

CASE STUDY



National Head Start Association

Employer Profile

The National Head Start Association (NHS) is a private not-for-profit membership organization dedicated exclusively to meeting the needs of Head Start children and their families. The organization represents more than 1 million children, 200,000 staff, and 2,700 Head Start program in the United States. NHS currently has a staff of approximately 40 employees at its headquarters in Alexandria, Virginia. Many of these individuals spend a great amount of their time traveling to local NHS offices across the country and they are adept at working remotely on laptops in client locations and hotel rooms.

NHSA's Telework Team

NHSA's Deputy Director of Human Resources took the lead in coordinating the start up of the program. The program was subsequently transferred to the Director of Human Resources and the Technology Director. The program is now administered by Operations staff.

Assessment and Implementation

NHSA was approved as a Telework!VA site in October 2001 and received technical assistance between December 2001 and December 2003.

At the time the Telework!VA program began, one NHS employee was teleworking; however, the organization did not have a telework policy in place.

Although NHS is located near a major transit hub, the daily commute is quite lengthy for some employees. For this reason, teleworking is a very appealing business practice, providing an additional benefit to NHS employees.

The Telework Team presented the program proposal to the NHS Executive Committee for approval in May 2002. The proposal outlined the program guidelines, procedures, and training/implementation requirements. The organization's Executive Director played an active role in all aspects of the program.



KEY FINDINGS

The focus group results greatly supported the implementation of NHS's telework program. Key findings included:

- Both employees and supervisors felt that teleworking was a positive addition to NHS's policy.
- Teleworkers enjoyed reduced commute times and costs, being closer to family before and after work hours, and the general lessening of stress in all aspects of their lives.
- NHS staff spends a good deal of their time traveling to meet members and constituents across the country. Teleworking, specifically the ability to connect to their business

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The consultant provided a comprehensive telework portfolio which included the following:

- Pilot Program Guidelines and Letter of Agreement
- Selection Surveys for Supervisors and Employees
- Objectives and Deliverables
- Coverage Notice
- Office Materials and Equipment
- Assessment Tools
- Safety Checklist
- Home Office Procedures
- Hardware and Software List

The consultant also provided training for teleworkers and managers which included, among other things, information about the telework policy, performance, time management, and technical considerations.

The Technology Director provided a plan for leasing equipment for the program and had good experience in providing support to remote workers.

Initially, 11 employees from multiple departments were identified as candidates for the telework program. Most of the selected employees and managers had responsibilities that required a great amount of writing and quiet time.

Program Evaluation

The consultant evaluated the telework program by conducting two focus groups approximately six months after employees began teleworking.

Results

NHSA had 10 employees participating in the Telework!VA program when the technical assistance concluded in 2003. They plan on adding more employees to the program. There has been no impact on how business is conducted at NHSA headquarters – it flows as smoothly as it did before the telework program was implemented. The organization reports that productivity increased markedly for those individuals teleworking. The greatest challenge was coordinating meetings, training, and focus groups due to travel and busy schedules.

Recommendations

The only recommendation for other businesses is to make sure scheduling is clear (i.e., know who is teleworking each day).



KEY FINDINGS (continued)

network, has been a tremendous help in keeping in touch with their headquarters office and keeping them apprised of new initiatives.

- The set up for technology was seamless. In-house information technology support was excellent for program participants.
- NHSA teleworkers indicated there is a lot of cross training within their organization which lends to a positive experience for those working remotely.