

Appendix 14 – Smarter Working

Promoting flexible working practices to reduce car travel

The introduction of flexible working practices can have a significant impact on employee wellbeing, return from maternity leave, absenteeism, and pressure on your organisations car parking. This section outlines some ways your organisation can promote more flexible working practices.

Promote Video and Tele-conferencing:

Employees are often aware of the existence of video- or tele-conferencing facilities in an organisation, but aren't familiar with how to operate them or how to resolve technical problems. An employee travel survey will reveal the extent to which people are aware of facilities, aware of how to use them and willing to use them instead of travelling for meetings.

Consider some of the following to improve uptake of video/ tele-conferencing in your organisation:

- > Introduce or upgrade equipment
- > Publicise locations of equipment currently available, and how to book it
- > Carry out workshop on how to use video/tele-conferencing equipment, and virtual meeting etiquette/ best practice
- > Develop an FAQ or troubleshooting guide, and ensure employees have access to it online and with equipment
- > Make it company policy that video/ tele-conferencing should replace face-to-face meetings where appropriate

“For Dell, investment in video-conference technology has reduced employee travel around the world, reducing employee downtime spent on travel or away from their families. Dell is also promoting the Cycle to Work scheme and Tax Saver tickets for public transport, alongside our successful car-sharing scheme. Really for us, this is all becoming a ‘win-win’”.

Denis Lucey, Director EMEA Technical Customer Services.

Technology-based alternatives to travel have helped Vodafone Ireland achieve a 45% reduction in air travel Greenhouse Gas emissions in just one year. Within the last year, Vodafone Ireland has expanded its video-conferencing facilities from 3 rooms to 12, and high quality video-conferencing facilities are now available to all staff. The company is also piloting the use of web-conferencing (all staff have access to computer webcams and headsets) and online moderated discussion workshops. With the help of staff training, alternatives to travel such as video and web-conferencing are now part of ‘business as usual’ at Vodafone Ireland.

Looking to the future, the company expects that advancement in communications technology in the next few years will allow its business travel to be reduced to an absolute minimum.

“The adoption of communication technologies such as video-conferencing is deeply embedded in our environmental strategy, and has been fully supported by our CEO and Senior Management. This level of commitment has proven essential for the sustained success of our Green Agenda and has been an enabler in bringing down our carbon emissions”, Laura Turkington, CSR Manager, Vodafone (2011).



Video-conferencing in Dell, Cherrywood



Introduce Flexi-Time

The introduction of flexi-time allows employees on infrequent public transport routes to use public transport occasionally, and may reduce pressure on car parks as employee arrival times are staggered.

Introduce Home-Working

Gauge interest in home-working from your employee travel survey and liaise with Managers about the possibility of home-working for some or all of your colleague's work. Home-working reduces staff commuting time and can also free up desk space for use as 'hot desks'.

Introduce Compressed Working Weeks

Allowing employees to work a four day week or nine day fortnight, but working longer days, will reduce the number of employees travelling on-site on any given day. This will reduce their time and costs associated with the commute, while also reducing pressure on car parks for employees who drive to work.

Highlight Policies at Recruitment

Where new employees are being recruited, make them aware that free car parking is not available, but that flexible working practices and alternatives to the car are encouraged.

British Telecom in the UK has 12,239 registered home-workers running home help-desks for customers.

According to the BT Local Business Managing Director, David Hamer, BT saves £40m per annum on accommodation (£350m as of September 2008) and has increased productivity by an average of 15%, up to 31% in some cases.

Sick leave has been reduced to 1% on average, and retention of employees has been significantly improved, with a 99% return from maternity leave compared to the national average of 70%¹¹.

¹¹ Hamer, D. (2008) *A New Way of Working? Travel Plans and Business Benefits*. www.nbtn.org.uk/pool/files/bt%20presentation.ppt; accessed 22 June 2011

