



TELEWORK BRIEFING

A Future of Work Programme Report

Key lessons for managing telework in New Zealand organisations



NEW ZEALAND

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Telework

Can be defined as the practice of using Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to substitute or supplement work at a central location with remote work.

We use an inclusive understanding of telework that encompasses remote work that is performed on a formal or informal basis, regularly or occasionally, inside or outside normal working hours, and from a range of possible locations such as satellite offices, client premises, ‘smart work centres’, and home. The increased use of mobile technologies and broadband connectivity have meant that telework is increasingly also performed in public spaces as varied as cafes, libraries, hotel lobbies and airport lounges, and even while travelling between locations. Telework is part of a range of flexible work practices that together constitute ‘new ways of working’ characterised by changing physical workspaces, management approaches, organisational cultures, workforce demographics, and employee expectations and lifestyle requirements.

Forms of telework that are included within this broad definition are *ad hoc* teleworking, including extending the working day before work, after work or at the weekend; *hybrid* or *part-time* teleworking, where employees combine office-based work with working one or more days from a remote location; *full-time* teleworking from a remote location, including from geographical locations as diverse as local, national or overseas; and *mobile* teleworking, where the employee moves between multiple distributed work locations. It also includes work within a virtual organisation, which lacks a central location and in which all staff work remotely.

Job roles typically associated with telework include professional knowledge workers, senior managers, project-based staff, IT support staff, field-based operational staff, customer service and sales representatives, and independent consultants and contractors. As information becomes more digitised and ICT more mobile, the range of organisational roles considered amenable to telework is increasing to include, for example, non-customer facing centralised service functions such as marketing, HR, legal and commercial, strategy and policy, administrative

support. In some organisations, workers are increasingly moving between various locations that are appropriate to the particular activities that they are engaging in, and team leaders and middle managers are also teleworking. A number of organisations are exploring home-based customer service and contact centre roles.

Telework is occurring in a wide range of organisation sizes and sectors, ranging from small consultancies to large service companies to government agencies and not-for-profit organisations. Telework arrangements vary depending on the needs of the organisation, employee or client, although the nature and extent of the teleworking may not always be known or documented.

In order to gain a better understanding of the issues that organisations need to address when implementing telework, in mid-2013 we conducted a comprehensive interview programme with senior managers and team managers in 27 New Zealand organisations of varying size and drawn from sectors commonly associated with telework: financial services; professional, scientific and technical services; information, media and telecommunications; wholesale and distribution; public administration; and education and training. This briefing document summarises the key lessons on managing telework learned from these organisations in order to provide guidance for managers implementing or reviewing telework within their organisations.

The document summarises the issues and implications for managing telework under the following headings:

Motivations for Implementing Telework
Policies and Procedures
Leadership and Management
Support Infrastructure



1. Motivations for Implementing Telework

Motivations for implementing telework tend to be aimed at addressing the perceived needs of the organisation itself, its employees, or its clients, or in response to changes in the wider environment. These motivations were not necessarily mutually exclusive. As one senior manager described, “[Telework] is a win-win for us, because we can get what we need from that employee in terms of productivity and it meets the employee’s needs as well, where there is a need for some flexibility around arrangements.”

There are a range of organisational reasons for implementing telework, including operational necessity, operational efficiency and effectiveness, alignment with organisational culture, and cost reduction. In many organisations there will be specific roles for which telework was a requirement. In some cases, flexible or remote working in the field, on the road, or at satellite offices is considered necessary or desirable by the organisation. Such roles include sales representatives, service staff, consultants, engineers, researchers, and internal service staff such

as HR staff or mobile managers. In addition, where an organisation lacks a central office or has employees permanently located at a distance from the central office, telework is also necessary.

Telework may enable an organisation to operate more efficiently and or more effectively given the nature of the organisation and services that it provides, the range and geographical distribution of staff employed in the organisation, or the perceived opportunities and benefits for service delivery or activity-based work offered by ICT-enabled mobile or remote working. Flexible work practices such as telework may also align with an organisation’s business or employment strategy, or be consistent with an organisation’s culture and values. Increasingly, organisations are exploring telework as part of a strategy to increase office space utilisation and reduce building overheads.

The Organisation

Operational necessity

- “We’ve got a team of business development managers on the road ... and they are based right through the country ... We’ve only got a couple of offices around New Zealand. So it’s sort of a case of having to do it [telework]. (*National sales manager, Financial services company*)

Operational efficiency and effectiveness

- “We have identified that in order to operate effectively and efficiently ... we have to be able to work both virtually and face-to-face as efficiently as possible. So that means our employees have to be more flexible and we have to accept that we need to put in greater mobility ... [and] working from different locations.” (*Organisational development manager, Local government organisation*)
- “I think the driver has been, whatever works for the group to be effective is whatever we do. So our system of working has been more or less remote workers, connected by technology, and meeting occasionally once a month for a formal get-together to review what the activities are.” (*Director, Government advisory group*)

Cultural alignment

- “Part of our culture is ... being able to offer flexible working practices. So we have that as a cultural objective ... It’s important for our employment brand and our culture that we’ve got here, that we trust people to be able to work off-site.” (*HR manager, Information technology solutions provider*)

Cost reduction

- “It is something that the business is actually looking at very closely ... I know that the boardroom are looking to get best bang for their buck out of the buildings that we have. So I can see it increasing and on that basis I can see it becoming more formalised.” (*CIO, Business products supplier*)

In almost all the organisations that we studied, a key motivation for implementing telework related to either enabling or engaging employees; half the organisations reported both of these motivations. Telework was perceived to offer employees the flexibility in their work arrangements to meet specific needs, such as caring responsibilities or issues related to commuting, or to suit a desired lifestyle. Telework was also commonly linked to building and maintaining engagement between the employee and the organisation, with the net perceived benefits of improved employee satisfaction and productivity.

Telework is increasingly seen as a part of an organisation’s staff attraction and retention strategy because of the flexibility that it offers employees. Flexible working arrangements can help to attract and retain staff with particular skills and expertise, thus reducing recruitment costs. This is important when there are shortages of particular skill sets in an industry or where a certain mix of staff is considered desirable. As an HR manager commented, “We believe that in tight markets ... teleworking will give us an advantage.”

The Employee

Enabling flexibility

- "It is about balancing the lifestyle choices of your employee with actually getting the job done." (*Organisational development manager, Consumables distributor*)
- "It is the recognition of letting smart people, basically, make their own decisions on how to work best and giving them the tools in terms of how they achieve the outcomes that are required within their role. So [telework] allows that kind of flexibility. It allows them to balance some of the different things that they have going on in their lives." (*Strategy manager, Economic development organisation*)

Engagement and productivity

- "I think [telework] improves productivity and I think it improves personal satisfaction. And I think that the net effect is to improve engagement between the individual and the business." (*General manager, Engineering services company*)
- "Actually this is all about people and about us thinking differently or working in a different way and that we can improve engagement and we can improve productivity. And all these things have started to flow out of it ... We've realised that this is so important." (*Organisational development manager, Local government organisation*)
- "We're after an agile and productive workforce. And people are productive when they are engaged and when they're having the lifestyle that they want." (*Senior manager, Financial services company*)

Recruitment and retention

- "The most important aspect of [telework] for me is ... attracting the right staff and then retaining them ... I suppose we leverage that sort of workplace flexibility to be able to attract the talent and the skills and expertise that we need." (*Managing director, Healthcare products supplier*)
- "Part of it is around our focus as an organisation about making sure that we've got a diverse workforce that reflects our customer base ... both in terms of attracting a diverse workforce and retaining the people that we already have." (*HR manager, Financial services company*)

For a significant group of organisations, telework is an important means of better meeting the needs of their clients. This motivation could reflect a desire to increase the speed of responsiveness to clients, such as when a client has an urgent deadline for a particular job; offer flexibility to clients, such as

meeting outside normal working hours or working at client premises; build and maintain a good client relationship, or meet client expectations around the immediacy of communication and support in contemporary business.

The Client

Meeting client needs

- "There is an expectation from the people that we deal with that they can talk to the person they want to on the telephone or albeit electronically, anywhere, anytime ... It's a big part of our business now. It's going to be a big part of our business as we grow. You know, flexibility in terms of meeting both our employee and client needs is going to become more and more important, and teleworking it's going to become more and more the norm." (*Partner, Market research firm*)
- "A lot of it is around flexibility for the customer, so we want to make sure that the guys have got the tools with them, when they are at the customer site so that they can capture information about the customer at the time and during the conversation ... It's around giving us access to the information at the time, which helps them to better support the customer. So that's a big focus for us, how do we help the customer?" (*General manager, Government agency*)
- "[We] provide our professionals with the opportunity to achieve the outcomes that our customers need ... If teleworking achieves good things for the customer, it's perfectly acceptable; if it doesn't achieve good things for the customer, it is not going to happen." (*General manager, Engineering services company*)

Finally, organisations may be motivated to implement telework in response to changes in the wider environment in which they operate. The change may be in the physical environment, such as when Canterbury experienced a series of damaging earthquakes in 2010-2011. Many New Zealand organisations have since incorporated telework into their disaster recovery strategies in order to ensure business continuity in the event of a natural disaster. The physical environment may also be a motivator for introducing telework as part of environmental sustainability and corporate social responsibility initiatives.

Changes in the wider societal environment may also encourage the implementation of telework, such as when organisations respond to perceived expectations about the future of work, or legislative changes influence organisational decision-making on telework. For example, a number of the organisations that we talked with had extended to all employees the statutory right for those with caring responsibilities to request flexible work arrangements, including telework.

The Environment

Business continuity

- “As a result of the Christchurch earthquake, nearly all of our staff have the ability to work from home on a casual basis, particularly if there is another emergency ... [They] have what we call virtual PCs at their homes or ... their [own] computers have been fixed up by our people so they have access to our network from home in cases of emergency or just when they need to work from home.” (*HR manager, Government department*)

Environmental sustainability

- “As a responsible corporate citizen ... we realised as an organisation that we can't keep operating the way that we are. We can't keep bringing people great distances for meetings and for activities, because that just isn't efficient. So, we need to provide the infrastructure, we need to provide the ability for people to be able to work close to either their home, to minimise transport and improve sustainability, but also to be able to work close to where the customers are. So I guess that's what we are trying to get out of teleworking.” (*Organisational development manager, Local government organisation*)

The future of work

- “Looking at the work force of the future it may well be a bigger mix and a deliberate mix of teleworking versus people on site.” (*HR manager, Education provider*)

Legislation

- “We've made a policy commitment, if you like, to offer flexibility where we can ... Of course, there is that legal requirement in the Employment Relations Act to consider flexible working conditions for staff ... and we extend that to all staff. You know, it doesn't matter if you've got caring responsibilities or not. Anyone can make a request.” (*HR manager, Information technology solutions provider*)



2. Policies and Procedures

Approximately half of the organisations that we talked to had some form of policy related to telework. These were all larger organisations (>50 FTE employees), and in most cases telework policy was part of a broader policy or strategy, for example around flexibility, mobility, or staff attraction and retention, rather than a distinct policy. We suggest that this reflects the way that teleworking is increasingly becoming just another way of working. As a senior manager commented, “Teleworking is just one of those avenues that you can work flexibly.” Over half of the organisations without policy related to telework were considering developing such policy in the near future.

The main motivations for having a policy in place are the increasing prevalence of or demand for telework arrangements, ensuring consistency in the

availability and provision of teleworking opportunities, establishing effective communication between teleworking employees and their managers and team members, the need to safeguard organisational devices and data used away from the main office, managing risks around teleworker well-being and health and safety, ensuring that telework arrangements comply with legislative requirements and industrial relations agreements, and ensuring that the anticipated benefits from telework will be achieved.

A small number of organisations deliberately chose not to implement an organisation-wide policy on telework, typically because that approach fitted with their organisational culture or decentralised management style.

Telework Policy

Developing a policy on telework

- "It's something that's evolving ... As teleworking becomes more commonplace, we'll probably have to crystallise a policy and set some formal controls in place." (*HR manager, Local government organisation*)
- "We are starting to explore [telework]. We see it as a future way of working and getting staff engagement and higher productivity ... There will be some more sophistication around it, but it will be more formalised in terms of policy and procedure. So, it's just an extension of business as usual being formalised." (*General manager, Healthcare service provider*)

Eschewing a policy on telework

- "The whole culture is quite informal and deliberately so ... It's just a belief that [telework] works well for us ... We have highly engaged people, with very low turnover. And for that reason we can have a high trust model." (*Managing director, Training consultancy*)
- "We acknowledge that for a professional services organisation like ours, our people have to be empowered and enabled to do the job wherever, whenever. So ... everybody gets that access, everybody gets the technology to do it as well as possible." (*Partner, Market research firm*)

Telework policy needs to strike a balance between generality and prescription. It needs to allow individuals and managers the freedom to tailor teleworking practice to their local circumstances while providing guidance and support on requirements and responsibilities. As one of the managers that we talked to pointed out, "It's a little bit ironic to have a fixed policy about flexible working!" Policies also need to be reviewed regularly and updated to address perceived inadequacies or changing circumstances.

Where it exists, telework policy tends to be supported by more detailed procedures and guidelines on what is required and how to go about it. These include the types of arrangements available to employees, criteria and expectations for commencing teleworking, set-up and support requirements, health and safety guidelines, and appropriate use of technology and data when teleworking. Providing guidance for managers responsible for implementing and managing teleworking employees is also important. In addition, teleworking employees will expect to have available comparable benefits, support and development opportunities to their non-teleworking colleagues.

In the organisations that we studied there was a clear distinction between telework being at the request of an employee and being a requirement of a particular job or role. The majority of organisations had both types of telework arrangements. With respect to employee requests, the most common process followed was a conversation between the employee and his or her line manager, with the line manager making the decision about whether to allow teleworking or not. This was typically the case for ad hoc teleworking, but also in some cases for a more formal or on-going part-time or full-time teleworking arrangement. With respect to the latter, in some organisations the employee request was form-based. The Human Resources (HR) function might be consulted to provide advice on a specific request to telework and/or to document the arrangement. Similarly, the Information Technology (IT) function might be consulted to assess the level of access, equipment and support required. Where telework was required, because of the nature or location of the job, this was often stipulated in the job description and/or discussed during the interview process.

Initiating Telework

Conversation with line manager

- “You propose it to your manager and if your manager believes that it is suitable and it won’t impact your deliverables, then it is approved ... It’s more to do around that conversation with you and your manager.” (*HR manager, Financial services company*)

Formal application process

- “If I want to work from home on a permanent basis or for a period of time, like recovering from an injury ... we would formalise it, make a formal application to my manager as to the reason why, the equipment I’d be using or that I need and require, the support I need, the access I need ... That then goes to my manager, my manager then gives it to their manager who will discuss it with human resources and with IT ... Those are all set out on forms and through policy, so it is quite a rigorous process.” (*HR manager, Government department*)

Requirement of the role

- “A lot of our customer-facing guys will be working either at the customer’s premises, while they’re travelling or at another office ... That role will have a recognised requirement in terms of technology ... and when a person is recruited, then that is passed on as part of the joining process to our IT group and they set them up accordingly. So it’s pretty much embedded into the joining process.” (*General manager, Government agency*)

Virtual organisation

- “We implement teleworking for everybody ... We certainly communicate really clearly around it when we employ people so whenever we advertise a position we will be very clear that it is a work from home position.” (*Operations manager, Not-for-profit organisation*)

We found that organisations have a range of expectations of their teleworking employees, which can be grouped into three groups related to behaviour while teleworking, communication and availability, and performance of work.

In terms of expected behaviours the most commonly expressed expectation was that of trustworthiness, with organisations emphasising to us that their telework arrangements are based on high trust relationships in which employees are treated as responsible and are expected to act with integrity when teleworking. Many organisations also commented that their teleworking employees expected to be trusted and given autonomy when working in this way.

Closely related to trustworthiness is an expectation that teleworking employees will be self-motivated and capable of working independently - without the need to be ‘micro-managed’, as one team manager put it.

Employees are also expected to behave appropriately when teleworking, particularly in their use of technologies, maintaining their well-being and safety, and in representing their organisation to others.

Employees are expected to remain available and contactable while teleworking, and to maintain timely communication with their line manager, team and clients. The ICT used to facilitate contemporary teleworking also enables communication by email, mobile or smart phone, or instant messaging and collaborative software. The frequency of contact is typically arranged between employees and line managers. In addition, teleworking employees are often expected to attend scheduled team meetings in person or by teleconference. A related expectation is that teleworking by an employee will not adversely affect the working arrangements of others or the functioning of the team to which the employee belongs.

The high trust environment in which telework frequently operates carries with it the expectation that teleworking employees will be productive and produce the intended deliverables or achieve the outputs agreed with their line managers. In this sense, telework is often managed by results. In addition, teleworking employees are expected to fulfil the normal requirements of their roles, such as attending office-based meetings or scheduled training and meeting other in-person requirements or commitments to clients.

Telework is expected to not compromise an employee's ability to perform their work and deliver services. Teleworking employees are expected to produce work accurately, in a timely manner and to a comparable level as if they were working in the main office environment.

Common Expectations about Teleworking Employees

Behavioural expectations

- Be trustworthy
- Work independently
- Behave appropriately

Expectations around communication

- Be contactable
- Maintain communication lines
- Attend regular team meetings
- Do not adversely affect others

Expectations around performance

- Be productive
- Fulfil the normal role requirements
- Maintain work and service delivery standards



3. Leadership and Management

As with any organisational change process, successful telework implementation requires the support and involvement of senior managers within the organisation. Our study highlighted a number of priorities and responsibilities for senior managers in relation to telework implementation. Senior managers can take a leadership role in understanding the implications for the organisation of the changing nature of work and technology in a digitally-enabled economy, and in assessing the suitability of telework as one of the organisation's flexible work practices. This may involve making a business case for implementing telework, including assessing the organisation's need for ICT-enabled mobile or remote work, identifying tangible and intangible benefits of telework, and aligning telework with the organisation's business and employment strategies. Development of a policy framework that encompasses telework can provide a structure for implementing telework arrangements and ensure consistency in telework practice across the organisation.

Ten Responsibilities for Senior Management

1. Understand the implications of the 'new ways of working' for the organisation
2. Establish a business case for incorporating telework in the organisation's flexible work practices
3. Develop a policy framework for telework implementation and ensure guidelines are followed
4. Develop and maintain a culture of trust and engagement within which telework operates
5. Encourage and facilitate telework uptake within the organisation
6. Assess and develop the capabilities needed to support and manage telework
7. Provide the appropriate infrastructure and support for telework
8. Assess and manage the risks associated with telework
9. Ensure teleworker well-being and safety
10. Monitor and review telework practice and outcomes

Telework operates best in organisational cultures that place a high value on employee empowerment and trust. Senior managers play an important role in developing and maintaining such a culture by introducing and emphasising cultural values that are supportive of telework, and by communicating how telework is consistent with the organisation's values and desired behaviours. This may involve breaking down a traditional culture of managing by presence and of 'being at work and being seen'. Senior managers also have a role to play in overcoming any

resistance on the part of individual line managers, whose attitudes and management style will have a major impact on the ability of employees to telework, as well as non-teleworking team members who may be reluctant to support a colleague's request to telework. Active promotion of telework within an organisation can take place through the organisation's internal communication channels such as the intranet and newsletters, roadshows and training workshops, and through role modelling of teleworking and interacting with teleworking employees by senior managers.

Promoting Telework

Trusting

- "I don't have any of those great fears about, you know, 'You can't trust them if you can't see them' ... There isn't a culture of, 'If you can't see someone, they must be skiving'. So it's pretty professional that way." (*General manager, Government agency*)
- "With teleworking we have a very high level of trust ... We've got a pretty strong bond, employer to employee, which is a very important thing. I think if we didn't have that trust, it would be a worrying thing with the amount of teleworking we do." (*CEO, Technology services provider*)

Advocating

- "One of the things we've found is that you really need your senior leaders as well as the HR function to advocate and to work with line managers ... You need the real advocates in an organisation to really pressure, you know, line managers to go, 'Yes, I can make this work ' ... If you don't have the advocates, then even though you've got the policy, if the manager always says no, there's no point ... You've got to have the advocates to turn it into practice." (*HR manager, Financial services company*)

Communicating

- "I think it's something people have to get used to. It's interesting. The more we talk about it and the more people do it, the more people are starting to become more accepting [of it]." (*HR manager, Government department*)

Role modelling

- "Probably role models and admitting that you telework are the key factors to its success. So, if you've got senior leaders ... like the CEO, the executive team, the leadership teams in all the business units, if they are seen to telework it tends to make it more successful for those below and it shows that it can be done ... A lot of people don't know to ask for it unless they see it working." (*HR manager, Financial services company*)

Overcoming managerial resistance to telework is partly a matter of developing the understanding of individual line managers and their capability and willingness to manage by results and at a distance. Line managers need to acquire or develop particular capabilities and strategies for managing teleworkers. Despite the importance of providing support and training for line managers of teleworking employees, many organisations do not explicitly do so, often relying instead on general management training or individual managers' experience of managing teleworkers or teleworking themselves.

Other sources of support that can be drawn on by managers of teleworkers are organisational guidelines, advice from HR or senior management, and mutual coaching from other line managers. As telework and other flexible working arrangements become more prevalent, training for both teleworkers and their managers is essential. Senior managers also need to recognise the additional time and resources that line managers may need to spend on managing their teleworking staff.

Capabilities for Managing Teleworkers

Set boundaries for staff in relation to their communication, availability and level of work

- "My biggest issue would probably be setting boundaries ... When people work and when they don't work ... Some work way too much and never turn off." (*Team manager, Information technology solutions provider*)

Maintain regular communication on a one-to-one basis

- "I think regular contact, at least by phone and preferably face-to-face, is actually quite important." (*Team manager, Management consultancy firm*)

Ensure social and professional connectivity of teleworkers with their team members and the organisation

- "It's about making sure that they are connecting with each other ... As a team in the business ... [and] so they still feel part of the organisation" (*CEO, Technology services provider*)

Monitor teleworking staff well-being and work-life balance

- "I continually ask my team, 'Where are you at and how's your head space?' ... I need to make sure that I'm regularly checking." (*Team manager, Information technology solutions provider*)

Establish clear expectations and manage by agreed outcomes and performance objectives

- "It's just clarity of expectations - you need to make sure that it's arranged in advance, that it's clear what people are going to be doing and achieving." (*Team manager, Financial services company*)

Learn to trust and avoid micromanaging

- "It works for me just not being a micro manager. I couldn't monitor everything they do every day ... Most people if you trust them, if you offer them trust, then they'll respond by being trustworthy." (*Team manager, Government agency*)

Periodically review individual teleworking arrangements and take action where problems arise

- "They will get an email from me on a regular basis, basically telling them, 'This is what happened. You've done this much work and you've got two reports outstanding.' And then we have a timeframe for them to do it in. If it gets bad enough, then we would have to follow more stringent employment processes." (*Team manager, Not-for-profit organisation*)

In addition to capability development, an appropriate physical, technological and support infrastructure needs to be put in place for successful implementation of telework. The organisations we talked with emphasised the importance of providing the necessary infrastructure to, as a senior manager put it, “provide the ability for people to be able to work close to either their home, to minimise transport and improve sustainability, but also to be able to work close to where the customers are.” Such infrastructure includes work-enabling technologies; access to corporate information; tools to communicate, share information and collaborate; appropriate places and workstations; and training and technical support. Attributes of the infrastructure for teleworking emphasised included flexibility, mobility, reliability, responsiveness, comprehensiveness and ease of use. As one senior manager commented, “The easier we make the tools to use, the more people use them.”

Once an organisation decides to implement telework arrangements, senior management need to identify, assess and manage the risks associated with telework. Such risks may include digital information management, device and information security, teleworker well-being and health and safety, teleworker and team performance management, teleworker access to professional development and career advancement, and organisational reputation and customer relationships. The main concerns related to teleworker well-being and health and safety that arose in our study are isolation and disconnectedness, work-life imbalance, and emotional and physical well-being.

Isolation encompasses both social and professional isolation, the latter requiring ways to ensure that interactions with colleagues and the equivalent of “water cooler conversations” occur so that teleworkers remain connected and “in the loop”. As a team manager said, “The real challenge is ... that isolation, that feeling of disconnectedness from the other team [members] and ... that they don't know as much about what is going on in the business as you would pick up if you were working inside it.” The organisations in our study used a variety of mechanisms to overcome this including using ICT such as smart phones, instant messaging,

teleconferencing or videoconferencing, social media to connect and interact, regular one-on-one face-to-face interaction or phone conversations with the line manager, regular face-to-face interaction with other members of the team, bringing teleworking staff into the main office or other main centre for a work event, providing opportunities for social engagement, a company newsletter to connect teleworkers and their families with the organisation, and workplace spaces that are welcoming for mobile teleworkers or remote workers visiting the main office.

High workloads, stress and work-life imbalance can be a major issue, particularly for high pressure teleworking roles such as managers, staff on call, and those working in deadline-driven environments. As a senior manager observed, “Sometimes it's hard for those types of roles to switch off and the work-life balance does come into play.” Organisations rely on a range of approaches to address this issue, including encouraging line managers to pay attention to the work-life balance of their teleworkers, monitoring patterns or hours of work and taking appropriate action, monitoring teleworker attitudes and experiences through employee surveys, modelling of appropriate behaviour by senior managers, and encouraging self-discipline. Addressing the emotional and physical well-being of teleworkers involves making access available to an employee assistance programme as a support mechanism, enforcing safe and healthy work practices, and providing online access to resources and tools about wellness.

Finally, senior management should monitor telework practice and measure outcomes across the organisation, and regularly review telework arrangements and policies to optimise outcomes for the organisation, employees and clients. Interestingly, while most of the organisations we talked with perceived that teleworking was as or more productive than office-based work, few organisations formally measured the productivity or costs and savings associated with telework. Where productivity is measured, achievement of specific inputs can be used when appropriate to a specific role (e.g. billable hours, number of client calls), but more organisations focus on output and outcome measures such as achievement of specific targets or objectives, task and project completion or client satisfaction.



4. Support Infrastructure

The occupational health and safety (OH&S) of teleworkers tends to be a shared responsibility between the individual and the organisation. As with all employees, teleworkers have a responsibility to identify and manage or report hazards in their workplaces. Organisations generally have existing OH&S policies and procedures, but the challenge is ensuring that these are applied to all the places and spaces in which a teleworker may work. As an HR manager observed, “Regardless of where someone is working, we’ve got a moral and legal obligation to ensure that they are working safely.” In particular, the home is often considered a private space in which the organisation should not intrude. However, organisations implementing telework on a formal basis are conducting OH&S assessments in their teleworkers’ home workspaces using internal or external assessors. As a minimum, teleworkers are given a self-assessment tool or checklist to complete.

Monitoring and managing teleworker OH&S is more difficult in the case of ad hoc or part-time teleworkers,

or where an organisation is not aware of the extent of teleworking occurring among its employees. As one senior manager commented, “It is much better with our people who have it more formally as part of their role ... the health and safety aspect in their role is very strict and is very well managed. I think it is less so where you get to the employee working one day a week from home, because we don’t have a handle as to how it is being done.” Many organisations are addressing teleworker OH&S proactively through staff induction, training and advice, provision of appropriate equipment, and including teleworkers in specific OH&S initiatives. However, monitoring whether teleworkers are actually complying with OH&S guidelines and practices is less actively enforced.

Most of the organisations in our study provided training for teleworkers in how to use the technologies available to them for teleworking, either as specific training for teleworkers or as part of general staff training (many of the technologies and systems

used by teleworkers are the same as those used by non-teleworkers). Surprisingly, relatively few organisations provided training to teleworkers in how to organise and manage their work when teleworking. The provision of training in efficient and effective telework practices appears to be a gap that needs addressing in most organisations that implement telework arrangements.

Access to training, as well as professional development opportunities, can be an issue for full-time teleworkers, although organisations are increasingly configuring some of these resources for online delivery (to all staff).

In terms of technology, a smart phone and a laptop comprise the standard equipment used for teleworking. Increasingly, iPads and other tablet devices are also commonly used. These devices are usually provided by the organisation, although depending on individual teleworking arrangements some devices may belong to the teleworker. For example, in some organisations, teleworking devices are provided mainly to senior staff or to those with roles where teleworking is a requirement. Some teleworkers use a desktop computer in their home workspace, but this is typically provided by them. A significant number of companies proscribed or constrained the use of BYOD ('bring your own device') technologies because of security concerns, although some noted that this could change in the future.

When relevant to the role, teleworkers are provided with secure remote access to organisational systems. However, increasing use of Cloud-based applications and storage is supplementing or replacing the need for this (although not without security concerns for some organisations). Communication and collaboration tools are

increasingly forming a fundamental platform for teleworking. A range of teleconferencing and videoconferencing, instant messaging, social media and workflow tools are being used. Interestingly, a significant number of organisations considered internet access to be an individual responsibility (particularly in the home), often when teleworking was considered to be at the initiative or for the benefit of the individual. As attitudes change towards the acceptability or desirability of 'anywhere' working, this stance may change.

Effective information security requires a combination of organisational policies and procedures, individual teleworker responsibility, and controls and protections on organisational data, systems and devices. Teleworking, particularly in its ad hoc and mobile forms, is challenging conventional security models based on the organisation's firewall. As a senior manager commented, "In today's teleworking, and indeed totally flexible working, environment ... what you've got to do is protect device, application and data individually." For example, mobile devices used for teleworking can be password protected and, in some cases, the IT department has remote control of a device so that it can be shut down or wiped if lost. Remote access to company servers is controlled and protected through passwords, encryption software, virtual private network (VPN) technology and firewalls. Access to specific applications may be restricted, and certain types of information may be unavailable, not downloadable or read only. Confidentiality of corporate and client information is a major concern for many organisations, and confidentiality clauses or non-disclosure agreements are becoming increasingly common in telework arrangements.

Further Information

The research findings provided in this briefing are drawn from a larger study of telework in New Zealand and Australia in 2013, in conjunction with Cisco Australia and New Zealand. The Trans-Tasman Telework Survey examined manager and employee perspectives on telework productivity and wellbeing in 50 Australian and New Zealand organisations. The study was based on interviews with almost 100 senior and team managers, and a survey of 1800 employees.

The full report on the Trans-Tasman Telework Survey can be downloaded at:

www.workresearch.aut.ac.nz/Media-and-publications/all-publications

About the Future of Work Programme

The Future of Work Programme is a major research programme of the New Zealand Work Research Institute at AUT University that addresses the challenge of rapid workplace change. The Programme is concerned with people, work (paid and unpaid), diversity, relationships, technology and how people learn and interact. It is a multidisciplinary initiative, bringing together expertise in employment relations, employment law, labour market economics, health, information and communication technology, industrial and organisational psychology, human resource management, occupational health and safety, design, tourism and hospitality and ergonomics.

For further information about the Future of Work Programme visit the New Zealand Work Research Institute website at www.workresearch.aut.ac.nz/ or contact:

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