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## Technology

### Telecommuting in Philanthropy

Since 2000, the number of foundations offering teleworking from home rose from one in four to almost six in ten.

by *Martin B. Schneiderman*

In "How to Quit the Commute" (*Foundation News & Commentary*, September/October 2001), I described the benefits, costs, and concerns about teleworking. Since then, foundations have been moving quickly to provide this capability to their staff. There have been a number of factors contributing to this:

- | Greater availability of low-cost, high-speed data communications via digital subscriber line (DSL) and cable modems
- | Strong demand from staff
- | Increasing use of systems and programs with Web-based interfaces (such as Microsoft Outlook Web access)
- | Growing use of Microsoft Terminal Server and Citrix MetaFrame by larger organizations to provide secure remote access
- | Implementation of intranets and virtual private networks (VPN)
- | Responses to emergency planning initiatives in response to the attacks of September 11, 2001.

At the Council on Foundations' 2002 Annual Conference, I participated in a presentation and panel discussion concerning telecommuting in philanthropic organizations. In advance of this session, we conducted a Web-based survey of members of the Technology Affinity Group (TAG) and other interested members of the philanthropic community. The purpose was to gather up-to-date information about foundation practices, attitudes and issues concerning teleworking/telecommuting. Here's a sample of what teleworking grantmakers told us:

- | *All of our applications can be accessed remotely. It's working very well. One downside is that employees have the ability to work 24 hours a day (and some try).*
- | *Telecommuting is not for everyone, but for the disciplined, it can be a great bonus.*
- | *We do have issues about inequities telecommuting causes. It fits better with some job descriptions than with others. We find that we cannot do the vast amount of detailed writing we need to do with the phone ringing all the time. Productivity is far greater working in solitude at home.*
- | *Our policy is to provide all exempt employees with remote access to our systems. We pay for their DSL or cable modem access. Non-exempt employees on an "as needed" basis.*
- | *Remote access to e-mail is used most often. The intranet is hosted*

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*externally and is always available to anyone with an Internet connection.*

- | *Specialized financial and grants databases have restricted access for remote users.*
- | *Citrix MetaFrame terminal services is by far the most amazing and enabling option. Everything that is at my fingertips at the office is at my fingertips [at home]... The downside is that I have to have an active network connection to work, and though it is very impressive over broadband, it can feel clumsy over a less than pristine dial-up connection.*
- | *When teleworking one must not be easily discouraged as systems can go down. A good "help desk" is important, and maintaining your own set of instructions on what to check before you put in a [tech-support] call is essential.*

It's interesting to note that "Management Concerns" was identified as a major barrier by 49 percent of survey respondents, and only 31 percent of foundations have a written policy on teleworking. These are two areas that foundation leaders and human resources personnel need to address and keep up-to-date as trends and practices continue to change.

Another source of current information on this topic is the Council on Foundations' forthcoming annual *Grantmakers Salary and Benefits Report*. Preliminary findings from the 2002 survey indicate that while the proportion of grantmakers offering a variation to the official workweek has risen slightly (from 64 percent in 2000 to 67 percent in 2002), the proportion of those offering "telecommuting from home" has more than doubled, from 25 percent to 57 percent.

Today 52 percent of foundations that allow staff to work from home provide equipment to do so, and 23 percent now cover the cost of data communications.

For more information on this topic, check out <http://www.iaa.com/resources.html> to see the detailed survey results and to view a multimedia presentation on teleworking.

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## Does This Sound Familiar?

I came across this anecdote in a trade magazine:

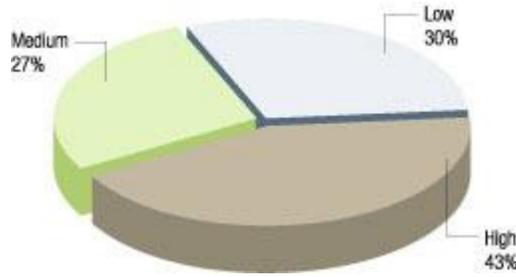
Management-speak: "We want people in-house to work together to do the jobs that need to be done."

Translation: "We change directions so often we can't let you out of yelling distance."

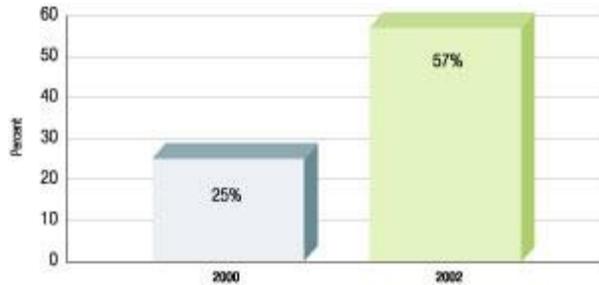
When I read those words in a presentation on telecommuting at the Council on Foundations meeting last spring, there was a definite reaction from the audience: some laughter, some nervous tittering and several heads nodding in recognition of the sentiment.

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**Importance of Teleworking for Staff in Philanthropies**

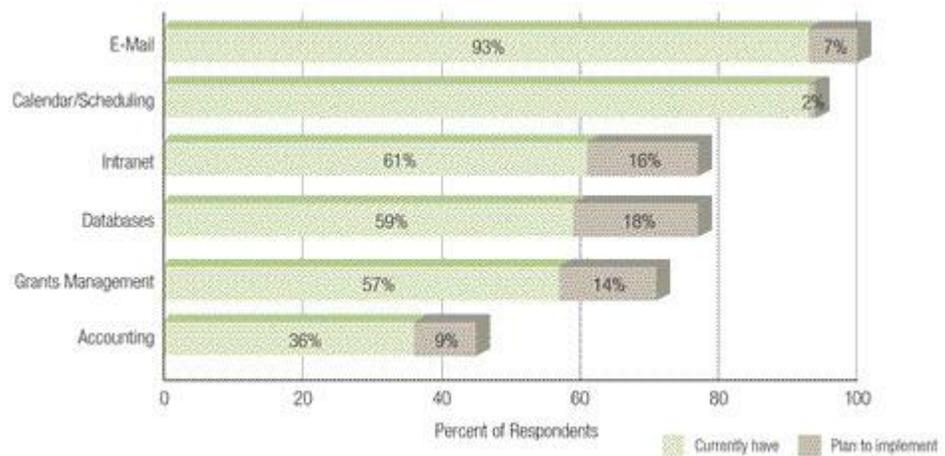


**Foundations That Offer Telecommuting from Home\***

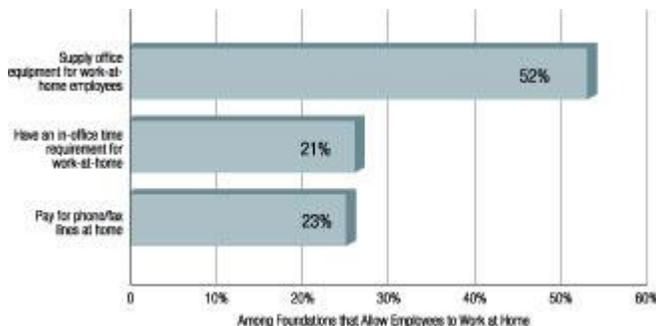


\* Among foundations that offer a variation for the official workweek

**Applications Staff in Philanthropies can Access Remotely**



**Foundation Support of Teleworkers**



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