

Technology In Our Lives

Remote Workers Are Moving Into The Mainstream

(NAPSA)—Change has become America's motto for dealing with a turbulent economy, and few things are changing more rapidly than our attitudes toward commuting to the office every day.

Not long ago, workers usually had to receive special permission from management to work from home for a day or two. Now, according to a new survey, managers often support "remote working" even more strongly than employees do.

The study, from Microsoft, was designed to assess which small-to-mid-sized U.S. cities are leading the trend toward remote working. In the markets surveyed, San Diego led the way, followed by West Palm Beach; Buffalo; Salt Lake City; Raleigh; Oklahoma City; Nashville; Charleston, S.C.; Greensboro, N.C.; and Hartford-New Haven.

The cities were measured on several criteria:

- Number of companies with remote-working policies
- Level of managerial support reported by workers
- Level of co-worker/peer support reported by workers
- Percentage of workers believing their job can be completed from home
- Percentage of workers using remote-working programs.

Employers, it seems, are becoming fans of remote working for a number of reasons. For one, working from home frequently increases productivity. At home, workers often have fewer distractions and do not lose minutes—or hours—tied up in traffic jams on the way to work.

Moreover, the costs for a company to maintain employees in an office have been increasing—everything from air-conditioning expenses to leasing rates.

With more people working

The top 10 best midsize cities for remote workers:

1. San Diego
2. West Palm Beach, Fla.
3. Buffalo, N.Y.
4. Salt Lake City
5. Raleigh, N.C.
6. Oklahoma City
7. Nashville, Tenn.
8. Charleston, S.C.
9. Greensboro, N.C.
10. Hartford-New Haven, Conn.

Source: Microsoft Corp.



remotely and using the office only periodically, office space can be shared and expansion needs are often reduced.

Technology is also contributing to the growth in the number of remote workers. Solutions from companies such as Microsoft now allow businesses to set up remote-working operations efficiently and safely.

Systems such as Microsoft Windows Server 2008, Windows Vista and Microsoft Unified Communications are designed to enable workers to connect to the office from home and have access to all the same applications that they would have in the office.

Also, Windows Vista BitLocker Drive Encryption is said to thwart any attempt to hack into information on a laptop computer that is stolen or lost. BitLocker prevents a thief from removing and booting up the hard drive and locks up the system's information if someone tampers with it.

Using technology to work from home is no longer a luxury. It's a strategy that is helping many companies make employees happier and lower costs. For more information, visit www.microsoft.com/midsizebusiness/gameplan/.