FACT SHEET

Mobile and flexible

*About this tool*

**PURPOSE:** To provide answers to frequently asked questions, address common myths and offer best practices on various mobility and flexibility topics

**AUDIENCE:** Employees of all levels who are looking for information on telework, working hours and productivity, in the context of GCworkplace

**USE:**

* in presentations to employees
* in emails
* on internal websites
* in blog posts

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## Frequently asked questions

* **What is telework?**
* Telework is an arrangement that allows employees to work from home or some other off-site location. Telework agreements between you and your supervisor can vary from the informal (an occasional day working from home) to a formal full-time telework agreement. Telework has been shown to increase productivity and efficiency levels, employee satisfaction and work-life balance.
* **Will teleworking be mandatory? Will I have to work from home?**
* Telework will remain a voluntary option with the support of your manager. We encourage all who wish to try it to discuss this option with their manager**.**
* **How is telework related to workplace modernization?**
* The modernization of our workplace is a cultural change that emphasizes *how* work is being done and not *where* work is being done. Telework can help employees meet both productivity and flexibility (work-life balance) objectives.
* **Are the working hours different for telework?**
* Conditions of telework must respect the terms and conditions of employment and relevant collective agreements and this includes hours of work.

| Myth busters | |
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| **“Telework will lead to longer working hours”** | |
| This may be true for some employees, but even those employees who don’t telework may put in longer hours at the office. Effective teleworkers can accomplish their work in a more productive manner and in a more comfortable environment, which helps contribute to better work-life balance. | *Tips*   * *Discuss with your manager your preferred start and end times that fall within the core working hours of 7 a.m. to 6 p.m.* * *Ensure you have clear performance objectives (both short- and long-term) set for you by your manager.* * *Discuss any concerns regarding workload with your manager.* |
| **“Teleworkers will be less productive than if they were in the designated workplace”** | |
| Telework has been shown to increase employee productivity. This is especially true during non-routine working conditions (extreme weather, emergencies, illness, etc.) when teleworkers face little to no disruption. Ultimately, you are responsible for your performance and productivity. | *Tips*   * *Only you know where you are your most productive. You may need to try different options, then you can discuss with your manager which ones you prefer and are available to you.* |
| **“Client service will suffer”** | |
| Many of the tasks employees perform can already be done via telephone, email, teleconference or videoconference and can be easily adapted to telework without impacting client service. In cases where client service is conducted over telephone, it may be beneficial to be in a quieter environment that the home may offer. | *Tips*   * *You can arrange to telework part-time, allowing for the chance to meet face-to-face with clients when necessary.* * *Evaluate whether some current tasks could be completed in a more effective or efficient manner through digitization.* * *If you are required to be physically in the workplace due to operational requirements, see with your manager if there is still a possibility to telework, perhaps in taking turns with colleagues or through another arrangement.* |
| **“Telework and teamwork do not mix”** | |
| Most teams are not constantly interacting with one another; rather, the individual team members often do most of their work alone, using phone calls and emails to keep in touch and interact with one another. These same practices extend to telework, where team members can call, email, or videoconference with their colleagues (the latter can also be used to conduct formal meetings). Managers may choose to establish a consistent meeting schedule for team members to interact and update one another on current tasks. | *Tips*   * *As a manager, ensure there is regular and meaningful communication between you and your employees.* * *Discuss as a team if it would be beneficial to agree on a day where you are all in the workplace at the same time and schedule team meetings accordingly.* * *Establish a system to inform others of where you are working from and share your calendar with them.* |
| **“It is impossible for an employee who holds supervisory duties to telework”** | |
| The uniqueness of each position will dictate whether or not an employee in a supervisory role can telework (type of work performed, number of subordinate positions, etc.). Some supervisory employees may find they can telework full-time, while others may only be able to do so on a part-time basis or not at all. | *Tips*   * *As a manager or supervisor, you are encouraged to work remotely where possible and appropriate.* * *As a manager or supervisor, you should ensure your employees know how and when to reach you; sharing your calendar with them is one way of doing this and promotes transparency.* |
| **“Everyone will want to do it”** | |
| Telework is not a perk or a right, but is simply an option for you to consider should your work allow for it. Telework, however, is not for everyone―the type of work you perform and your current performance will factor into the decision of whether or not your telework agreement gets approved. | *Tips*   * *As a manager, carefully review each employee’s request to telework and make a decision based on organizational needs and the unique circumstances of each employee.* |
| **“Employees should not telework when meetings are scheduled”** | |
| With new readily available technologies, being on site for a meeting may not always be required. WebEx or a teleconference are a great alternative to in-person meetings. | *Tips*   * *If you need to be physically present at a meeting, ask your manager if you can start or end your day at your telework site (depending on the time of the meeting).* |
| **“Teleworkers will not be there when they are needed”** | |
| This can easily be avoided by setting guidelines for employees to be available during normal working hours as they would be if they were in the office. By establishing etiquette for response times to missed calls and emails, as well as for notifying other employees and managers when you will be unavailable for an extended period of time, you should feel comfortable stepping away for a few minutes without your absence being perceived as being unavailable. | *Tips*   * *Sharing calendars with your manager and team members is a great way for them to see when you are available or in a meeting.* * *Make use of the status in your instant messaging software to indicate your status (on a call, in a meeting, having lunch, etc.).* |

| Best practices | |
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| **Develop a team charter** | |
| A great way to foster team spirit and morale, and ensure clear communication between team members is to create a charter as a team. This can allow virtual team members to collectively define the shared values and procedures to adhere to, provide a concrete set of benchmarks for operating a virtual workplace and fosters acceptance of and general enthusiasm about team objectives. | *Tips*   * *Brainstorm with your team about the elements they think should be included in the charter such as “ground rules”, roles and responsibilities, communication styles and frequency of communications, mechanisms, language of work commitments, and measurable objectives.* |
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| **Build team spirit**  Whether your team works on set telework schedules or is fully mobile (including team members located in other cities), it’s important to make time for team building. Rather than relying on impromptu meet-ups and conversations that tend to happen when people all work together in the same office, these likely need to be planned ahead of time to ensure everyone can be available. | *Tips*   * *If all your team members are located in the same city, schedule a time once every week or two weeks where you all get together in a more informal setting (e.g. offsite meeting, early morning coffee, etc.).* * *If your team is dispersed and cannot all meet physically, ensure there is a bit of time at the beginning of team meetings to discuss non-work related topics. You can also set up a time (keeping in mind different time zones) for a videoconference where you all meet up to brainstorm or discuss various topics with no set agenda (e.g. a weekly 30 minute meeting with a cup of coffee, etc.).* |