

SECTION 1 : THE ISSUES

Eworking – Balancing life-style with work-style

Eworking means doing your job from home or on the move, using communications technology. It is a way of working more and more people are considering, in an attempt to match their life-style with work-style. Advances in technology are making that possible.

This manual aims to cover everything you'll need to know to introduce Eworking to your business.

It's time for Eworking

- *Look around your office today and you will find that many desks are empty*
- *At others, people whose job requires concentration struggle through the distractions of the busy office*
- *This morning on the way to work how long did you sit in traffic, going nowhere?*
- *Have you lost a valued member of staff lately because of their other commitments?*
- *Are there vacancies that remain unfilled because you cannot find the right high-calibre people?*
- *How many skilled people cannot take up a job because the hours, and place of work, on offer do not match the time they have available?*

Most of us still work in a nine to five world, but, as our life-styles grow more diverse, it is a world that does not suit everyone. Eworking offers a real alternative.

Eworking

There are four main ways to ework:

Home: Some people do office-type jobs but work full-time from home.

Home and Office: Split the job between the home and the office. One or two days at home is typical. This is the most common way to ework.

On The Move: Some of us depend on getting out of the office to do the job. Sales people, surveyors and journalists are typical mobile workers.

Telecottage: Neighbourhood telecentres pool computers and communications resources for office workers.

We probably all know someone who works in one of these ways. Eworking has always been available to a privileged few. Now it can be available to everyone.

The Irish are keen to Ework

The Irish are keen on Eworking. Detailed research from the Telefutures Report, sponsored by Eircom and Forbairt, reveals:

The public approves of Eworking

39% of the public thinks working from home is a good thing, compared to 36% in the UK, 39% in France, and 31% in Germany.

Most of the public favour splitting time between the office and home

Half the public favour 'Home and Office' working, Only 6% favour staff working from home all the time. Banking staff were most keen on Eworking, with almost four out of five people employed in banking supportive of home-working.

Over 115,000 people in Ireland work from home all of the time or occasionally

Not all of these people would think of themselves as eworkers.

Around a third of the working population would like to ework if possible

There is a broad variation by age and region. Over a half of younger workers would like to work from home 1-2 days each week, while people living in rural areas were, understandably, particularly keen on Eworking, (56%).

The benefits to the employer

Eworking benefits the organisation as well as the individual. On productivity alone research shows that eworkers deliver gains between 15 and 40%.

A number of studies have demonstrated also that eworkers are:

- *More reliable*
- *More loyal*
- *More likely to produce better quality work*
- *Likely to take less time off*
- *Likely to stay longer with the organisation*

The eworker is a model employee.

Ten good reasons to Ework

1. Establish a reputation as a progressive employer

Organisations known as progressive employers attract better quality staff. It's a fact.

2. Attract or retain staff with specialist skills

Improved working conditions can improve job satisfaction

3. Retain staff with competing life commitments

People sometimes find their life roles change suddenly, for example having to care for an ill or elderly relative or look after a child. Often they want to remain in the workforce.

4. Accommodate disabled employees

Disabled employees may find Eworking ideally suited to their needs

5. Improve the productivity of mobile workers

Workers who must travel in their jobs, e.g. salespeople, waste time constantly returning to the office

6. Reduce your overheads

Less people in the office means reduced office overheads

7. Extend office hours

Eworkers often need to work outside of the conventional nine to five. One way to capitalise on this would be to extend sales/service hours for customers.

8. Avoid moving to larger premises

Desk sharing, or hot desking reduces the floor space needed per employee

9. Access specialist skills needed occasionally

People with specialist skills are often self-employed, spreading their time and skills around several organisations.

10. Reduce recruitment and training costs

Whether you use Eworking to retain skilled staff, or to access specialist skills, you'll reduce recruitment and training costs.

Would Eworking suit your business?

We have learned to congregate together in offices to make the complex information and paper chains we rely on in our work as short as possible. Improved communications, the personal computer, and most significantly, the Internet have undermined that logic. Many businesses are ready for the change to Eworking.

Today you can live in Dublin and work in New York. Or if your horizons are different, live in Kilrush and commute to Cork (electronically of course!).

On large international projects work chases the sun around the globe. It is not unknown for programmers in Ireland to pass work onto San Francisco, from there to New Delhi, and have it arrive back on Ireland next working day to be taken up again.

Some jobs are more suited to Eworking than others

A telesales representative would make an ideal eworker, a production line operative clearly would not. In assessing the suitability of a job for Eworking one might consider:

- *The information content of the job*
- *The autonomy of the job tasks*
- *How it is managed*

Some people are most suited to Eworking than others

The manager who spends one day a week at home has very different skills from the telesales representative who is entirely home-based. Working remotely from colleagues puts extra demands on people. Inevitably some will be more able to meet those demands than others.

A home-based worker must:

- *Show good self-discipline*
- *Have strong communication skills*
- *Be able to work independently*
- *Be trustworthy*

Some organisations are more suited to Eworking than others

Organisations can fail their eworkers by not providing sufficient support. An organisation should:

- *Never compel anyone to ework against their will*
- *Train managers to get the best from eworkers*
- *Endure eworkers are integral team members.*

Case Study 1:

Eworking Policy pays dividends at Hewlett-Packard

Hewlett-Packard, the worlds second largest computer company, introduced eworking in Ireland in 1997, as part of a new corporate policy. Today almost a quarter of the 100-strong sales company has the ability and infrastructure to work from home, or on the move.

Kevin Sweeney, head of the Test and Measurements business, piloted Eworking hoping to avoid the one-and-a-half hour commute from his home in Co Meath to the office in Blackrock, Dublin. Now he comes to work via ISDN, connecting to the Internet and to HP's own internal network. "I began by forcing myself to stay at home when there was no obvious reason to come into the office. This required discipline. Now it is the other way round."

In a typical week Kevin will spend two days at home, two days on the road meeting customers, and one day in the office. Following his lead, the seven strong Test and Measurement sales team have all switched to Eworking. While he might not see some of his team during the week they are in constant communication.

"My number one objective is to develop my people. I would not work this way if I felt I could not achieve this." HP is recognised globally as a progressive employer, something Kevin Sweeney puts down to trust. "The company puts its trust in the individual and the individual reciprocates. We then manage by setting objectives and measuring results."

Eworking is open to anyone in the company, permission to ework is made by job analysis rather than personal assessment. That even includes the managing director of Hewlett-Packard Ireland Sales, who works at least one day a week from home.

The benefits have been felt throughout the company. "Eworking is much more efficient. Throughout the company there is the feeling that it has been a very positive development." Individuals report a greater sense of well-being too, from having more time with their families. No wonder Fortune magazine readers recently voted Hewlett-Packard the number one most admires computer company.

Case Study 2:

See the results Nortel have achieved

In 1997, Nortel extended its worldwide HOMEbase Eworking project to cover 3,200 employees. The results so far with regard to improved employee satisfactions and increased productivity have been so good that it is intended to massively expand the scheme within Nortel. The ultimate goal is for 20% of the company's global workforce to utilise Eworking.

So far the benefits are obvious:

- *Over 90% of eworkers stated they had increased job satisfaction*
- *Compared to other Nortel employees, eworkers were found to have an average of 10.4% higher overall job satisfaction*
- *88% of employees reported increases in productivity*
- *On average, employee productivity had increased by 22%.*

Case Study 3:

"An ten hour bonus per week actual working time for 3Com "

Jim McGovern, Sales Manager of 3Com Corporation in Ireland has an extremely busy schedule, yet he works principally from a home office, and keeps just what he describes as a 'footprint' at the 3Com plant in north County Dublin.

" My remit is to be out among my customers as much as possible, so by Eworking I can be logged on to the office network by eight in the morning. A couple of hours later I've dealt with the administrative and communications side of my day and I can head out for a meeting with a customer without fighting the commuter traffic".

"ISDN has given me a new lease of life in terms of time saved," says McGovern. "From my little office at home in Leopardstown I can work on the office network with a laptop computer and the speed of operation is comparable to being in the main office. Working the way I do is no longer as unusual as it once was. Many companies and executives are now realising that what we traditionally called 'the office' is in many respects just a set of services and communications."

3Com is a pioneer of modern Eworking, so the ethos is firmly in support of this style. Also 3Com is one of the world leading networking and communications companies, so the equipment and systems are absolutely state of the art. "Because the ISDN connection gives a wide 'pipe' to my desk at home, it takes a relatively short time to transfer the files-and even that is improving all the time with clever data compression software". McGovern quotes the example of a tender for a major contract which he worked on with two colleagues, one in Britain and one in Northern Ireland. "We had absolutely no problems working in real time, exchanging files or accessing the latest technical information from the US – I think we actually met once on that one!"

Jim McGovern's home set-up is technically a single LAN in itself which is actually configured and managed remotely by the MIS department back at 3Com. It is part of the company's infrastructure, connected to the Intranet servers in Blanchardstown by ISDN dial-up and serviced in the same way as the rest of its IT resources. A remote support and diagnostics mean that if there are any glitches, There is seldom any need to send out a field engineer.

Jim McGovern reckons he spends about three and a half hours a day on the network, mostly from his home office. Telephone traffic is automatically managed since 3Com has a system of LIW (Location Independent Working) numbers that mean he can be reached immediately whenever he is logged into the system.

Commuting to Blanchardstown would be at least an hour each way so the 10 hour bonus in actual working time is very valuable indeed-when I get into my car it is to go directly to a customer, not to get to a specific place in order to start work! In any event I have always found there is a tendency to become a little office-bound in the traditional way of working. The sales function is all about minding your customers and Eworking by ISDN for the essential office related tasks gives me the maximum time to be out and about doing just that”.

Could you get more from your mobile workers?

Mobile working is a special case of Eworking. Some jobs still require a high degree of face-to-face contact and travel. Salespeople, journalists, surveyors, and transport workers are just some of the roles that require people to be constantly on the move to do their job.

Computers and communications-mobile phones, portable computers, digital cameras, etc.-help them so their jobs better.

The salesperson downloads the day's schedule, delivers orders, gives presentations from CD-ROM and soon will even take payment over the network.

The newspaper photographer captures breaking news in Belfast and has it on the page in Dublin in minutes thanks to digital photography and GSM telephones.

The transport company optimises schedules and tracks events on the ground using satellite-controlled Global Positioning Systems.

These are just some of the growing number of mobile workers empowered by technology.

Case Study 4:

On the road with Flexible Multimedia

Cork-based Brendan Thompson, Sales Director of Flexible Multimedia spends up to three days a week out of the office. Flexible Multimedia, a supplier of multimedia training software to the corporate sector, has offices in Dublin and Cork, but Brendan could find his working day spent anywhere on Ireland. He could not do his job in this 'hands on' way without his portable computer and Eircell GSM mobile phone.

On a typical day he might deliver and set up a multimedia training suite in one company, climb back into the jeep drive 50 miles to pay a sales call on a potential client, then so the same again to replace software in another. When on the road his jeep is his office, calls from his direct line are forwarded to his Eircell mobile or directed to his messaging service.

“Service is an important part of the job, and I like clients to be able to reach me at all times. I do not give out my mobile number, key clients have my direct line number on the office and with Call Forwarding they have one number that reaches me wherever I am. We pay the difference for the stretch from the office to the mobile.”

Brendan uses a multimedia Pentium portable computer to give sales presentations and to pick up and respond to e-mail throughout his day. "Mobile working is much more efficient. I do not waste time going into the office every day, and still I never miss any calls of e-mails."

Flexible Multimedia does not have a formal Eworking policy, but several of the Dublin-based staff work from home one or two days each week, including the managing director.

Questions & Answers

Studies have shown Eworking can deliver productivity improvements of between 15 and 40%, but it can be difficult for the manager to prove. Consider why:

Are you measuring the right thing?

If the organisation introduced Eworking to retain staff are you measuring staff retention? Did you hope to reduce office overheads? Are you measuring overhead reduction?

Just what is productivity anyway?

Should a machine operator make 100 widgets last week and 115 this week then productivity has improved 15%. But how do you measure the productivity of someone who works with information. Do you count on what they wrote?

Attempts to measure productivity are often misconceived. Some suggest effectiveness may be a better metric. Effectiveness is an amalgam of:

- *How much*
- *How well*
- *How timely*

At what level do you measure?

Are you measuring the processes rather than the results? Should you measure at the individual, team, department or organisation level?

Of course, measure. Identify the success metrics, distinguish between productivity and effectiveness, and choose the right level to collect data; then one should be able to demonstrate the effectiveness of any Eworking policy.

Managing the flexible workforce

Managers worry: "how will I manage?" They shouldn't. If they already manage by setting targets and monitoring performance they will find that little changes with Eworking. Eworkers, like any other employees, are given targets and expected to meet them (Management by Objectives).

- *Training helps managers to get the most from eworkers*
- *Regular progress meetings give feedback and help the eworker feel part of the team. Constant and meaningful contact between manager and employee should take place by telephone.*
- *Agreed short term objectives yield high quality results.*

Next Steps

So now you know about Eworking. Perhaps you feel that it would work for you, but you are unsure how to proceed. Read Section Two-Eworking Solutions and explore some of the technology issues. Then follow the simple methodology laid out in Section Three-Your Organisation. Here you will find detailed information on how to make Eworking a success in your business.

SECTION TWO : TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS

Technology Matters

Technology has played an important role in the astonishing changes that have taken place in our working lives. The Internet has brought Irish enterprise to the world and the world to Ireland; the laptop and mobile phone have made the office portable and personal; while the quality digital communications network (ISDN) has provided us with the confidence to do business remotely. It's a wired world with Ireland well pleased to exploit it.

This is true of Eworking. Getting the technology right is an important aspect of any Eworking plan. A brief outline of the essentials required follows. With this manual, you'll also find a complete list of Eircom's products and services suitable for Eworking.

Technology for Eworkers

If work is to truly become 'something you do, not somewhere you go' information access must be totally transparent. At home or in the office the information resources available should be as rich as possible. That means arming the eworker with the technology to get the job done.

However, this need not mean a large upfront investment. You may prefer to start with just a telephone line, and build up the home office bit by bit.

A basic eworker technology package might include some of the following:

- *A personal computer*
- *Office software*
- *A printer*
- *A fax/modem and/or a fax machine (and a terminal adaptor if using ISDN)*
- *A desk and office chair*
- *Secure storage space*
- *A dedicated telephone (either PSTN or ISDN) line*
- *A business telephone set*
- *An answering machine or voicemail services*

A standard telephone line would suffice for the occasional foray onto the Internet to pick up e-mail, or send and receive files. ISDN access to the corporate LAN and the Internet would be more appropriate to intensive information sharing.

Digital ISDN technology offers several advantages over the conventional telephone network:

- *Instant connection and disconnection to and from the network*
- *High speed information exchange*
- *High quality error-free digital lines*
- *Multi-device access (using a terminal adaptor, a telephone, fax, and PC can share the same line)*

With ISDN (Integrated Services Digital Network), the user can telephone, fax and transmit data 'as usual', but with several enhancements:

- *One ISDN Basic rate line provides eworkers with 2 high speed channels, which can be used independently, e.g. to make a telephone call and refer to a computer file simultaneously.*
- *The amount of information, which can be transmitted per second, can reach many times that of the conventional analogue telephone network.*
- *The time needed to establish a data connection is much shorter (less than 2 seconds compared to 12 seconds on the analogue telephone network).*
- *Businesses may check that the incoming call is actually coming from the Eworker's line thanks to Calling Line Identification (CLI).*

As ISDN-linked ework station is just another machine on the office network. The Eworker logs on at home in the same way as if at the office and, can make use of the network facilities, such as incoming calls are distributed optimally between a number of phones, including a Eworkers' telephone set. In addition, the PSTN network is continually offering more and more functionality's, such as voicemail and Call Forwarding.

Internet access offers a gateway to services, information and markets from all over the world via the World Wide Web (WWW). Indeed, the Internet has become the fastest growing business communications tool in the 90s. Sending or receiving electronic mail or e-mail is one of the more basic uses; there are a whole range of other services including marketing and setting from your own website.

Within companies the Internet has brought the power and flexibility of the Internet to any TCP/IP network, with websaver software and Internet browsers.

Firewall security allows users to interact with each other and access to the Internet while keeping intruders out.

Technology for mobile workers

Technology has transformed work on the move, making the mobile worker more efficient. A laptop and mobile phone are the essential mobile technologies but there are a range of other products and services that would enhance mobile working, such as GSM data/fax, and Calling Cards. Users can send and receive e-mail and consult information services via GSM. It is also possible to mobile employees to network with the office LAN using laptops while on the move.

A typical set-up for a mobile worker might include some of the following:

- *A laptop*
- *Office software*
- *A portable printer*
- *A GSM telephone*
- *A GSM fax/modem*
- *A Calling Card/Chargecard*
- *A Pager*
- *Call Forwarding, and a Call Answering or voicemail service*

Technology for team workers

Eworking is also for people who work as part of a team. Technologies that facilitate teamworking include:

- *Groupware*
- *Voice conferencing*
- *Video conferencing*

Groupware is a mix of business applications and communications software that gives remote workers a central location for shared documents, and a means of collaborating together at a distance. Various software packages are available to facilitate working together at different locations.

Examples of functionalities within a groupware environment are:

- *Video/Voice Conferencing: consultation between groups and/or individuals who participate via their workstations from different locations. Communication takes place via voice, video and/or text. Multimedia applications will become more important and more user-friendly in the near future. Her too, ISDN can play an important role, since rapid data transmission is necessary, for example, for video conferencing.*
- *Meeting Systems: a system, which consists of, interconnected workstations. Participants sit at their workstations and can type in comments, which can then be read by all the participants.*
- *Bulletin Boards: anyone can react to other people's documents.*
- *Joint Editing: various people can work on a document at the same time.*
- *Electronic Mail: memos, letters and documents can be sent to and/or received from one person or a number of people.*
- *Workflow: documents can be routed automatically and in the correct order through those people in the organisation who are responsible for a specific part of the process*
- *Agenda: for co-ordinating and controlling meetings.*
- *Team Memory: a group's joint memory in which specific documents can be stored, consulted and manipulated.*

Technology at the office

Eworking's success depends on a robust technology infrastructure, in the office as well as at home or on the move.

A typical office IT infrastructure to facilitate Eworking might include:

- *A dedicated network with dial-in access*
- *Security software*

A computer dedicated to meeting the needs of eworkers and mobile workers bridges the gap between PSTN and ISDN telephone lines and the office LAN. It may include software to authenticate that users who dial in are who they say they are, and offer dial back security. The leading computer operating systems all support remote access services. Should eworkers connect to the office LAN across the Internet, one would also require Internet firewall software to keep out unauthorised individuals and unknown software. The user of a PIN-code as authorisation is one option with Calling Line Identification (CLI): the central computer 'recognises' the eworker and opens the connection. Setting up closed user groups also contributes to secure management.

SECTION THREE : YOUR ORGANISATION

Introducing Eworking in your organisation

In the past Eworking has been the preserve of the few, those with sufficient clout in the organisation work the way they want to. You may wish to introduce Eworking on an ad-hoc basis, but many companies prefer to develop a eworking policy. With this generic six step programme any organisation might put a Eworking policy in place for all their employees;

- *Canvass support*
- *Identity scope*
- *Define solutions*
- *Implement pilot*
- *Evaluate*
- *Roll-out*

Canvas Support

The key to success is to establish a committed project team early on, comprising representatives of the major stakeholders in the organisation, together with someone who has expertise in the field. Stakeholders might include:

- *A Senior Manager*
- *The Human Resources Manager*
- *The IT or Comms Manager*
- *A Union/Worker Representative*
- *A Ework Expert*

Start with an agreed objective. This may be as vague as, “to be known as a progressive employer”, or as precise as, “to improve productivity by 15%”. It is more important that there is consensus than the objectives are listed in the Ten Good Reasons to Ework box on page 3.

Identify Scope

Not all organisations are suited to Eworking. Not everyone makes a good eworker. During the scoping phase the project team should collect data on:

- *Openness to Eworking at management level*
- *Openness to Eworking at employee level*
- *Which jobs are appropriate to Eworking*
- *What tasks within those jobs might be eworked*
- *Current IT infrastructure*
- *Current telecommunications infrastructure*

Define Solutions

Any Eworking policy can only be implemented in the context of the data gathered in the Identify Scope phase. If for example management is implacably opposed to the project it will not proceed. Or if

the team has discovered that the telecommunications infrastructure is insufficient to support large numbers of mobile and home-based workers then the scheme will have to be limited or the infrastructure upgraded.

A task and job analysis will suggest a range of Eworking options. Some jobs, e.g. teleservices support, might be done entirely from home; others, such as sales or customers services, might be appropriate to mobile working. One will probably find that the greater number of office jobs could be partially carried out from home, but have a substantial office-based requirement too.

Implement Pilot

Organise a pilot before rolling the programme out to the whole company. Research during the Identify Scope phase will have identified employees who are keenest on Eworking. From among this group one might pick a representative sample whose jobs are suitable for Eworking and whose work modes will span the various options you wish to evaluate.

It is important to:

- *Have a clearly defined objective for the pilot*
- *Choose a pilot group because it will deliver relevant data and is representative, not because it is expedient*
- *Design tools, e.g. questionnaires, open ended interviews to collect data from the pilot*
- *Emphasise this is a pilot with no commitment to continue Eworking after the trial has ended*
- *Make sure that members of the pilot clearly understand its objectives*

Evaluate

This phase of the implementation involves an evaluation of the pilot phase, compilation of a report to management, and feedback of the results to employees.

The project team set the objectives and defined the data collection tools. Provided this was done properly the data should suggest the format and conclusions of a report. The report should be written in simple and easy to understand style and should provide feedback to all interested parties – management, employees, and workers representatives.

Roll-out

Should the management decide to proceed to Eworking it is important to convey the limits of the policy to employees immediately. Obviously there will be limitations on available resources, some jobs will not be appropriate for Eworking, and some employees will not be suited to it. Transparency in the application of the policy will ensure that expectations are not raised beyond what can be delivered.

Human resources should:

- *Set an overall target for the number of employees who can work flexibly*
- *Decide how this total will be apportioned across departments*
- *Delegate decisions on who can work flexibly to department level*

Inevitably some people who want to work flexibly will be disappointed. Managers have an important role to play in ensuring that the roll-out goes as smoothly as possible. Anyone who is turned down for Eworking should be given clear reasons why.

Training should be given to eworkers and their managers.

The project implementation team should meet after an agreed period to assess how the roll-out has worked, and to suggest changes that might improve its effectiveness.

Extend the existing employment contract

While eworkers should be treated equally to office-based colleagues there are some special considerations that might be drafted into an agreement additional to a contract of employment.

- *Specify a trial period during which the organisation and the individual see if the new work-style suits*
- *Reserve the right to terminate the agreement with a notice period, and give the eworker the right to come back to the office full time.*
- *Employee rights and benefits should not be affected by the decision to ework*
- *Agree core working hours so that employer and employee understand the parameters of the Eworking arrangement.*
- *Retain the right to flexibility. You might need the eworker in the office when they expect a day at home.*
- *Who will be responsible for equipment and stationery. Include a statement on ownership, restrictions on the use of home-based equipment, and a commitment to cover insurance.*
- *Clearly establish the organisation's responsibility for communication cost, e.g. the installation of ISDN lines, payment of usage and rental charges. Itemised telephone bills can minimise misunderstanding.*
- *Who is responsible for utility charges in the home: heating, electricity, gas etc.*
- *Emphasise data confidentiality. Suggest that all documents are stored securely at home and/or keep a log in the office, detailing all confidential documents removed from the office to home.*
- *The organisation should be concerned that the home working environment conforms to the European Directives. While the company has no right to enter anyone's home it might request that the employee agrees to an initial, and annual inspection of their home work area to ensure that they are working in an appropriate environment.*
- *Subject to agreed home inspections the organisation could acknowledge responsibility for any work-related injuries incurred on company business at home.*
- *Consider a disclaimer absolving the organisation of any responsibility for tax, insurance, housing authority, and/or business rates implications of an employee choosing to work from home.*

Eworking is not a legal entity

For Revenue and Social Welfare purposes a worker is either an employee or self-employed, though the distinction between the two can be blurred. The distinction the Revenue makes is whether an individual has a 'contract of service' (i.e. an employee), or a 'contract for services,' (i.e. a self-employed person/independent contractor).

Where a eworker works in one member country and their employer is based in another, the European Convention of the Law Applicable to Contractual Obligation applies. This establishes the principle of freedom of choice as to which nation's law is applied. A contract shall be governed by the laws chosen by the parties, subject to the proviso that the choice

made should not deprive the employee of any rights that would be applicable in the absence of choice.

Home-based workers are covered by the same legislation as their office-based colleagues.

The main relevant acts are:

- *Safety, Health, and Welfare at Work Act (1989)*
- *Data Protection Act (1988)*
- *European Display Screen Directive (Irish Law 1993)*
- *European Use of Work Equipment (Irish Law 1993)*

The Data Protection Act (1988) specifically relates to personal data. It is a criminal offence to process personal data when not registered (when required) with the Data Protection Commissioner, or to disclose personal data to a third party without authorisation.

The Act applies even where an organisation does not have to register with the Data Protection Commissioner. The onus remains on the employer to fulfil Data Protection requirements.

Other Contractual and Financial Issues

Employer's Liability Insurance

Employer's liability insurance is usually specific to the address on the policy document. One may have to pay an extra premium to extend cover to home-based workers. Employers should also check that their equipment held in an employee's home, or used on the road, is covered by to organisation's insurance policy.

Home Insurance

Domestic insurance companies have become quite progressive about home-based working, provided they are kept informed. Some may even reduce premiums on the grounds that having someone at home all day increases security. Other companies have special policies specifically for home workers that include personal liability insurance and cover for employer's equipment on the premises.

Taxation

Generally, all non cash benefits and expenses provided to employees may be liable to be taxed; therefore if an employee is allowed personal use of a home office computer, the employee could be liable for tax on that benefit (although most amounts would be very small). Therefore some companies explicitly forbid personal use of equipment.

Payment for home office heating and lighting expenses are more difficult to quantify than telephone expenses. Employers may pay allowances to cover home office costs, reimburse expenses, or not cover such expenses at all (for example where it is felt that savings in travel costs balance out any extra costs that may be incurred). Travel is another unclear area. An employee working mainly at home can argue that home is the usual place of work and travel to the office is business travel, and therefore not liable to tax. To avail of this, the employer should formally instruct the employee to work from home.

A theoretical liability to Capital Gains Tax, on the sale of their home, could be incurred by a eworker where a room is exclusively given over to business use. CGT liability should not be an issue where a room at home has dual use for domestic and work purposes.

Mortgage and Tenancy Agreements

Home owners would be advised to inform their mortgage lender, and tenants to tell their landlords that they intend working from home. Usually this would not be a problem for computer-based work, since the public will not be calling at the home.

Planning Permission and Business Rates

Planning permission is required if there is a 'material' change of residential property. However this is not required if there is no change to the external appearance of a property or increase in traffic. For example, installation of a desk and a computer in a spare room obviously does not require planning permission.

If a home office has formal planning permission, this may make it liable to business rates, but this rate only applies to the portion of the house used as an office. In addition, normally a 'six o'clock' rule is applied – if after 6pm the room reverts to domestic use, it is not subject to business rates.

Their Health, Your Responsibility

Whether an employee is working at home, on the move, or in the office, their health and safety is the responsibility of their employer under the Safety, Health and Welfare Act (1989). Responsibility for carrying out risk assessments and for the implementation of training programmes rest with the employer.

An employer ought to inspect the home-based work environment and ensure eworkers are trained. Employees need not allow access to the home but an employer can and should insist on a home inspection before allowing anyone to e-work.

Health & Safety Authority inspectors do have the authority to inspect the home working environment without a court warrant, under Section 40 of the Health Safety and Welfare Act. Fire Inspectors, environmental control, and planning officials can also gain access to the home office.

Relevant European Directives on 'Display Screens' and 'Use of Work Equipment' were incorporated into Irish law under the General Application Regulations 1993. The latter puts a duty on employers to ensure that equipment used by employees is without risk to their health and safety, of to take measures to minimise the risks.

- *Evaluate workstations to assess and minimise the risk of eye strain, muscular problems or work stress*
- *Design work load so that it includes breaks away from the screen*
- *Ensure that the work environment complies with regulations on lighting, reflections, glare, noise, heat and humidity and suitability for purpose of software*
- *Provide eye-sight tests as requested*
- *Offer training*

Home inspections must be included as part of any systematic Eworking policy. There ought to be an initial inspection and regular follow-up visits by staff with a Health & Safety background. Unlike some of our European partners there is nothing in Irish Health & Safety laws dealing with privacy or the separation of work and family life. However, the Irish Constitution recognises a right to privacy.

1. THE BASICS

Below you'll find information on the essentials needed to set up a home office. The beauty of these products and services is that you can pick and choose just what you'll need for their requirements. This allows you the flexibility to add more complex products when required, and to ensure that every eworker has the set-up that's right for them

Product Description

Dedicated Telephone Line

Why not install an additional telephone line for business use, or solely as a fax/dial-up connection? This separates business and personal calls and avoids tying up the home phone line. So you'll never miss that important call. Or why not gain the benefits of the advanced features of the 2x64k channels of Basic Rate ISDN? This is suitable if you need high-speed information transfer and Internet access while simultaneously using your line for fax or voice calls.

Telephone Sets and Systems

A wide range of fully guaranteed and Department of Communications approved telephones are available. Particularly suitable for the Home Office are our Advanced Phones which are compatible with Call Management Services, offer LCD display, memory for programming numbers, Handsfree operation, Hold and Last Number redial facilities. Cordless phones allowing crystal clear call clarity with complete portability around the home are also popular. Or why not invest in a combined phone that also acts as an answering machine, fax and copier? Many of our telephone systems also allow extensions to be installed at home so callers have access to you using the same number whether you're at home or work: and you have the same range of functions available as at your office desk.

Call Management Services

To help you make the most of the phone and ensure you'll never miss a call, we have a range of Call Management Services which are all free of connection and rental charges. Call Answering provides you with your own mailbox for callers to leave messages when you can't take their call. When you are already on the phone, Call Waiting lets you know with a discreet 'beep tone' on your line if another caller is trying to get through to your number. You then have the option of ignoring the other call or switching over to it and holding your first call. Call Forwarding allows you to divert calls from your own telephone number to any local, national or mobile number. Your calls follow you – useful for those days when you're out of the office or away from base. And if you need to talk to 2 people simultaneously no matter where they are, 3 Way Calling allows you to do just that.

Answering Machines

As an alternative to Call Answering, TE also provides a range of standalone answering machines ideal for call screening and remote access. Several of our advanced phones include a built in answering machine, as do most of the combined fax/phones on offer.

Fax Machines

As the leading supplier of faxes to the Irish market, we have a machine for you whether you're looking for a basic version or a top of the range plain paper model. Particularly popular are combined fax/phones, many of which also offer copier, scanning, and answering machine facilities. Most models offer AutoDial storage, remote access, automatic cutters and feeders. Many of the plain paper fax machines are also PC compatible. Our list of suppliers includes Sagem, Sharp, Panasonic and Olivetti.

CD Directory

To cut out the need for Directory Enquiries, and provide instant access to 6 telephone directories, why not buy our Directory on CD-Rom. This is fast and easy to use on your own PC. Accessories Even something as simple and inexpensive as a telephone extension lead and a longer handset cord can make it easier to use the Home office phone. A headset is also useful if you're on the phone a lot.

2: TRANSMITTING DATA

For those working away from the office, transmitting information is their and your key priority. You need fast, secure and efficient transmission options. Listed below are a range which cover every need, depending on the volume and location of information.

Product Description

PSTN Dial-up

For occasional use such as downloading email, a standard PSTN line connection. We recommend an additional line dedicated for this use. Although most PCs now have internal modems, TE also supplies an external modem should you require one.

ISDN

If you want to handle voice, data, images and video at greater speed, you'll need a Basic Rate ISDN line. This gives you 2 x 64 k channels (which can be used singly, together, and with compression) for high-speed secure information transfer, remote LAN access, Internet access, and simultaneous fax/voice calls.

Datacomms equipment

To use ISDN, you'll need an ISDN card or an external terminal adaptor. TE supplies enhanced terminal adaptors, which allow for simultaneous applications and come complete with extensive after sales support. TE also sell routers for the heavy volume user who requires more security

Fax Machines

If you need to send and receive written documents, TE offers a range of Sagem, Sharp, Panasonic and Olivetti fax machines. Most models offer AutoDial storage, remote access, automatic cutters and feeders. Many of the plain paper fax machines are also PC compatible. Particularly popular are combined fax/phones, many of which also offer copier, scanning, and answering machine facilities.

Eircom.net

Eircom.net, part of Eirtrade – Ireland's leading provider of Interactive and Internet solutions, provides for high-speed access to the Internet, World Wide Web and Email. A unique feature is that it is accessed for the price of a local call nationwide. A 24-hour Helpdesk is also available. Free starter packs (offering registration and one month's subscription) are available.

PCs

TE sells Compaq PCs and Laptops, which is one of the best known yet affordable ranges in the market today. All come with Pentium Processor, MMX Technology and are Internet Ready. We also stock a

range of Hewlett Packard and Olivetti printers, featuring speedy full colour printing.

Mobile Data

Your GSM mobile phone used together with a PCMCIA Card and a laptop will enable you to transmit data. TE also stocks mobile phones such as the Nokia Communicator which can be used for email, Internet and file transfer applications

Other Data Services

TE also supplies a range of Advanced Data Services such as Eirpac, Frame Relay, Private Circuits (National and International) and Virtual Private Networks (National and International). Different options depending on your security, speed and data volume requirements are available

3. ON THE MOVE

Today, most people spend at least some of their working day out of the office. A simple solution to the communication challenges this presents may include a Pager and a Chargecard. Or why not try Call forwarding and a mobile phone for two-way communication. For the more advanced user, TE also provides a range of Laptops, and Mobile Data options.

Product Description

Call Management Services

Free of connection and rental charges, Call Forwarding allows you to divert calls from your own telephone number to any local, national or mobile number. Your calls follow you yet the caller is automatically transferred to your new location. So you can divert your office phone to your home office phone, or your home office phone to you mobile. And if you are out of touch, Call Answering or TE's range of Answering Machines can take a message for you.

Eircom Chargecard

If you travel within Ireland or abroad, why not get a free Eircom Chargecard. You can use this from virtually any phone – public, private or hotel – to make all your calls and have them billed, itemised free of charge to your telephone account or credit card. Not only does it save on costly payphone and hotel rates, but you save on the hassle of expense claims too.

Pagers/Cellular Messaging Service

Pagers connected to Eirpage gives nationwide coverage around the clock to ensure you can be contacted with a text or numeric message instantly. TE supplies Philips and Motorola pagers. Why not use a pager in connection with your mobile (TE's Cellular Messaging Service). Diverted calls are answered in your name and a written message sent to you.

Mobile phones

Eircell, Ireland's leading mobile phone provider, provides coverage nationwide and in over 50 countries worldwide. Whether you opt for Analogue (088) or GSM (087) coverage, TE has a range of Nokia, Motorola, Philips, Siemens, Panasonic and Ericsson phones to suit your need and your budget. A range of Eirtime options include talk-time, and a variety of added services such as Playback, Eircell's 24-hour answering service, help you get the most from your phone. GSM phones also support mobile fax and data services, and EirText and EirOffice allowing you to send and receive when out and about.

Mobile Accessories

TE sells a variety of accessories including batteries, cases, car chargers and also supplies and installs a variety of car kits.

Mobile Fax

When you need to send/ receive a hard copy right away, TE's Mobile Fax fits in your briefcase and also offers scanning, copying and Internet capability.

Laptop

TE's Laptop, including the highly renowned Compaq, which can be used while away from base. A PCMCIA card will let you use this together with your GSM phone

4. BACK AT BASE

To enable effective communications between the home office and the central site, there are a number of products and services which TE can offer to make this easier.

Product Description

FreeFone For nationwide access which is free to your staff and customers, why not set up a FreeFone number. For international coverage, choose International FreeFone

Call Management Services

To make it easier when communicating with staff out of the office, TE's range of free connection and free rental Call Management Services can help. Leave messages in their mailbox with Call Answering. Alternatively, 3 Way calling is useful to set up simultaneous calls with 2 other people, all in different locations

Telephone Systems

Many of TE's range of Telephone Systems can be configured to allow the caller access to the eworker using the same number whether in or out of the office. The eworker has the advantage of having the same functionality on their phone at home and in the office

Fax Machines

Many of TE's fax machines allow for Broadcast Fax, enabling you to send the same message out to all your home office workers.

ISDN/Datcomms equipment

To enable your eworkers best access the LAN remotely and carry out effective information transfer, you'll need ISDN (basic – 2 channel or Primary – 30 channel) at your central site. TE also sources and provides the Datcomms Equipment essentials including servers and routers from companies such as Lake, Nortel, Aspect, Sharp, Newbridge, Gandalf, Panasonic, MDS, Siemens and Cisco.

Videoconferencing

Save time and hassle and bring your team together with virtual meetings with remote colleagues over ISDN Videoconferencing. TE provides a range of options: videophones, desktop units, and PC based units.

Eirtrade and Eircom.net

For Email and the Internet, Eircom.net provides rapid cost effective communication. Eirtrade, Ireland's leading provider of Internet and Interactive service, also provides a full Internet and Intranet solution: with web design, installation and hosting all part of the service

Saving Money

TE provides a range of discount schemes which can be extended to include home offices to maximise cost savings

Making Billing easier

Summary billing and billing analysis software allows you to allocate the costs of home offices. Itemised billing on telephone lines, FreeFone access and Chargecard free detailed billing allows for easier expenses claim handling

Repair Services

All equipment sold by TE comes with a 12-month warranty while a range of enhanced and personalised maintenance plans are available for equipment including telephone systems, call centre equipment, datacomms equipment, telephone sets and mobile phones. For customers whose business is critically dependent on telephone service availability, Eircom has introduced enhanced maintenance plans named ServicePlus. These offer guaranteed response times 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, a dedicated ServicePlus operator, regular progress updates and onsite support which can be customised to your needs.

Customer Consultancy

TE's Customer Consultancy experts can work with you to design, install and support a customised solution for your information and communications technology requirements.

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Disclaimer

This document outlines some of the issues an organisation should consider when introducing a Teleworking policy. While the document covers most of the main points it is not claimed to be comprehensive, nor should it be used exclusively when planning a Teleworking policy. In all cases you are advised to consult the appropriate experts in Human Resources, Health & Safety and Legal Matters before implementation. Eircom and the Work Research Centre can take no responsibility for Teleworking policies in other organisations.

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