

Georgia Commute Options - Case Study



GE Energy

ORGANIZATION:

GE Energy

INDUSTRY:

Manufacturing and Services

LOCATION:

Atlanta, Georgia

STATISTICS:

- 30,000+ employees
- 135 teleworkers in GA
- Pilot began in 2014

REASONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION:

- Improve ability to serve global customer base
- Increase productivity
- Improve retention of talent
- Increase employee satisfaction

CHALLENGES:

Ensuring a smooth cultural change in an environment where face-to-face communication has traditionally been an important variable in career advancement

BUSINESS BENEFITS:

- Ability to recruit and nurture top employees
- Be an "employer of choice"

"We realize that great people have great choices, and by offering and embracing a flexible culture, GE Energy will continue to support the well being of our employees while implementing a strategic tool for business success. It is all about improving productivity, attracting quality applicants, retaining employees and motivating them to achieve their full potential."

- John Krenicki, Former President and CEO

The GE Energy pilot program in Atlanta was developed in 2004. Replacing an existing but little used policy for telework, the pilot program enrolled 100 employees. A steering committee was convened to tailor company policies and procedures for the pilot. John Loomis, then Vice President of Human Resources, sent an email to all GE Energy employees located in metro Atlanta, informing them about the telework program. Employees were required to obtain their manager's and Human Resource manager's approval for participation in the program. Selected employees attended a 1.5 hour training session focusing on GE Energy's program parameters, technology capabilities, safety/ergonomics, and steps for being successful teleworkers and telemanagers.

A mid-point evaluation demonstrated that employees were teleworking at a much higher frequency than was anticipated. GE Energy already had an excellent remote access system in place, which quickly allowed many of the teleworkers to transition from one day of teleworking to more days per week.

All GE Energy teleworkers were provided with laptops or desktops for teleworking and were compensated for use of High Speed Internet Access such as DSL. Teleworkers that worked away from the office and shared an office, in addition were eligible for a second phone line, printer, and fax/copier. Full-time teleworkers without a home office were also provided with office furniture.

The main challenge of the program was introducing remote work in an environment, which had been traditionally more accustomed face-to-face interactions. Both managers and teleworkers initially expressed concerns regarding visibility in a telework environment.



To learn more about teleworking, contact Georgia Commute Options.

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STAFF TELEWORKING:

Professional, managerial, and technical/skilled

PROGRAM COMPONENTS:

- Policy, program, and technology guidelines
- Safety/ergonomics guidelines
- Employees provided with computers
- Teleworkers provided with high speed Internet access
- Remote access provided through Virtual Private Network
- Training, discussion forums, and formal evaluation

LESSONS LEARNED:

- Pilot program important for global rollout
- Planning for the telephone component is as important as planning for the remote access and connectivity
- Training of teleworkers and telemanagers is critical allowing participants and managers to troubleshoot and acquire skills that facilitate teleworking

"I save 10 hours a week previously spent commuting to and from work and 200 miles each week on my car. I share a car with my wife and this program has allowed me to postpone the purchase of a new car. This is a tremendous program."

- GE Energy Teleworker

PROGRAM RESULTS

PRODUCTIVITY

- About 85% of teleworkers reported increased productivity; 50% of managers agreed.

THE WORKPLACE

- 99% of teleworkers reported increased morale as a result of the program; 75% of managers agreed.
- 92% of teleworkers did not report having problems with coworkers.
- 96% report that management and supervisors are supportive of teleworking.

PROGRAM EXPANSION

- About 99% of teleworkers and 63% of managers view teleworking as "good for the organization."
- 50% of managers in the pilot program are ready to expand the program.

As of December 2004, the GE Energy Flexible Work Arrangements program is available globally to employees at worksites where local/country laws and customs permit such programs. The pilot program in Atlanta established the groundwork for expanding the program. Currently, GE Energy has 135 employees in Georgia and 400 employees across North America utilizing telework options.

TRAFFIC IMPACTS

- Prior to the start of the program, 100% of teleworkers drove alone; after the program piloted, the drive alone rate dropped to 50%.
- At pilot program levels, GE employees will reduce 937,750 miles, 2,319 pounds of Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs), and 2,065 pounds of Nitric Oxide (NOx) annually.
- On average, teleworkers save 133 minutes each day and use that time to work more for their employer, spend time with their family, and do more home-related work.

