it brings together organizations, unions, and employees whose common interest is to stimulate telework of work in the Netherlands. TelewerkForum’s mission is to stimulate the implementation of new forms of working and to contribute to economic and social change by collecting and disseminating information. It supports the transition of the Netherlands into an information society. To implement a successful telework project, an integrated approach...
is required including office technology innovation, management tools and changing organizational structure.

In the definition of telework used by TelewerkForum, work is characterized as independent of time and place and makes use of information and communication technology. There are several types of telework. In home-based telework or telecommuting, an employee or contractor works at home instead of traveling to an employer’s or client’s premises. In mobile telework, employees travel from home directly to the client. Telecenters provide access to neighborhood and satellite offices where the employee can work.

The number of teleworkers is projected to rise worldwide due to social developments such as an increase of more highly educated people who are information workers, a growing individualization of people’s needs for working, a lack of highly skilled personnel for industry needs, an awareness of environmental issues and limitations, increased traffic congestion and the globalization of company scope. Based on the trends as described, TelewerkForum expects the number of teleworkers in the Netherlands to double in the years ahead.

Telework offers several advantages to companies, individuals and society. A focus point where all relevant information can be found helps companies to implement telework programs and assists employees. TelewerkForum is a small, flexible organization with a board of directors consisting of six members, a managing director and secretarial support. The managing director works approximately three days per week and a secretary works two days per week and spends one day on the web content update (on a contract basis). An advisory committee for the association is comprised of representatives from unions, universities, the Dutch Employers Organization, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and the Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management. The board of directors is chosen among participants and sponsors and meets once a month. There are various working groups comprising participants, experts, social partners, universities and interest groups. The TelewerkForum is set up as a nonprofit organization. This means it does not compete against suppliers, but offers support for the development of telecommuting along with several suppliers and the involvement of the social partners.

The physical office space is shared with one other professional association and uses the support infrastructure (e.g., the reproduction department) of the ICT suppliers to keep overhead costs very low. The public relations and marketing people of the organizations are linked to the work groups via virtual working and teaming.
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