



BT Flexible Working and Workstyle

"At BT we have implemented flexible and home working at scale across the organisation, allowing people to work in the way that best suits them, their job, their personal circumstances and our customers. As a result we've been able not only to make large financial savings and productivity improvements but also create a more sustainable organisation through reducing travel and CO2 emissions and by increasing people's levels of satisfaction. Flexible workstyles are now business as usual, helping us to meet the demands of the market, attract and retain the right people and to cut out unnecessary cost and bureaucracy."

Neil Mellor, Director Intelligent Transport, neil.2.mellor@bt.com

Summary

Believed to be one of the largest flexible working projects in Europe, 89,500 BT employees are now involved in the BT Workstyle Project. BT Workstyle is not only a set of policies and procedures, but also a complete technical architecture in itself. This example goes beyond the traditional travel plan model towards one of complete organisational behavioural change. Demand for home working remains high with around 1,500 employees switching each year.

Strategic context

Senior managers at BT promote ICT as a mode of transport to support travel behavioural change both internally for employees and to external companies. By engaging in the workstyle programme, BT can promote the technological benefits that can be unlocked by other business customers.

Other corporate objectives that are met include:

- To drive down office costs (operational)
- Allows market agility and the ability to respond to change quickly
- The Corporate Social Responsibility benefit – drive down CO2

The working population

There are in total approximately 105,000 BT employees worldwide in 2008 with 92,000 based in the UK. In terms of Workstyle, employees are assigned to three distinct bands defined in Table 1 below.

Workstyle employee type	% of total workforce
Contractual home workers	14%
Flexible (mobile, no fixed office but not full time home workers)	71%
Primarily office based	15%

Measures / policies in place

- Home working
- Local working- relocating to BT premises nearer to home
- Job sharing
- Teleconferencing coupled with a business travel reduction policy
- Internal car sharing scheme
- Staff shuttle from Adastral Park site to Ipswich station

Benefits realised

Primary benefits

- The reduction in office space between 1993 and 2006 saves BT nearly \$950 million per annum. Within that figure, BT's 11,600 home workers (2006) saved the company over \$136 million a year in accommodation costs, and were on average 20 percent more productive than their office based colleagues. For example, home working BT call centre operators handled up to 20% more calls, giving comparable or better quality response than their office-based colleagues. The remainder of the cost saving was down to office space rationalisation & hot-desking
- There has also been 20% reduction in business travel between 2006 and 2008
- Telephone conferencing is eliminating 859,784 meetings per year, reducing CO2 emissions by approximately 97,628 tonnes, making £135 million in travel savings and £103 million per year in productivity gains. (May 2007). Table 2 below shows how these savings are calculated

Table 2 Financial Value of Avoided Meetings Resulting from Conferencing

	Value Per Meeting	Total Value for BT
Time (Opportunity)	£120	£103,174,092
Travel (Profit & Loss)	£148	£109,788,379
Overnights (Profit & Loss)	£30	£25,793,523
Total Value	£298	£238,745,994

Secondary benefits

- BT home workers are taking 63 percent less sick leave than their office-based counterparts
- Flexible working has reduced absenteeism to 3.1% (the national average is 8.5%)
- 99% of women return after maternity leave, compared with a national average of 47%
- Home based workers record 20% less absenteeism
- A reduction of commuting from homeworkers has resulted in over 7.5 million kg of CO2 emissions being avoided – the calculations for this are shown in Table 3

Table 3 – Avoided CO2 emissions from commuting amongst registered homeworkers

Daily kg CO2 emissions avoided by non-commuting	7.814
Average number of days per week at home	1.9
Weekly kg CO2 avoided by non-commuting	14.847
Annual kg of CO2 avoided by non-commuting, per person, per year (of 46 weeks)	682.962
Number of registered homeworkers	11,104
Annual kg CO2 avoided by non-commuting, all registered BT homeworkers	7,583,610

Setup costs for home workers

These are variable depending on equipment already issued to individuals. In most cases, BT staff already have a laptop, hence the only additional items are a home broadband connection, phone, mail redirection facility (PO Box) and office furniture (desk, filing units, etc.) the cost of which is limited to £600. Health and safety assessments and technical support are also carried out by internal support services.

Annual running costs for home workers

Reduced annual running office costs are sustained: annual cost to support an office based worker in London is £18,000 per annum, cost for a home worker is less than £3,000.

Additional reference material

Case Study, BT Workstyle, (2006) Flexible working provides a better work life balance, reduces environmental impact, cuts costs and improves customer focus.

Professor Peter James, University of Bradford and SustainIT (2007): Conferencing at BT - Results of a Survey on its Economic, Environmental and Social Impacts, Final Report.

Professor Peter James, University of Bradford and SustainIT (2008): Homeworking at BT - The Economic, Environmental and Social Impacts, Final Report.