TELECOMPUTING IN NIGERIA: CONCEPT AND BENEFITS

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Abstract

In the past decades, perhaps, telecomputing might have been a trivial issue. But with technology shrinking the world every day, the issue has already started to shift. It is no longer a choice of whether to stay for your job or leave your job altogether. It is now a choice of whether to stay in the office or take your work with you. However, in Nigeria, telecomputing is still an evolving issue, with many unaware of it or unknowingly involved. This paper focuses on the concept and benefits of telecomputing. The paper emphasizes the benefits of telecomputing as a call to embrace it. This technology of working anywhere anytime has numerous impacts on productivity, environment and social standard of living for a balanced life. And thus, should be adopted by employers, employees and also encouraged by government policies.

Introduction

Telecomputing is doing work which you would normally do in the office at another location. It makes use of technologies such as the internet, VPN connection, email, chart, phone, fax and video conferencing. It is usually considered working from home, but it doesn't have to be that way. You can telecompute from any where these days. With the Internet, it is just as easy to telecompute from Umunze in Nigeria as it is from New York.

One way to make money almost anywhere in the world is to talk your current employer or client into becoming a global telecomputer, a computer nomad.

A global telecomputer is someone who can set up an office anywhere in the world there is a telephone and electricity.

Telecomputing is broadly defined as any method of working productively away from the office. According to the American Telecomputing association (ATA) cited in Grundstrom, T. (2007), "telecomputing is second only to casual days as the fastest-growing shift in traditional working pattern".

The concept of telecomputing or e-computing or working from home (WFH) has redefined work and work places. Work is something you do and not something you travel to, this seems to be a new age mantra of the Nigerian companies.

According to McAdams (2006), telecomputing, telework, working from home (WFH), or working at home (WAH) is a work arrangement in which employees enjoy flexibility in working location and hours. In other words, the daily commute to a central place of work is replaced by telecommunication links. Many work from home, while others, occasionally also referred to as nomad workers or web computers utilize mobile telecommunications technology to work from any location.

Virtual office

This s typically a managed telephone answering or email response service that receives and routes telephone or email messages on behalf of a small business and may provide some initial scripted response to a query.

Remote Office Centers

These are office space leasing centers which lease individual offices to employees from multiple companies in a single office location or center. The purpose of remote office centers according to Zigas, et al (1990) is to provide professional office space in locations that are near where people live, so they can cut down on the commuting, but sti1l work out of a real office with professional grade internet, phone services and security.

Co-working

This is an emerging trend for a new pattern for working. Co-working is the social gathering of a group of people, who are still working independently, who share values and who are interested in the synergy that can happen from working with talented people in the same space.

Benefit of Telecomputing

Telecomputing which implies working from home or a 'remote workstation' has shown increasing attention across the United States in the last several years, as well as growing acceptance Cutler, B. (1990), while its still evolving and coming to the consciousness of people in Nigeria. According to Edmondson, B. (1991), people commute with cars, buses, planes and trains to work, and to other activities on a regular basis; commuting is part of our lives. However, actual necessity to physically change location in order to accomplish such tasks has recently been challenged on the basis of concerns for energy conservation, the impact on our environment, a refocusing on family values, and impact in education and other issues.

Many advantages future workers and our society in general might see are presented and discussed.

Conserving Energy: Although energy utilization will continue to grow as we expand our industry and improve our standard of living, efficient use of energy will always be of prime importance. By telecomputing to work instead of using more conventional methods, there is a great potential to save energy. A tremendous amount of energy is required to produce transportation equipment such as

automobiles, buses, trains and jet aircraft (Alexander, M. (1990)). If telecomputing is promoted, there will be less use of this equipment and less energy will be required for production, maintenance and repair of these equipments. An increase in the percentage of people telecomputing to work will reduce the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and control environmental pollution

Preserves our Environment: Telecomputing preserves our environment by reducing land use requirements for highway expansion and by reducing slow moving automobile emissions Bailyn, L. (1989). Highways and parking lots are continuing to consume larger percentage of people telecomputed to work, existing highways could be reduced in size and parking lots could be converted to parks. Bailyn, L. (1989) stated that one of the largest sources of pollution is the automobile. One solution to this problem is increasing the size and number of our roads, but an even better solution is to telecompute, so we will not need additional highways, parking lots and airport in the future. And, when we do choose to drive our cars, it will be in fresh air, on less crowded streets.

Promotes Safety: by reducing highway use by people rushing to get to work. Fleming, D. (1988) maintained that there are thousands of traffic-related deaths every year and thousands more severely injured trying to get to work. In addition, there is substantial property loss associated with traffic accidents that occur as people take chances in order to make the mad rush from home to the office and frequently become impatient by traffic jam and slower travelers. With telecomputing, more and more people are becoming frustrated by the insistence that they come into the office every day, when, in fact most, if not all of their work could be accomplished from their home or site much closer to their homes.

Improves Health: It improves health by reducing stress related compromises made between family and work. Grubb, F. X. (1988) lamented that the stress associated with commuting back and forth to work away from home is rel, and telecomputing offers a renewed opportunity for workers to rediscover the joy of working from their homes. With advanced telecommunications technology, a large segment of workers can return to this mode of "work-at-home" productivity not compromising either their family living or their job productivity.

Allows Closer Proximity To And Involvement With Family And Extended Family: According to Zedeck et al (1990), working in the home offers people a greater opportunity to share quality time with family members, to promote family values and develop stronger family ties and unity. Also, time saved through telecomputing could be spent with family members constructively in ways that promote and foster resolution of family problems O'Malley, C. (1989). The strength of a society derives from the strength of its individuals and the strength of its individuals often times derives from the strength of their families.

Allows Employee Freedom: Telecomputing provides opportunity to choose an environment that is more suitable from a social and economic standpoint and to live in an area with people of common interests. For couples as well as singles, people who can telecompute do not have to quit their jobs and move, when they determine they are compatible with the town they are living in. this occurs often, following a divorce or when a single person discovers an incompatibility with the area surrounding his or her

employers business. Telecomputing affords an employee the freedom to look for another place to live, where he or she can feel comfortable both from a social, as well as an economic standpoint and live near people that have common interests, above all, remaining loyal and productive.

Improves Productivity: Time saved in telecomputing can be used to improve productivity. Zigas, et al (1990) maintained that much time is spent on unnecessary activities y people who commute back and forth In conventional manner, with telecomputing, one no longer needs to be always preparing for the commute and for being "presentable". Workers are no longer interrupted by all the idle chatter that inevitably takes place at the central work place, although some of it might be useful for the work, but a lot of it just a waste of time and perpetual interruption. However, with teleworking, you can stay up on the latest rumours at your convenience using electronic mail. For persons with health problems or handicapped person, working from home may offer some comforting and productive opportunities.

Reduces Number of People "Job Hopping" And Unemployed and Cost of Retraining: many people job hop each year, this is a peculiar and overheated issue among Nigerian youths. And much of this job hopping"" is because people want to move to new location or are totally unemployed and idle. Employees enjoy their work, and they would keep working for their present employer, but they do not like their present location. If people could move without losing their jobs, because they could telecompute, the amount of retraining would be reduced substantially. This would increase overall employee productivity while keeping loyal and productive employees on board. And also telecomputing will promote job opportunities to youths and encourage self employment.

Advantages to Employer: advantages to companies that let their employees' telecompute are numerable. According to Zigas et al, "in addition to office space savings, companies reduce parking requirements. Reduction of office rental and real estate expenses. Companies need not to maintain the overhead costs of offices and in many instances actual real estate. Also, there is increased productivity and commitment from employees. The flexibility of working from home offers to employees who have to care for children and other relatives allows them to perform better at their job.

Easier and more effective recruitment: there is a much larger pool of applicants for jobs that human resources have to choose from. Many well qualified applicants won't apply for a job simply based on location and, companies have no choice but to hire applicants that are not the right fit for the job.

CONCLUSION

As our global economy in the information age evolves, telecomputing will increasingly become a popular work style. Companies are turning to telecomputing to solve the dilemma of recruiting and retaining quality employees, ensuring productivity, controlling costs of office space and meeting environmental and social standards. Interest in telecomputing is growing among informed workers, employers, communities, and the telecommunication industry among others. But actual level of telecomputing appears to be increasing slowly, although there is little reliable data on trends. The future of

telecomputing depends on whether employers provide the opportunity to telecompute and whether workers take advantage of this opportunity, government policies can encourage both.

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