



# WILLIAM & MARY

CHARTERED 1693

## TELECOMMUTING

### Managing Employee Performance Expectations Agreement

Managing employee performance requires supervisors to answer three main questions:

- *What expectations do I have for the employee while he/ she telecommutes?*
- *How will I determine if the employee is meeting expectations?*
- *How will I provide feedback to the employee?*

#### Expectations

In setting expectations for employees who are telecommuting, follow the same approach you would in any other supervisory situation. Ensure that the standards are **specific, measurable, accepted** by you and the employee, and are **realistic**. Review the employee's current performance plan and goals, and determine if they are relevant for the telecommuting environment. If not, modify them so they are salient to the situation. Following is an example of a modified performance goal for an employee who is telecommuting.

#### Current standard:

*Oversees the production of the divisional newsletter. Ensures timely and efficient production schedules.*

#### Revised standard:

*Oversees the production of the divisional newsletter. Schedules a phone conference with appropriate parties to ensure tasks are clarified and on schedule. Ensures timely and efficient production schedules.*

The above performance goal was changed to ensure that communication would occur between the employee and coworkers. Such communication may happen naturally in the office environment, however, by indicating the expectation for a verbal conversation ensures that the communication occurs.

Supervisors who need assistance with developing or revising standards may contact the W&M Human Resources Office for guidance.

#### Assessment

Performance should be assessed against the expectations that are set forth in the *Telecommuting Agreement* and related work plans. Because telecommuting does not lend itself to in-person observation, supervisors should, also, focus on **results-based** assessment. One way to accomplish this is to have the employee turn in a *work log* documenting the work completed on days the employee is telecommuting, or to submit specific work products.

Another method is to set up *regular discussions* during which the supervisor and employee can review completed items as well as the status of items in progress. In doing so, the supervisor should ask specific questions of the employee regarding a particular assignment or task. For example, if the employee is expected to consider a new model for implementing a program based upon current literature, do not ask the employee “*What do you think?*” Such a question is vague and may not allow the supervisor to determine the employee’s understanding of what was read, or if it was read at all. Instead ask, “*What did you think about the suggested model on assessment in the Varuca article?*”, or “*What specific concepts have you come across that you think we can use in our planning?*” Such pointed questions will require the employee to elaborate, thus giving you adequate information to assess his or her performance.

## **Feedback**

Regardless of how work is documented, regular feedback is vital to the success of the telecommuting arrangement. This is especially true when problems arise. Problems should be addressed and resolved quickly before they escalate to the detriment of the telecommuting arrangement.

Give feedback just as you would with any employee. It should be direct and offer examples of where the employee is meeting, or failing to meet, expectations. Feedback should, also, give the employee an opportunity to seek clarification. In addition to feedback at regular intervals, departments should continue to carry out applicable annual performance appraisals that may fall during the telecommuting time frame. Such performance reviews must be conducted in person.

All employees who are telecommuting are required to have a Telecommuting Work Agreement on file in the Human Resources Office. This agreement only lasts for 12 months, and must be renewed each year. The agreement is done electronically through Banner Self-Serve. It is found under **Employee Forms**, then **Telecommuting Work Agreement**. The following link shows the instructions to fill out this form. [https://www.wm.edu/offices/hr/documents/forms/telecommuting\\_work\\_agreement\\_instructions.pdf](https://www.wm.edu/offices/hr/documents/forms/telecommuting_work_agreement_instructions.pdf)

In addition, it is highly recommended that the supervisor and employee, also, sign off on an Employee Expectations Agreement. This form allows you to set the parameters for the work to be done during the telecommuting. If you have questions about modifying the expectations, please contact the Human Resources Office.

*For additional information on writing, communicating, and assessing performance standards, visit:*  
[www.wm.edu/offices/hr/managerssupervisors/performance-b/index.php](http://www.wm.edu/offices/hr/managerssupervisors/performance-b/index.php)

## TELECOMMUTING – Employee Expectations Agreement

Before an employee completes a Telecommuting Agreement, the employee and supervisor must complete an Employee Expectations Agreement. This form is to help further manage expectations.

Employee Name: \_\_\_\_\_

- If the employee performs a work task where VPN is needed, the employee agrees to stay logged into VPN during working hours.
- The employee agrees to have their work phone transferred to their home location on telework days. The phone will be answered regularly as if on-site.
- The employee agrees not to conduct personal business during working hours.
- The employee agrees to keep the Outlook calendar up-to-date, and to check emails at all times.
- The employee agrees to notify their supervisor of any variations of working hours differing from the telecommuting work agreement.
- The employee agrees to notify their supervisor if their internet, phone, or VPN access is limited or unavailable immediately upon becoming aware of it. The supervisor will decide if it is necessary for the employee to come to the office to work the remainder of the day.
- The employee agrees that if leave is taken during a given week, their supervisor may require them to come into the office on regularly scheduled telecommuting days.
- The employee agrees to be reachable at all times by phone during working hours.
- The employee agrees to check and respond to emails at least once an hour during working hours.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Employee Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Supervisor Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Any non-compliance with these expectations can result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.**

## Information for the Telecommuter

To be a successful telecommuter, it is necessary to work with less structure and more freedom in completing your responsibilities. Telecommuting is not as simple as staying at home and working. It requires careful planning and discipline. Described below are basic tools for working at home to maintain or increase your level of productivity.

**Get organized** – Having good work habits from the moment commuting begins makes it easy to complete work away from the office.

**The Location** – Identify a safe location in the home as a place to work. There is no need to devote an entire room for the office at home. Some telecommuters have successfully developed a part of an existing room, a basement room, or an attic for their workstation. Locate the workstation away from distractions. Working on the couch in front of the TV does not work!

**Set a Routine** – Set a work schedule with your supervisor for telecommuting days and stick to it. Begin and finish work at the same time on telecommuting days. This helps set a routine.

**Replace the Ritual of Getting Ready for Work** – Telecommuters will no longer have the traditional office rituals of morning conversations, or coffee. Even the drive to work that symbolizes the beginning of the workday is missing. Set up new rituals for telecommuting days. Some telecommuters actually leave their house, go around the block, return, and begin their workday. Others play specific music, ride a bike, or begin working after a morning exercise session. Each worker should find a ritual that will work for them.

**Make a Daily “Things-to-Do” List** – Develop a list of goals and assignments for telecommuting days. At the end of the day, go over the list and see how much has been accomplished. It is helpful to start the list a couple of days before telecommuting. This helps to plan for all the resources needed to support activities at home. Remember there may not be access to a FAX machine, a copier, or even a computer at home. Plan the work accordingly.

**Managing the Work** – As a telecommuter, it is necessary to manage work efficiently. It is up to the telecommuter to make sure they keep well informed and continue with a high level of performance.

**Maintain Contact with the Office** – Be sure to stay in touch with the office during telecommuting days. Try establishing a buddy system with a trusted co-worker, or an administrative support person in the office who can be called once or more a day. Frequently call the office, or listen to voice mail messages, and return phone calls if you cannot forward your work phone to your home, or cell phone. Do not fall out of touch when telecommuting. Decide early in the day how accessible to be. There may be the luxury of working for three or four hours without any interruptions, but you should clear this with your supervisor before going off-line.

**Set up a System at Home** – Develop a system for organizing the work that will be done at home. Without the time to organize resources and materials there will be trails of paper and stacks of references everywhere!

**Stick to Deadlines** – While telecommuting, follow the same rules for deadlines as in the office. **Don't miss deadlines.** When mailing reports to the office, send them so they arrive the day they are due, or earlier. When sending work electronically (by modem or FAX), it should, also, arrive on time.

**Keep the Supervisor and Colleagues Informed** – The telecommuter needs to keep their supervisor informed about the status of projects, progress, and any difficulty encountered. **Supervisors, Colleagues and your department stakeholders are clients that need information on a timely basis.**

**Train Family Members, Friends, and Neighbors** – As a serious telecommuter, consider the work seriously. Be careful not to create a bad image for telecommuters. Train the people at home so there are not too many interruptions.

**Office Supplies** – Develop an understanding with family members about how office materials are used. Tell them that the office supplies are for business only. The worker may want the work space to be off limits to other members in the household.

**Do Not Telecommute if there are Problems at Home** – Avoid telecommuting on days when there may be friction at home such as family quarrels, or problems. If there is an elderly family member, an infant, or a toddler needing care, it will be difficult to telecommute and complete any work. Wait until additional help arrives to take care of those needing help, before starting to telecommute.

**Telecommuting is NOT a Replacement for Child or Elder Care** – Do not assume working at home means the ability to take care of children. There is more flexibility in accommodating childcare needs, however, it is not a replacement for childcare. When taking care of children and being a telecommuter, there are two jobs instead of one! This may preclude handling the job in a professional manner. The same is often true when older family members can benefit from someone being home with them. The key is how much time and how many distractions occur because of this care. Elder care, when balanced with work needs, can be a powerful benefit of telecommuting.

**These are areas that can bring the most benefit to the employee and their family, and in turn benefit the employer, but, also, requires the most careful thought.** The needs of the workplace must be met and expectations, and the ability to do the job, fully understood.