

## **Telecommuting: Qualex's Powerful Work At Home Workforce**

Following in the footsteps of companies such as Cisco Systems (which allows 70% of its employees to telecommute) and ebay (which allows 48% of its employees to work from home), Qualex Consulting Services, a leading technology consulting company, has chosen to allow most of its employees to telecommute as a way to not only cut down employee and travel costs but also to entice top talent to the firm. The advantages of telecommuting – savings in time, money, travel, a flexibility in scheduling, as well as important environmental factors – far outweigh the disadvantages – time management challenges and a lack of social interaction between workers. “Telecommuting only works if customers and business associates sense no difference in the work performed in the home compared to the work done in a regular office,” says Clive Pearson, Qualex's Chief Executive Officer. “At Qualex we've seen no discernible difference in work done from home and work done in the office. The only differences we've seen are in the happiness and motivation of our employees, and those are differences we like, after all what company doesn't want a happy and motivated work force?”

Unlike most companies, who don't offer telecommuting to new employees, Qualex has embraced the concept for most of its employees, new and old. Most companies have taken a conservative attitude towards telecommuting by allowing employees to work from home on a part-time basis. Qualex, however, has embraced the concept wholeheartedly, allowing new employees to work from home once they've attended a week's worth of orientation at Qualex's world headquarters in Miami. “It's a level of trust we have in our employees; we hire the best and we expect the best, and it's a philosophy that has worked out exceptionally well for us. The savings we incur from telecommuting are returned to the employees in the form of better benefits and higher profit sharing.”

### **The Daily Commute: A Flight of Stairs**

Sarah Mitchell, Technology Practice Manager at Qualex, contends that telecommuting has helped not just herself but also her husband. A married mother of three, Sarah has a commute that is as simple as walking down one flight of steps. Sarah has “lived in five different cities since coming to work for Qualex with no interruption of work.” Sarah's telecommuting has allowed her husband to pursue graduate degrees that have made him more valuable in today's tough employment market. Sarah's productivity has also increased because she doesn't have office interruptions from fellow co-workers. Sarah has also noticed a distinct change in the way her clients view telecommuting. “Within the last 12 years, more and more client work can be done with remote access into their systems, enabling a new level of telecommuting,” she says. Remotely accessing a client's network means substantial saving in time and travel costs, she notes.

### **All Meet At Gotomeeting.com**

As a software company that has to be on the cutting edge of technology to survive, Qualex exploits every technological advantage it can, including the latest in remote meeting technology. With employees located in such far flung locales as Salt Lake City, Utah, Los Angeles, California, Washington, D.C., and Miami, Florida, as well as in international offices in the Dominican Republic and England, Qualex holds monthly employee meetings through gotomeeting.com instead of having employees fly in from all corners of the world. Qualex has also developed cloud computing technology that can manage its staff and their projects remotely through its web-based time and expense reporting and project management system.

## Remote Accessibility

Many of Qualex's employees work from home and access their customer's network information through remote access. J.R. Furman, Qualex's Senior Consultant, says, "I can do everything from home that I can do onsite and telecommuting makes me much more productive, not just because of the savings in travel time but also because I can be working on many projects at once and problems can be troubleshooted and solved quickly." For J.R., time spent not traveling means more time at home to tend to his wife and twin boys. J.R. also likes the fact that he can set up his office however he wants and doesn't have to get involved with the daily water cooler talk that can waste a lot of precious work time. "Overall, there is a better quality of life, my carbon footprint is smaller, and I have full access to the tools I might need should I need to troubleshoot a problem," he concludes.

Zeph Stemle has been a SAS developer at Qualex for eight years and recently he had to turn to telecommuting because his wife was battling a terminal illness. "Telecommuting provided me with the opportunity to manage and participate in my wife's care. She passed away in December after a four-year battle with a terminal illness, but because of telecommuting I was able to help care for her. It also allowed me to spend as much time as possible with her," says Zeph. Now a single parent of a 16-year old daughter and a freshman in college, Zeph believes telecommuting has made it much easier for him to keep the family together.

Telecommuting has many advantages over regular office work; it allows parents to provide their own daycare services to their children, which can add up to substantial savings over time; cooking at home instead of eating out every day can also reduce costs; employees also don't have to worry about purchasing expensive business attire as they can work in a more relaxed environment at home. Other advantages include workers being insulated from at-work distractions, such as office politics, annoying co-workers, and morale-lowering gossip that is prevalent in most offices. The advantages, however are not one-way: Qualex quickly discovered that finding and hiring top talent is a two-way street and often the ability to work from home is an enticing perk that exceptional talent appreciates.

Written by Andrew W. Pearson

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