

Connections

Covering the people side of contact center management



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Is It Time To Grow Your Virtual Workforce?

Corporations large and small are redefining what it means to be a company. Embracing the motto that “work is something you do, not something you travel to,” these companies are reducing costs as well as their physical footprint by becoming increasingly virtual.

At one extreme are companies such as Midwest Family Mutual Insurance Company, a small property-casualty carrier in Plymouth, Minnesota, that spent two years converting to a largely paperless environment and now employs a mostly home-based staff. It sold its 24,000-square-foot building to lease a much smaller space with a few common rooms and 24 "hoteling" cubicles for use as needed.

While this example is extreme, many companies are embracing the concept of remote workers. The cable television provider Cox Communications, for instance, has nearly 2,000 of its customer service staff work from home. And Aetna has a virtual service center staffed with about 500 at-home employees.

The terms to describe these tethered personnel include virtual workers, virtual employees, teleworkers, e-workers, telecommuters, e-commuters, and remote workers. Based on the nature of their job, these virtual personnel may work from their homes, on the road, from personal offices, or at jellies (collaborative work spaces, typically for programmers and writers).

Identify and Develop People Who Can Successfully Work From Home

The new [Virtual Worker](#) will identify current employees and job candidates who can succeed as remote customer service, sales, claims, underwriting, IT, and operations personnel. Equally important, you will receive the coaching advice and self-development information you need to enhance their performance.

For more information, please visit us [online](#), or contact Rhonda Giacomarra (860-298-3951 or rgiacomarra@limra.com) or Nicole Overmeyer (770-984-6450 or overmeyern@loma.org).

New Program Helps Your Company Bridge Generation Gaps

The ability to recognize and bridge generation gaps can create a powerful competitive advantage. LIMRA's new *Managing and Training Across Generations* will help your company create a work environment that supports and includes the different styles of today's workforce. Participants will add tremendous value to your business by learning how to

Why Go Virtual?

We have found that companies are turning to virtual worker business models for several key reasons:

- **Talent acquisition, morale, and retention:** Work-at-home options can be attractive to talented, in-demand workers, which can reduce the turnover in jobs with higher burnout rates, such as contact center representatives.
- **Access to labor:** By eliminating or minimizing geographic requirements, companies can tap into a broader labor pool.
- **Diversity:** Telework can provide greater opportunities to employ the disabled.
- **Real estate costs:** With fewer employees to physically house, companies reduce their real estate needs and have regular telecommuters share common workstations when they come into the office for meetings and projects.
- **Productivity:** Employers who permit telework may experience lower absenteeism and higher productivity due to fewer interruptions.
- **Disaster recovery:** A dispersed workforce can help companies better recover from business interruptions caused by storms, fires, transit strikes, illness outbreaks (including employees who must stay home to care for sick family members), and similar challenges.
- **Competitive advantage:** Companies with telework plans in place can rebound quickly during business interruptions and benefit from the increased agility that a flexible workforce confers.
- **Possible tax and financial incentives:** Some local, state/regional, and federal governments offer tax breaks, grants, or other programs that encourage virtual workforces.

Why Workers Want To Go Virtual

Employees and prospective hires may find it beneficial to work virtually for your company for several reasons, including

- **Cost savings:** Workers typically save money on clothing, food, and transportation-related expenses.
- **Focus:** They can benefit from a quieter work area with fewer distractions.

- Create cross-generational synergies
- Reduce workplace conflict
- Better manage, train, coach, and retain employees from different generations

For more information, please contact Wendy Weston at 860-285-7727 or wweston@limra.com.

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- **Productivity:** Depending on the schedule requirements of their employer, they may be able to work during the times when they are most personally productive.
- **Location:** Workers can remain with your company when their spouses are transferred, or if they simply want to live beyond commuting range.

Identifying Virtual Workers

Companies are successfully transforming many sales and service reps, software programmers, insurance underwriters and claims reps, and contract writers to virtual employment. But not everyone is suited to virtual work. In next month's issue of *Connections* we'll describe the attributes of people who are suited to virtual work environments and other issues to consider.

