Managing a Remote Workforce

It’s all the same work

Remote Work, Mobile Work, Office-based, Telework – it’s all the same work. The time a person sits or stands on site is meaningless when measuring achievement of business results. The key driver of success by companies using remote workers is to achieve the same amount of quality work, or more, while reaping the benefits of a virtual office.

The use of a remote workforce has exploded in the past two decades, and is accelerating every year. Global Workplace Analytics.com published that the population of work-from-home employees has increased 79.7% from 2005 to 2012. The cost benefits as well as competitive pressures are driving this expansion, which has been facilitated by inexpensive, portable computers and wireless handheld devices combined with the availability of low cost, high quality communications networks.

Companies and public sector agencies have recognized telework as a smart business practice. Successful managers have adopted new techniques and strategies such as results-based management. Whether your employees sit in the cubicles in front of you or are scattered across time zones, you really don’t know who is working and who isn’t if you’re not using performance-based management tools.

This white paper will share information on the challenges and success strategies of managing a remote workforce and CYIPRO’s contribution to optimizing your organization’s resources for constantly improving productivity and employee satisfaction.

*IBM calculates that it saves $450 million per year in reduced facility infrastructure and associated initiatives through telework. [Ref. On Demand Government]*

For more information on CYIPRO, go to http://cyipro.com/
Remote Work Management
The 2010 federal Telework Enhancement Act requires federal workers to telework “to the maximum extent possible”; however, when looking at the entire Fiscal Year 2012, only 14 percent of all Federal employees teleworked to some degree, when over 45% were eligible. (Global Workplace Analytics)

The 2012 data also suggests fairly widespread use of unscheduled, situational forms of telework used in response to weather events, minor illnesses or employee personal conflicts. In the winter of 2013-2014, workers in much of the country frequently faced almost insurmountable obstacles getting to their offices due to ice and snow. Telework is an important new tool for maintaining agency productivity and continuity in minor to major emergencies.

The statistics showing the resounding success of incorporating remote work styles are plentiful and validated by companies, from small and mid-sized to the largest global corporations. Reports have been widely published of solid ROI numbers which show reduced real estate, increased productivity and higher employee satisfaction.

The success of remote work contrasted with the low rate of its adoption begs the question, “What are the obstacles holding back wider deployment?” What are the successful strategies in making it happen and reaping the benefits?

Studies have found that the greatest hindrances for businesses and public sector organizations in moving to a more extensive mobile workforce are lack of trust across the organization and misconceptions about remote workers and their management. (Ref. On Demand Government)

Managers want to know exactly what staff is doing and that they have full ability to supervise and control the business effectively.

What Is the Potential Bottom Line Impact of the Widespread Adoption of Telework in the U.S.? (August 2012)

“If those with compatible jobs and a desire to work from home did so just half the time (roughly the national average for those who do so regularly) the national savings would total over $700 Billion a year including:

- A typical business would save $11,000 per person per year
- Telecommuters would save $2,000 & $7,000 a year
- The oil savings would equate to over 37% of our Persian Gulf imports
- The greenhouse gas reduction would be the equivalent of taking the entire New York State workforce permanently off the road.

The Congressional Budget Office’s estimate of the entire five-year cost of implementing telework throughout government ($30 million) is less than a third of the cost of lost productivity from a single day shut- down of federal offices in Washington DC due to snow ($100 million).”

Global Workplace Analytics.
http://www.globalworkplaceanalytics.com/telecommuting-statistics

For more information on CYIPRO, go to http://cyipro.com/
Challenges and Success Strategies
Remote work challenges and successful management strategies can be illuminated by looking at primary management responsibilities and activities and how they can be enabled and improved by the right technology support. Managers must:

1. **First reduce cultural resistance to the new model and build trust across the team.**
   Managers can build trust by ensuring transparency in what everyone is doing and objectivity in performance evaluations. Efficient and effective communications are vital. They must focus on **results-based management** and trust that their employees are capable of achieving their goals even when someone is not looking over their shoulder.

   Foster innovation by encouraging the free flow of information with project communication through CYIPRO’s exclusive Email to Project (E2P) tool. This feature takes emails and attachments and transforms them into assignments associated with the appropriate project so that all team members can read them, react, comment and respond.

2. **Make expectations concrete and measurable in assigning work.**
   **Detailed work descriptions** describe what is to be done, how to do it and where to get help if needed. Where standards and templates have been developed and are readily available, the work is completed quickly using best practices.

   When an assignment is created in CYIPRO using project-based management, automatic notification via e2P (email to Project) alerts the team member of the assignment and when it is due. Tasks can be assigned from email, the process library or the project display. This information updates the project plan at the same time. Scheduled notifications remind team members when a task is due.

   "Management can use “Oversight Project(s) Management” to reprioritize projects while staff can look at “WDIDF dashboard” (what do I do first) to understand what needs to be done first and access the “Process Library” to get it done the right way. SME’s can perform quality control on all projects and agency heads can manage the “Vocabulary and Processes” to fine tune their organization.”

   CYIPRO captures explicit and tacit knowledge for reuse – thus building corporate intellectual bandwidth and empowering your staff to come up to speed quickly on new tasks. These knowledge management techniques are especially important where the workforce is made up of contract workers or there are language barriers or time differences.

   **Workflow can be further enabled** through automation of routing and approvals. Entry of an assignment kicks off tracking until it is complete. For example, a vacation request
has rules as to whom it is sent, approvals needed and response times. Alerts call out those which are at risk of not completing successfully on time.

3. **Prioritize work and set goals** or milestones or targets, so that the workload does not seem overwhelming or continuous. Clearly defined deliverables and priorities empower employees to succeed.

Priorities are absolutely necessary to ensure that the employee understands the relative importance of all assigned activities and the managers can ensure that the most important work is at the top of the queue.

In a fast moving, dynamic workplace, **Custom Calendar views** in CYIPRO allow each person to see details of what they have been assigned, details they’ve assigned out to someone else and which are the highest priority.

- An assignment is assigned a Priority, 0-5, or Mission critical when it is created.
- It is also assigned a Vocabulary term which has its own priority. (As an example, FEMA might use a Vocabulary Term of ‘Hurricane Warning’.)
- Priority changes can be made to the Vocabulary terms, which then flow across the associated tasks. (If the priority of ‘Hurricane Warning’ is bumped up, that change is reflected in all the associated tasks, across projects and teams.)

- This two-dimensional prioritization determines the position of the task in the **WDIDF (What Do I Do First)** view on the employee’s dashboard. Each task owner can use this to plan start work.
- The manager can see quickly these rankings, and change them as needed. These changes, whether they are a reassignment or reprioritization, are communicated to all the team members.
4. Manage across projects and teams - React, reprioritize and integrate changes

For growing organizations, scalability is critical. Assume 5 divisions with 10 work teams. If you have 10 projects under each team, with 10 tasks each, upper level management must track 5,000 tasks. And they will have to track more next year. You need Visual, real-time tools with drill-down capability to make this manageable. Formal meetings are not always practical, cost efficient or appropriate to the immediacy of today’s dynamic projects.

CYIPRO offers a centralized command and control center to manage workflow from anywhere. Real time dashboards provide a structure to view information, status and update activity for multiple teams, projects, employees and tasks. Assignments can be viewed and changed as to who does what, when it is due and dependencies. Alerts can be set up to flag overdue actions which might not be noticed until they reach red status. Many reports use the familiar formats of a Gantt chart and Red-Amber-Green (RAG) coding.

When issues or deviations show up, CYIPRO reports allow drill-down to associated documents and emails to identify root causes and provide sufficient information to decide on corrective actions. Changes show up in all dashboards immediately and the real time dynamic system broadcasts the effects of the change to the team.

Financial tracking is enabled by the assignment of labor codes or CLIN’s to each activity. Each standard activity has an estimated ‘best practice’ duration and cost. Overruns are immediately visible, allowing for timely intervention.

5. Recruit, hire and manage the workforce

Telework allows federal agencies to use flexibility for recruiting and retention of the best, most cost effective, employees. Broadening the available labor pool brings in candidates from lower cost of living areas and those skills which may not be available locally. It provides access to disabled, retired or part-time workers, including parents of small children and other caregivers. This capability can allow a valued employee to provide support when personal or environmental conflicts prevent their coming to the office.

The challenge of knowing whether the employee is working efficiently or up to accepted standards is met by the use of work definitions and templates with estimated labor costs and duration. Managers can monitor an individual employee’s performance to provide the work for which they were hired. The ability to monitor deviations from the

Across all age groups, flexible work ranked third just after competitive pay and health insurance, as important for happiness on the job.


Managing a Remote Workforce

For more information on CYIPRO, go to http://cyipro.com/
standard helps determine if they need added support or whether an unanticipated issue has come up. Continued overages may require training or intervention and could indicate external stresses on the remote worker which require a revision of their work assignments until the problem is resolved.

With performance based management using CYIPRO, productive employees receive objective, results-based evaluations.

6. Manage risk

A dispersed workforce with disaster-proof servers and storage are essential for business continuity, government preparedness and national security. Catastrophic events – natural disasters as well as crises such as terrorist attacks or epidemics – do not provide sufficient notice or lead times to implement such capabilities – they must be in place ahead of time.

“Working remotely must be viewed as a national security imperative … so that the government can continue operating during a crisis or emergency situation.”[On Demand Government]

In addition to damaging physical events, data security is a major concern. Security of the organizational assets is improved using a cloud-based product such as CYIPRO. The system is built with the needed rules and policies to allow easy access to those who need it and block those who aren’t authorized. Systems are built to provide the security required by the business or the department.

This transition is also an opportunity to sweep up the unsecured assets of the company and put them under the proper control. Valuable intellectual and confidential property can be lost -- sitting on hard drives or printed and lying on desks. Additionally, appropriate security policies, protocol, training and enforcement for all employees can protect the company’s digital and physical assets.

Cloud computing protects you against loss of your information in case of natural or manmade disasters. Business continuity lets you get back up and running quickly.

7. Communicate, collaborate, motivate

Employees scattered across geographically dispersed branches, home offices, client sites or points in between, can communicate, share screens or documents and track the resulting actions in real time. CYIPRO identifies the current working version of any document and makes back-rev files available, if needed.

Collaborative software eliminates the need for many meetings through shared real-time status reporting and tracking displays. E2P enables joint problem-solving almost as fast as a single person could act, but with the insight of the entire team. This feature allows
project team members to email task and information directly from any device into the project repository.

A worker interacts with the core business through the unified portal from phones, tablets, computers or other devices with Internet access. This software allows them to manage their work and time better.

**Video and audio conferencing can be integrated** ‘to get everyone together’ to recognize accomplishments (using the tool to identify outstanding results—early finish, under budget, contributions to develop or improve templates, etc.) and share best practices processes and procedures as well as change requests, issues and risks.

Another extremely powerful function of CYIPRO allows you to manage all entries to a threaded discussion across time and location. For example, a project view might have 10 tasks. Each task could have multiple assignments where threaded discussions take place in a virtual space. CYIPRO puts bookmarks where your responses are, or need to go, in the discussions. This allows discussions to take place with two or more staff remotely and at different times. No worries, as CYIPRO gives you a map (called Assignment Inbox/Outbox) of all your assignments and those you assigned out. All you do is just go back through the threaded discussion and answer each one, completing the task at hand.

The evolution of an idea is readily available for review by all authorized personnel and you can see exactly what you need to do in order to contribute to the successful completion of a project.

8. **Support quality of life work practices**

Employees should be able to take time off 100% away from work, but sometimes they are reluctant to take a full one or two weeks’ vacation if they play a vital position in a time-critical project. Using the web portal, they can choose to set aside small amounts of time to ‘check-in’, which provides peace of mind when an employee or manager decides to take vacation, is too sick to come to the office or has personal demands which keep him or her away. Remote work serves many special and family needs. Focus is more on work performed and team work than when they do the work.

The status display features described earlier in this paper which provide information on who is doing what, what has been done, what is left to do and related discussions allow a worker or manager returning to the office to come up to speed quickly.
Remote Work, Mobile Work, Office-based, Telework

In discussions of remote work, there are different styles, which sometimes overlap.

**Remote workers** are company employees or contractors who work from an alternate location all or part of the time. This might be an office in their home, a satellite location or wherever they can set up a stable work environment. **Mobile workers** are able to work from wherever they are -- the airport, the customer site or a hotel or home office.

**Virtual workers** can be freelancers or temporary staff utilized as needed. They may provide their own equipment and communications infrastructure. These workers are available when they are needed, without the employer taking on a fixed cost.

These personnel may work from the company office at times. Their focus is completing the work to accomplish the business objectives.

Another 21st century business type, **Virtual companies** are made up of employees, contract workers and freelancers, with no physical office space. This increased flexibility and lack of overhead provides incredible advantage in their market place.

CYIPRO offers a proven path and method to address these work styles and move an agency or business to a leaner, more effective organization.

“Management can use “Oversight Project(s) Management” to reprioritize projects while staff can look at “WDIDF dashboard” (what do I do first) to understand what needs to be done first, moreover, access the “Process Library” to get it done the right way. SME’s can perform quality control on all projects and agency heads can manage the “Vocabulary and Processes” to fine tune their organization.”

**Contact CYIPRO today to take your group to the cutting edge of innovation and productivity.**

*For more information on CYIPRO, go to http://cyipro.com*/
CYIPRO – Your Business Office in the Cloud

CYIOS Corporation is a leading Department of Defense (DoD) contractor providing cutting-edge, innovative solutions since 1994 in three distinct areas: systems integration; Web and database development; and business process management and improvement.

CYIOS built America’s Army Online, the first Army Knowledge Management solution that was developed to become the core for Army Knowledge Online (AKO), the U.S. Army's main intranet serving over 1.8 million registered users.

CYIOS continued innovating in knowledge management with the development of CYIPRO, a virtual office solution for collaboration, accountability, knowledge management and virtual work spaces. Features include document management and versioning, project and task management, e-mail encryption, full-text search, timesheets, meetings, and reports.

References:
