



Leading Edge Technology Q4 2011

Create a Virtual Working Policy

The virtual workforce continues to expand rapidly. In many companies, virtual workers represent almost 45% of the employees and often hold key roles related to revenue and client retention. To make sure these employees remain highly effective and company assets are protected, many organizations are putting in place a formal virtual office policy. This document provides a high level overview of key areas requiring consideration.

Define Your Policy

Virtual office can mean many things to many people. Writing down a formal definition ensures that you have alignment on what a virtual office means in your organization. Here is an example:

A virtual office is a location where work is performed outside of a traditional company facility, whether it be working from home or working from an airport, hotel, or other off site location. Performing work in such settings often requires telecommunications capability as well as access to technology. This policy does not cover situations where an employee occasionally works from home during evenings or weekends or during the day on an irregular basis.

Employees covered by this policy include those who must work outside of company offices, including:

- *Employees who travel 25% or more of the time*
- *Off-site staff, where a home office is the primary physical office*

Determine Who Can Be Virtual

A virtual office policy should be based on business requirements and who is eligible to work virtually. Policies can then be created based on these requirements. Many organizations have multiple tiers of virtual workers and policies should be defined for each tier. Examples of tiers may include:

- Type of virtual office—whether an employee always works virtually, balances time between a corporate and virtual office, or other situations
- Employee title and responsibilities—executive/senior manager, sales representative, support representative, and other appropriate positions

Document Equipment Requirements

To ensure a highly effective virtual office program, employees need the appropriate equipment and support. Defining the specific set of hardware, software, connectivity, and reimbursement requirements needed for each virtual office work arrangement is critical. The Virtual Office Policy should include this information and be clearly communicated to managers and employees.



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Create Security Policies and Training

Mobile technology is far more vulnerable to data security breaches and losses, which can result in potential loss of clients as well as substantial financial loss to a company. Virtual employees must understand their unique responsibilities in safeguarding all company property.

Recommended policies include:

- Written documentation that specifies company-provided equipment should be used exclusively by the employee
- Formal training procedures should be documented and each employee should receive individual training
- Documented procedures should be created for what is to occur if equipment is lost or stolen

Formalize Governance

A defined governance program will help your organization ensure compliance with policy and measure effectiveness. The following areas should be emphasized:

- Track all employees in the program, assets provided to them, and any training received
- Require signature of a home office agreement to ensure a clear understanding of policies and responsibilities
- Annually review the home office agreement and objectives of the virtual work arrangement
- Provide individual security training once a year for each employee in the program

Summary

A virtual workforce provides significant benefits to organizations, especially with a defined structure and governance. This document highlights overall issues to consider. Runzheimer International has worked with numerous companies to develop in-depth virtual office policies and would welcome an opportunity to assist your organization.

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