

The Telecommuting Handbook



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Founder of VirtualVocations

Over 8 years telecommuting experience!

Table of Contents

Introduction

- 1 Where To Start: Tips for Beginning Telecommuters
 - Your Home Office
 - Childcare Options
 - Balancing Home and Work
- 2 Resume and Cover Letters: What They Say About You
 - Writing a cover letter
 - Writing a resume'
 - Sample cover letter and resume'
- 3 Creating an Online Portfolio
 - Creating your portfolio template
 - Putting your portfolio together
 - Sample portfolio format
- 4 Locating Legitimate Telecommute Jobs
 - Recognizing work at home scams
 - Locating legitimate telecommute jobs
- 5 Why Employers Don't Respond
- 6 How to Approach Your Boss About a Telework Arrangement
 - Telecommute compatibility job assessment
 - Cost-savings for employers and employees
 - Example case study
 - Telecommute proposal sample

Table of Contents

7

Special Concerns: Using life experience as work experience and working at home with disabilities

Your Home Office

Handling gaps in employment

Sample functional resume'

Telecommuting options for the disabled

8

Skills Testing for Telecommuters

Bibliography

Copyright

About the Author

Introduction

VirtualVocations, Inc. was founded in 2007 and is one of the leading online resources for telecommute employment services. In an effort to continue providing quality resources and support for the members of our site, we are adding this ebook as an informational tool for those who would like to learn more about telecommuting, how to get started, handling special situations and more.

This ebook was written by Laura Spawn, one of the founders of VirtualVocations, and provides personal and professional insights into the telecommuting career world. Laura Spawn has been telecommuting for the past eight years and has gained a wealth of knowledge in the field which has allowed her to help many people with their search for legitimate work that can be done from home.

It is her desire to help those interested in working from home learn more about the benefits of doing so, and how to go about locating a legitimate telecommute position.

This ebook answers some of the basic questions she is asked on a regular basis about resume' writing, job searching, employer responses and more.

VirtualVocations sincerely hopes this ebook will prove to be very informative, and a valuable asset to all of our members who are actively seeking a telecommute position, or for those who are interested in learning more about the benefits of working from home.



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Where To Start: Tips for Beginning Telecommuters

All successful telecommuters have gone through the initial question asking of whether a telecommute career is right for their particular situation. Factors such as family dynamics and support, financial needs, or ability to mentally handle working from home in a more isolated setting are certainly issues that need to be considered before a decision is made.

Assuming that you have already considered the pros and cons, and made the decision that working from home or telecommuting is right for your situation, how then, do you get started?

Before diving into the actual process of applying for telecommute jobs, you must consider your home environment first.

- Where will you be working from in your home?
- Do you have a dedicated office?
- Is your office equipped with the basic components you would find if you worked outside the home?
- Do you have available childcare for your children if needed?
- How will you balance your home/work life?
- How many hours do you have on a daily basis to dedicate to both home and work?

These are some questions that should be answered before you begin your search for a telecommute position. Take some time to think about and discuss these questions with any family members who share your home. Telecommuting is a family affair, communication about when you will be working, where you will work and when it will be family time is essential. After you have discussed and answered all of the questions in the list to the satisfaction of yourself and your family, you are ready to move on.



Where To Start: Tips for Beginning Telecommuters

Your Home Office:

Most employers that hire telecommute employees or contractors expect that you will have a home office equipped with at least the following features:

1. Up to Date Computer-Most employers expect that you will have a computer with updates that are no less than 3 years old, including current security software.
2. High Speed Internet Access- Dial up and satellite internet are generally not acceptable for telecommuting. DSL or a cable connection are usually required.
3. FAX/Scanning capability
4. Printer
5. Unlimited Long Distance Plan-Many companies now use online options such as Skype or Vonage for communication with telecommuters.
6. Quiet Office Area-Depending on the type of jobs you will be applying for, you may be required to have a quiet home office area.

In addition to the general home office requirements above, some companies may also require that contractors have a separate room in their home which can be used for an office and locked during off-work hours to protect confidential information. Other companies may require that you use a Mac computer over a Windows based system. Be sure to check with all potential employers to find out what home office and system requirements they have for the position.



CHAPTER
1

Where To Start: Tips for Beginning Telecommuters

Childcare Options:

One of the major benefits of working from home is the option of having your children close at your side, and the flexibility to be there for them in between phone calls and paperwork, or whatever your job may require. That being said, I have worked at home with my young children around me for the past 5 years, and it hasn't been until the last couple of years that I have realized that sometimes it is better if your children have one on one attention from an adult (even if it's not you), rather than feel like they are only getting a few moments of your attention in between tasks.



When I started working from home, my oldest child was just 4 years old and my youngest just a few months. Nap times were still a few hours in the afternoon, and I could count on them sleeping a full 12 hours at night. It worked great for my schedule, working in the morning, during naptimes and in the evening after they were in bed. But, time marched on, and all of a sudden, no more naptimes, they started getting up earlier in the morning, and of course, eventually later bedtimes.

I tried getting up to work at 5am and going to bed at midnight after I had finished my evening tasks, but it didn't last long. I eventually had to come to terms with the fact that even though I was living the 'dream' of working from home and being with my children during the day, I wasn't really 'with' them, because I was so exhausted.

It was at that point that I realized that I needed help with childcare. Luckily, because my schedule was flexible enough, my husband and I setup times when he would be available to be home while I spent usually one to two hour blocks in my office getting work done. That proved to be very



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Where To Start: Tips for Beginning Telecommuters

successful for our family. I was able to accomplish my work, get the rest I needed, and give our children my full attention throughout the day when I wasn't working during those blocks of time.

Some telecommute positions require working during set periods of time, or just have general deadlines for when tasks need to be completed. Either way, the following suggestions for childcare can be beneficial to both parents and children in a telecommute work environment.

Paying for Childcare: Paying for traditional childcare is always an option, but usually pretty costly. Avoiding this cost is many times one of the reasons why people choose to telecommute in the first place. However, if you are working from your home, and depending on the age of your children, you could pay an older child or teenager to help keep your children occupied, fix them snacks, etc., while you are working in another area of the home. This would also cut down on the amount of money you would need to pay compared to placing your child(ren) in traditional daycare, or having a nanny.

Babysitting Co-op: Another option that is effective is joining or forming a babysitting co-op in your neighborhood. You can do this with several other parents who are at home during the times you would need to work. Rotating the babysitting of your children at different homes throughout the week allows you to have a set amount of free time to get your work done. You would need to be available to take your turn watching the children for the other parents as well.

Utilize Family Members: This option can be somewhat tricky, but doable. If you have family members nearby that wouldn't mind taking your child(ren) sometimes, I would certainly recommend allowing them to do so. Grandparents can be great for this if they are able. Even just one day a week for a few hours can allow you to get caught up on paperwork or make phone calls while it is quiet. Be sure to show consideration for their schedules and not infringe on their time or abuse the relationship by putting expectations on them just because they are related to you.



Where To Start: Tips for Beginning Telecommuters

Balancing Home and Work Life:

The balancing act of separating work and home life becomes especially critical as you telecommute. It is far too convenient to mix the two, in the end sacrificing the quality of both your work and the time spent with your family.

A good rule of thumb is to establish a daily schedule with definite starting and stopping points for your work. This will allow you to focus on your work during those times, but also mentally disconnect as you end your work and turn your attention to your family.

Use the benefits of working from home to your advantage. Instead of having to work an eight hour block, schedule your work time in two to three hour increments spread throughout the day at convenient times. Vary your schedule each day if needed, working in the mornings one day and evenings the next. This method has allowed me to be available for my children and husband during the busier parts of our days, as well as provided more flexibility for appointments or spontaneous family outings.

However you choose to structure your work schedule, location or childcare, it is an absolutely essential part of planning for telecommuting. Many employers will inquire specifically about these arrangements before considering you for a position, so it is always best to have thought through these key areas and know your availability and resources while working from home.



Resume' and Cover Letters: What They Say About You

Even with the increasing use of the internet for hiring new employees, many employers still require a well crafted resume' and cover letter submission in order to be in the running for a telecommute position. A resume' geared towards the telecommute job sector is not extremely different from a traditional resume, however, there are a few things that if emphasized, will help your chances of being considered for the position.

In the past eight years, I have hired around fifteen contractors to assist with various aspects of my business. For each position, I received a minimum of one hundred responses within the first 24 hours of posting the position. Based on my experience from being on the hiring end, this chapter focuses on a few tips to help you get your resume' opened by the employer.

Your Cover Letter:

1. **Your email IS your cover letter.** Even if the employer requests a separate cover letter, your email serves as the first contact, or first impression, in the virtual employment world. Before you hit the send button, you **MUST** take the time to do the following:
 - **Check your spelling.** I have a very difficult time taking any applicant seriously if they do not take the time to read over their email for spelling errors.
 - **Overview of relevant skills.** You should give a very brief 3-4 sentence summary outlining the skills that you possess that are relevant to the job position you are applying for.
 - **Invite them to open your resume' and/or cover letter.** Entice the employer to open your resume' and/or cover letter by giving just a little snippet of information that they would find useful to their advertised position. Mentioning some other relevant skill you have that may be useful in the position with further details in your resume' is a great way to give the hiring party a reason to look at you for further for consideration.



Resume' and Cover Letters: What They Say About You

- **Closing and Signature.** When utilizing an email as a cover letter, or introduction to your cover letter, you will need to be sure it has a proper 'email signature'. Below is an example:

FirstName LastName
Email Address
Phone
Cell Phone
LinkedIn Profile (Optional)
Twitter Account (Optional)

2. **Writing a document cover letter.** Time is of the essence, especially for those who have chosen to hire someone for a telecommute position. They are most likely deeply rooted in technology and the ease of use and instant results it provides. Your cover letter should give them the feeling of 'instant' delivery of the information they are seeking. Cover letters should not be a duplicate of your resume'. Use the following tips when crafting your cover letter for a potential position:

- **Basic Formatting.** Your cover letter should be formatted in a basic letter style. Place the date at the top left corner of the page, along with your name and contact information, followed by the salutation you would like to use, To Whom It May Concern, Dear Sir, Dear Hiring Manager, etc.
- **Body of Cover Letter.** Your cover letter should indicate your personal interest and knowledge of the company/employer you are interested in working for. Dig a little and find out some interesting aspects about the company you are applying to. A hiring manager will be more likely to look at your resume' if your cover letter shows that you've done your homework about their organization or business and are truly interested in what they stand for and the services they offer.



Resume' and Cover Letters: What They Say About You

- **Closing and Signature.** Because you will already have placed your contact information at the top of your cover letter, the ending signature really only requires a basic closing with your signed name. Some common closings for cover letters are:

Sincerely,
Regards,
Kind regards,
Best regards,
Thank you for your consideration,
Respectfully,
Respectfully yours,
Thank you,

Using one of these closings, you can end your cover letter in a professional, but friendly format.

Now that you have enticed the employer to open up your resume' by reading your well crafted cover letter, it is time to really impress them with all the reasons why you are their top telecommuting candidate for the position.



Resume' and Cover Letters: What They Say About You

Your Resumé:

1. **Tell them what they want to know.** I have personally opened up hundreds of resumes over the years when I have been hiring for a position, and have thrown them out within the first 20 seconds because the information given has nothing to do with the qualifications I specified in the job description. This doesn't mean the person wasn't qualified or capable of doing the job, but, as a business owner, I simply do not have the time to read through the whole entire resume' in detail and try to decide if the person may or may not have the skills I am looking for.
- **Personalize your resume' for each job.** I always suggest that you have a 'master' resume' document with a qualifications section at the top of the page, located directly under your contact information. This allows you to change the qualifications information for every job you apply to very quickly, which I find is key to getting noticed.
 - **Highlight your qualifications.** When an employer takes the time to write a job description, and especially those who are looking for telecommuters versus those who will interview in person, they include specific skills and qualifications they expect the applicants to possess. When you find a position you want to apply for, and are qualified to fill, you must show the employer within the first 30 seconds that you have the exact skills they are looking for. I have found this works best in a bulleted list or shadow box placed at the very top of the resume'. See below for examples.



**CHAPTER
2**

Resume' and Cover Letters: What They Say About You

Example Qualification Formats:

Marketing Position Example

- 10 Years Print Marketing Experience
- 5 Years Coordinating Marketing Materials: Flyers, brochures, coupons
- Held Management Position in Marketing Department
- BA Degree Advertising
- Telecommute Ready with Complete Home Office

Blogger Position Example

- Three years experience blogging on Wordpress 3.0
- Can start immediately and provide 3 posts per day
- Provide own editing and SEO of posts
- Can source own images relevant to posts
- Complete home office for optimal communication and reliability

Be sure you address the exact skills and qualifications the employer is looking for that were stated in the job description. The employer will definitely stop and look at what you have to offer if they can see you have the initial skills and qualifications they listed. It also shows you have paid attention to what they actually wrote in the job description, attention to detail goes a long way in getting hired for a telecommute position.



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Resume' and Cover Letters: What They Say About You

3. **Providing your work history.** After you have strategically placed your qualifications at the top of your resume', you will then want to provide supporting information of those qualifications by listing your past and present employers. If you already have your master resume' document created, you can simply use the information on that document. If you are starting from scratch, I would recommend the following format for listing your work history.

*If you are someone who has been out of the workforce for a significant period of time, chapter 7 of this book titled "Special Concerns", will help you address the work history portion of your resume'.

- **List your employment in chronological order, starting with the most recent employer.**

I would recommend only using the past twenty years of work history, or the last five jobs, unless anything older than that is extremely relevant to your current position.

Example format for listing work history LESS than 20 years old:

Bednar Motor Company (1999-Current)

Position: Bookkeeper

Responsibilities Include: Managing day to day accounting, receivables, cash drawer, invoices, customer collections, deposits and bank account reconciliation.

Example format for listing work history MORE than 20 years old:

Bednar Motor Company (1980-1985) Bookkeeper

Cash drawer, invoices, collections, deposits, receivables.



Resume' and Cover Letters: What They Say About You

4. **Listing your educational experience and professional affiliations.** Listing your educational experience and professional affiliations can also include experience gained doing volunteer work, community and political involvement as well as paid employment. In terms of a resume', proper placement and display of those skills on paper can make a big difference in whether you are considered for a position or not.

- **Listing Educational History.** List your educational experience as you would your work history, starting with the most recent.

Example format for listing educational history-

Management Training for Social Programs (2005)

Creating an effective workplace.

4-Continuing Education Credits

University of Alabama (2002)

B.A.S. Business Management and Accounting

- **Listing Professional Affiliations.** If you are a member of any professional organizations, you will want to list them in the same format as your educational history, but under their own heading. See below:

Example format for listing professional affiliations and memberships-

American Management Association

(2002-Current) Board Member

A well-written introduction email, cover letter and resume' can make the difference as to whether you



**CHAPTER
2**

Resume' and Cover Letters: What They Say About You

are considered for a position, and ultimately, whether you are hired. Even if you have 100% of the skills the employer is looking for, if you are not able to present them in an eye-catching format, your chances of being hired will diminish. Following the steps outlined in this chapter will help you make the best 'first impression' you can for potential employers.



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CHAPTER
2

Resume' and Cover Letters: What They Say About You

Sample Cover Letter & Resume' Format

February 17, 2003

Mary Smith
Waterford CT
mary@gmail.com
Home- 568.908.7896
Cell- 568.780.9865

Dear Hiring Manager,

In 2002, your business sustained record growth resulting in a substantial increase in products and sales. With the emerging social network potential online, your company is in a prime position to further your growth in the coming years by creating an online presence to attract consumers.

I have the capability and skills necessary to create an online presence for your company immediately upon hiring, including social networking experience utilizing platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Digg, LinkedIn, blogging and more. My experience is invaluable to your company as I can establish your brand through social online connections and create a presence that will attract new consumers.

I look forward to becoming a part of the growth your company is experiencing and would like to invite you to open my resume' for in-depth review of my skills, or you can view my online portfolio. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Mary Smith

Online Portfolio Link (Optional), LinkedIn Professional Profile Link (Optional), Twitter Profile (Optional)



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Resume' and Cover Letters: What They Say About You

Mary Smith

Waterford CT

mary@email.com

Online Portfolio Link

Home- 568.908.7896, Cell- 568.780.9865

- Qualifications
- Qualifications
- Qualifications
- Qualifications
- Qualifications
- Qualifications

Work History

Bednar Motor Company (1999-Current)

Position: Bookkeeper

Responsibilities Include: Managing day to day accounting, receivables, cash drawer, invoices, customer collections, deposits and bank account reconciliation.

Educational History

Management Training for Social Programs (2005)

Creating an effective workplace.

4-Continuing Education Credits

University of Alabama (2002)

B.A.S. Business Management and Accounting

Professional Affiliations

American Management Association (2002-Current)

Board Member

References available upon request

Online Portfolio Link, LinkedIn Profile, Twitter Profile



Creating Your Online Portfolio

I happen to think that within the next ten to fifteen years, resumes and cover letters will be a thing of the past when applying for positions online. With the benefits of being able to manage online portfolios easily, their instant availability to potential employers and the elimination of file sharing risks and software incompatibility, the online portfolio is a wonderful resource for both job seekers and employers alike.

This chapter addresses the construction of a professional, online portfolio that will catch the interest of potential employers that you would like to review your skills. You will want to create multiple portfolios highlighting different skill sets, depending on the job you are seeking. For instance, if you are a computer programmer and know three different programming languages, it would be useful to have a portfolio highlighting each one of the languages specifically and your projects or achievements surrounding that skill. No matter how many portfolios you choose to create, you should always include at least the following areas:

- An 'About Me' Section
- Skills and Qualifications or image/file showcase of skills
- Previous work accomplishments
- Education and certifications
- A 'Contact' section or form

Your Portfolio Template

Choosing your portfolio style is much like deciding what outfit you will wear to an interview. It is an unspoken indication of your professional background, skill level and serious interest in landing a position.

When creating an online portfolio, it is important to choose a template that matches your skills, work interests and professionalism. If you are a Graphic Designer, you will want to have a portfolio



Creating Your Online Portfolio

template that allows you to showcase your design talents in a creative way. On the other hand, if you are a Management Professional, you will want a portfolio that has a sleek, no-frills template that indicates your seriousness and ability to handle management issues. Be sure to choose a template that tells the employer you are serious about your skills, qualifications and professionalism.

Order of Information

If your portfolio allows you the option of adjusting where the information is located, I would recommend listing the various sections in the following format:

1. About Me Section
2. Skills showcase, or if you have image samples of prior work to upload.
3. Experience
4. Contact Section

About You Section

Your online portfolio 'About Me' section may give you the option to upload your picture if you'd like and give potential employers a short summary of your professional and personal background. This section of your portfolio should be a personable area, it should answer the question 'Tell me a little about yourself', much the same as you would in a traditional interview setting.

Skills Showcase

Your skills section should showcase the skills and qualifications you have, that the employer needs to fill their position. This can be done in many different formats, one of the most common is a bulleted list of skills that match the attributes the employer is looking for in potential candidates. The skills



section needs to 'sell' the employer on the idea that you have all the experience they are seeking to fill the position.

Work Experience

If you have a profession that allows you to showcase your previous work through images, files, or links to other websites, that work can be listed either in this section, or you can create a new 'gallery' or 'samples' section of your portfolio to showcase them.

If you have a profession that relies on written qualifications and skills to showcase your abilities, you will want to place them in this section, but, you are not required to display the information like on a traditional resume', you can simply just list the names of the companies you have worked with, and optionally, your job title. You will also list your education and achievements in a condensed format as well. See example:

Work Experience

1999-Current

Law Firm of Henry Moyle, Paralegal

Law Firm of Henry Moyle, General Secretary

1998

B.A. Degree in Paralegal Studies, Brown University

2005

Awarded 'Paralegal of the Year'



Creating Your Online Portfolio

Contact Information

If this area is other than a contact form, aside from listing your email address and contact phone (optional), you can also add social networking sites you use, such as your LinkedIn profile, Twitter user name, Facebook page, etc. This information could also be entered in the Header of the portfolio if available.

I would recommend when including your email address, that you type it in a format other than the traditional 'jane@email.com'. Consider using 'jane (at) email (dot) com'. This will help keep email harvesters from gathering your address in their auto searches.

If you are not a graphic designer or programmer that can build their own portfolio, or do not have the available money to pay someone privately for their services, there are several options available.

VirtualVocations has created an online portfolio service available to all subscribers, which includes the following features:

- Create multiple portfolios for various positions you are interested in.
- Various templates available to accommodate different professional backgrounds.
- Create online galleries to showcase design work, photography or other images.
- Upload file samples for potential employers or contractors to download and review.
- Customizable HTML header.
- Contact form that keeps your email address private but sends all inquiries to you immediately.
- To access the online portfolio creation area of your account, be sure to login, go to the 'My Account' section, then click on 'Portfolio'.

Additional online portfolio services include sites such as Carbonmade, Coroflot or Squarespace.

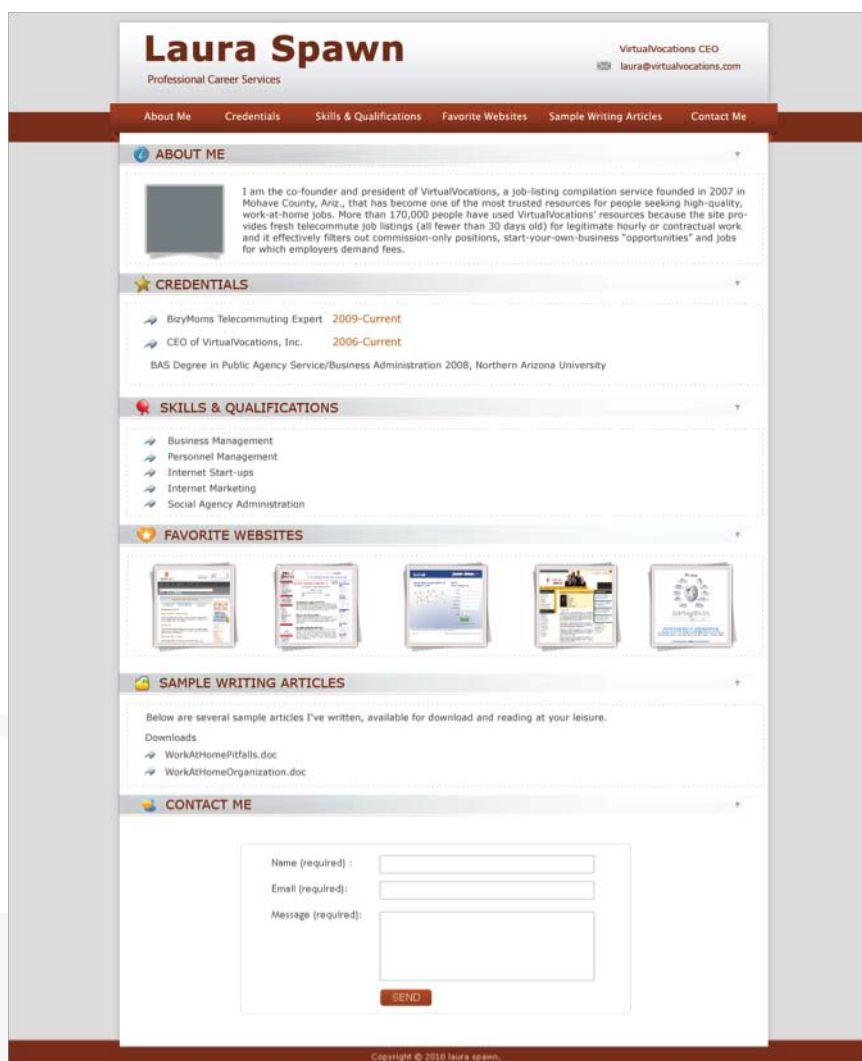
An online portfolio is a great way to improve the chances of having a potential employer consider



CHAPTER 3

Creating Your Online Portfolio

you for a telecommute position. The fact that you are computer savvy enough to have an online portfolio tells employers that you are able to use current technology in a way that allows for greater ease while working remotely. An online portfolio is an invaluable tool in today's job market. View a sample portfolio below.



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CHAPTER
4

Locating Legitimate Telecommute Jobs

Now that you are ready to apply for telecommute positions with a well-crafted cover letter and resume' or online portfolio, you may ask yourself, where does one actually find the legitimate, real work from home positions? Perhaps the best way to find a real work at home position, is to know what is NOT real. Please take a few minutes and review the types of 'telecommute jobs' that are not real jobs, and how you can personally filter out the good positions from the bad ones as you begin applying.

According to Staffcentrix, the current scam to legitimate telecommute job is 61:1 as of September 2010¹. That means that for every REAL work at home job, there are 61 scam jobs advertised! So, how do you make sure you don't fall for the vast amount of scams that are out there? This chapter will help teach you how to spot legitimate telecommute jobs, and provide tips for recognizing work at home scams.

Recognizing Work at Home Scams

1. Requiring you to pay money. If one of the job requirements is that you have to pay BEFORE you can start working, then it is a scam. Real employers do not require prospective employees to pay to receive information or to start working. Note: This does not mean that you should not pay a fee for job coaching, job research services, resume' assistance or other job assistance services. However, if any company ever states you must pay a fee to WORK for them, that is a scam.

2. You are required to purchase specific materials or software. If you are required to pay for very specific materials, or computer programs, then it is most likely a scam. If a job requires that you



Locating Legitimate Telecommute Jobs

have Windows based programs on your computer to qualify for work, that is fine, as most companies do have specific software requirements, but if they require you to purchase software from a specific 'company' to work for them, it is most likely a scam. Envelope stuffing is the same way, the company should provide you with the materials.

3. No experience required. If the job says 'NO EXPERIENCE REQUIRED', then mark it off your list. Real jobs require you to have some form of qualifications. Employers don't have job openings that don't require you to know anything, especially for telecommute jobs when they aren't going to be in the same office to be able to train you.

4. No company information listed. If the job description does not include any company information such as name, contact number, email address, physical location or website, then be VERY cautious. Some companies prefer to remain anonymous during certain portions of the hiring process, however, scams are known for not providing any company information so you are not able to identify them to law enforcement officials. Before you provide any private information to a company that is interested in hiring, be sure to obtain complete company contact information, management names and a website address, then check with the BBB and Google the company name with 'scam' to find out if there have been any complaints.

5. Negative company Google search results. Before you apply for a position with a company, run a quick Google search on them with the words scam, fraud and fake. Generally, if it is a scam, you aren't the first one they have presented the offer to, and you should be able to find information from various sources about the company. If Google gives you negative information about the company, you can be fairly certain it is not a legitimate position.

6. Make \$10,000 your first month! If you run into a job ad that claims you are going to make a huge amount of money with very little effort and time, it is a scam. Many of those advertisements are for home based business 'opportunities', claiming that you will get rich off of the home business system they are presenting. Most of them also require an initial business investment of at least several



Locating Legitimate Telecommute Jobs

hundred dollars to get started. These ads generally feature girls in scanty clothing, beautiful cars and homes akin to castles. Any job ad that claims you will make an unreasonable amount of money right off the bat is a scam. Remember, if it sounds too good to be true, then its 99.9% sure to be a scam!

7. Job offer arrives magically in your email. If you receive an unsolicited email with a work at home job offer that sounds too good to pass up, it means you are being scammed. Many scammers purchase lists of 'harvested' email addresses of those who have been looking for home based jobs and have innocently entered their email address into a form for information that looked legitimate. Those email addresses are then gathered, sold and used for scamming purposes.

8. You are asked to use your personal bank account for transactions. This scam can get you into big trouble if you fall for it. Scams that require you to cash checks using your personal bank account, then wire the money out of the country are illegal money laundering scams. There is no situation where a legitimate, real employer would ask an employee to do such a thing. In fact, if you do fall for this scam, you could be personally liable and charged for fraudulent activity. Under NO circumstances do you ever use your personal bank account for any transactions relating to 'employment'.

9. Job description has too many typos to count. One of the easier ways to spot a scam is to take a look at the grammar, spelling and sentence structures of the job description. Many of the online scams out there that are posted on job boards are done by people in foreign countries with undeveloped English skills. If you come across a job offer that is full of misspelled words, incomplete sentences or is grammatically difficult to understand, it is more than likely a scam, posted to harvest emails from people who send their resume', hoping that it is a real job.

10. They never ask for a real interview. Many scammers, especially those from foreign countries will want to conduct 'interviews' via an email questionnaire, or by using Skype. NEVER accept a job offer from a company unless you have talked to them personally on the phone at the very least, and



CHAPTER
4

Locating Legitimate Telecommute Jobs

ideally have spoken with them in person, checked out their company and done your research online and by checking with the BBB to make sure they are a real business.

Following these guidelines will help tremendously in spotting scam job postings or business opportunities that are floating around all over the internet right now. Over 275,000 people fell victim to internet fraud scams reported in 2009², don't become part of the future statistics!

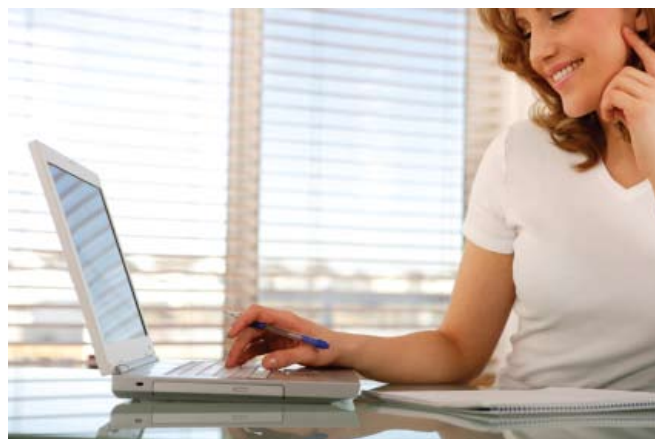
Now that we've covered the basics of what is NOT a real telecommute position, let's take a look at some places you can visit online that DO have legitimate work at home jobs available.

Locating Legitimate Telecommute Jobs

Job Search Engines

Job search engines have become critical in today's job research. The largest career search engines, SimplyHired and Indeed update their aggregator system with millions of jobs each day to allow users the opportunity to search open positions by date, location, category, company and more. Current top job aggregator search engines include:

- [SimplyHired](#)
- [Indeed](#)
- [Whydowork](#)
- [TopUSAJobs](#)



CHAPTER
4

Locating Legitimate Telecommute Jobs

Bid-for-Hire Marketplaces

Bid-for-hire sites are extremely popular for serious freelancers who work from home. However, you must be willing to bid for the open jobs, requiring you to compete with foreign workers, which can bring the pay rate unreasonably low for many U.S. freelancers. Bid-for-hire sites are great if you can browse them throughout the day and place bids quickly with a guarantee of fast completion and turnaround for the project. Bid-for-hire sites that provide great services and skills testing include:

- Freelancer
- Elance
- Mechanical Turk
- Odesk

Paid Subscription Telecommute Sites

Paid subscription sites can be very useful in your job search, especially for telecommute positions. Although you do have free access to almost 100% of the jobs listed on these sites by doing your own research, it can take the average, inexperienced researcher many hours. If you have the monetary resources available, it is well worth the cost to have all of the telecommuting positions screened and listed on one site.

VirtualVocations, started in 2007, is one of a handful of subscription telecommute sites, which offers the following benefits to their subscribers:

- Daily researched telecommute job listings
- Daily job alerts
- Online portfolio system
- Online resume' and file storage
- Work at home companies database
- Handbook for beginning telecommuters



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CHAPTER
4

Locating Legitimate Telecommute Jobs

By applying the tips that are mentioned in the beginning of this chapter to all the job leads you locate, either through job search engines, bid sites or private telecommute research services, you will be able to discern whether a position is legitimate, or if you should steer clear of the listing. Be sure to study up on the warning signs of scams, and it won't take long before you will easily recognize a legitimate telecommute job offer from a scam.



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CHAPTER
5

Why Employers Don't Respond

This is one of the questions that I have received through email the most often during my time of working with those who would like to telecommute. Usually it comes in the form of something like the following:

"I applied for a job and I didn't receive a response, how come?"

or

"I've applied for several jobs and it's been a month and I haven't heard back from any of the employers, what am I doing wrong?"

These are valid concerns which I will address in this chapter. The reasons that a person does not hear back from an employer can vary widely, however, I feel there are several steps a job seeker can take that will give them a better chance of being contacted by an employer for an interview.

Make sure you are qualified for the job. Unless you have the minimum qualifications listed for the job, you should not apply. Employers are very busy, and any lack of attention to detail on an applicants part can mean no response from the hiring company, even to say that you are not right for the position. This is one of the main reasons why an employer may not contact you about a job you applied for.

Tailor your resume' and/or cover letter. As stated in chapter 2: Resumes and Cover Letters, your initial email and resume' is the 'first impression' of you as a potential candidate for an employer or hiring company. If you have mistakes in your spelling, haven't written your cover letter specifically for the position you are applying for, or do not showcase the qualifications you have that fit the job,



CHAPTER
5

Why Employers Don't Respond

an employer will most likely pass you up while filtering through applications. It is absolutely critical that your email subject line, and the body of your email is an accurate reflection of the professionalism that you will be exhibiting should you be offered the position. Anything less than what the employer is seeking could mean that you are overlooked and may not receive a response to your application email.

Employer is overwhelmed by responses. Fifty-three percent, or 24 million, of the businesses in the United States are homebased, which means they are most likely owned and operated by a small number of individuals. It is also estimated that 8,500 new jobs daily are provided by home based business owners.³ Now, take into consideration that some telecommute jobs, especially those that fall under customer service, administrative, graphic design and data entry, can receive up to 200 applicants in less than 24 hours. Many of those positions are offered by small businesses, and most of them do not have the manpower to respond to every single applicant. This may mean that if you are not the prime candidate for the position, you won't receive any kind of response. As frustrating as that is, one of the best ways to get noticed even in a sea of emails is to make your subject line really stand out. Give them a reason to open your email right that moment. If the position is looking to hire immediately, you could use as the subject line, "Available to start work immediately." If the job description says they are seeking an individual that has extensive experience in a particular area, you could place in the subject line, "Professional with 10 years Experience". Remember, your subject line will advertise to the employer a little about you, so unless they have asked for a specific subject line, come up with something creative that will make them think twice about discarding your email.

The position is still open. Many of the people who email me, in their excitement and eagerness to find a telecommute job, don't realize that many times you have to wait for the position to close. This is especially true if the position is with a larger company that has a Human Resource department. If the position is with a smaller business, the owner may still leave the position open for up to 30 days, depending on how quickly they need it filled. On most of the major job boards,



Why Employers Don't Respond

employers pay for job postings for 30 day periods, which means you should give at least one month for each job position to close, unless the job description gives a specific closing date, or other instructions for contact. You may want to consider sending a follow-up email one to two weeks after you first applied for the job. This will ensure that the employer will receive your email after the first wave of applicants have most likely been reviewed. This additional contact may give you the added benefit of being looked at as someone who is persistent and reliable, as well as organized in their personal and professional life.

Unemployment is currently at 9.6% in the United States. According to the U.S. Department of Labor 'Employment Situation Summary' released in November of 2010, unemployment is currently at 9.6%, translating to 14.8 million people without jobs. This number can be discouraging, as it means that an increased number of people will be applying for the very same jobs you apply for, however, there is good news! New open job positions are increasing in the U.S. as well, which helps to alleviate some of the unemployment. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, in the past 11 months, since December of 2009, 874,000 non-farm jobs have opened, with 151,000 of those just in October 2010⁴. With the right preparation and presentation of your skills, you will be in a position to receive a job offer according to your qualifications.

Because there are so many factors at work when you apply for a job, such as where are you in the line of applicants, when the job opened, are they really looking to hire externally, or do they already have an internal candidate in line, etc. It can be very difficult to pinpoint the exact reason why you may not be contacted when you are perfectly qualified to fill a position. In the ideal world, we hope that employers are willing and able to send a notification to all applicants as to their status, however, in the telecommute career sector, this is sometimes not the case, simply because the number of applicants are too high for an employer to respond individually without the manpower to send responses to each applicant.



CHAPTER
5

Why Employers Don't Respond

Telecommuting is a relatively new, but quickly growing career market, with employers and businesses forging the path of how hiring is done and which applications are reviewed. Don't get discouraged if you feel a job opportunity passed you by that you would have been perfect for. It can take quite a while, even in the traditional job market, for a qualified individual to receive a matched job offer. Keep applying and eventually the fruits of your hard work will materialize with the optimal telecommute position.



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CHAPTER
6

How to Approach Your Boss About a Telework Arrangement

An increasing number of companies are joining the new wave of telecommuting, especially with the Federal Telework Act of 2010 pushing its way through Congress and many government and state agencies implementing telework programs.

There have been many companies who have helped pioneer the telecommute movement since technology has advanced enough to allow cloud computing and secure networking. Adobe, United Healthcare, Aetna, JetBlue, American Fidelity and S.C. Johnson to name a few.

Many companies would allow telecommuting if they new about the cost-saving benefits and increased employee productivity it provides. If you are currently in a job that allows you to complete some of your work without the requirement of personal interaction with clients or customers, you may be in the perfect position to approach your boss about allowing you to work from home.

This chapter will focus on the steps you can take if you are seriously considering requesting permission to work from home, or telecommute from a location other than the main business office. I would recommend that you print the following pages for personal use while constructing your Telecommute Work Proposal.

- [Telecommute Compatability Job Worksheet](#)
- [Telecommuting Cost-Savings Benefits for Employers and Employees](#)
- [Sample Telecommute Work Proposal](#)

This section will assist you in determining what kind of proposal you should bring to your manager or boss when requesting a telecommute work arrangement. Please complete the following worksheet and review the cost-savings benefits before using the sample Telecommute Work Proposal to create your individualized proposal to discuss with your boss.



CHAPTER
6

How to Approach Your Boss About a Telework Arrangement

Telecommute Compatability Job Assessment Worksheet

Please answer the following questions about your current work situation.

Have you worked with your current employer long enough that you would feel comfortable in your duties and working away from the office?

☐ Yes☐ No☐ Unsure

Is there a portion of your work that could be done regularly away from the office, such as paperwork or phone calls?

☐ Yes☐ No☐ Unsure

Do you have adequate care for any dependents, including children, the elderly, or pets?

☐ Yes☐ No☐ Unsure

Do you complete portions of your work utilizing online resources such as a secure company website or software program?

☐ Yes☐ No☐ Unsure

Do you have a home office that is comparable to your regular work area in the office?

☐ Yes☐ No☐ Unsure**VirtualVocations**www.VirtualVocations.com

CHAPTER
6

How to Approach Your Boss About a Telework Arrangement

Do you have access at home to appropriate Internet connectivity, fax capabilities, and/or additional phone line if needed?

☐ Yes☐ No☐ Unsure

Could your interactions with co-workers and management be completed by phone, video conferencing or email?

☐ Yes☐ No☐ Unsure

If your job requires that you handle client sensitive or confidential information, do you have provisions in place to keep that information secure?

☐ Yes☐ No☐ Unsure**If you answered 'Yes' to 4-6 questions:**

You are most likely a candidate for a partial telecommuting arrangement. This means that your job may require that you work in the office at least a couple of days a week, attend meetings with management and co-workers, or work with customers on a regular basis in-person.

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**CHAPTER
6**

How to Approach Your Boss About a Telework Arrangement

If you answered 'Yes' to 6-8 questions:

You are most likely a candidate for a full telecommute position. Your job most likely requires that you spend most of your time on the computer or responding by phone calls and email. You probably already take some work home with you to complete after hours and have a home office capable of completing necessary work.

If your job is eligible for either a part-time or full-time telecommuting role, you and your employer can both benefit from exploring the options of a telework program.

For a more in-depth screening for telecommuting eligibility, please visit TeleworkExchange⁵ or TeleworkArizona⁷

Once you have determined that your current job is one that could realistically transition to a full or partial telecommute position, it is now time to look at what the benefit would be for your employer to allow you to make the switch to working from home.

Cost-Savings for Employers

Retention of Employees- Businesses report that telecommuting employees are among the top talent that stays with them year after year, due to the perks and less stressful environment that telecommuting provides.

Fewer Absences- Businesses that allow employees to telecommute have less absenteeism because employees are able to work effectively from their homes in instances such as sickness, family issues or adverse weather conditions.

Reduction in Overhead- Businesses are able to cut costs with employees telecommuting. Less office space is required, fewer parking spaces and if the employee provides their own home office and internet connection, less equipment and computer costs.



CHAPTER 6

How to Approach Your Boss About a Telework Arrangement

Government Incentives- The following states provide government tax credits to assist businesses that implement telecommuting programs:

California- SB 2021 \$500 Tax Credit

Georgia- Telework Tax Credit

Illinois- Vehicle Trip Reduction Credit

New Jersey- Trip Reduction Credit

Oregon- Business Energy Tax Credit

Texas-Texas Health & Safety Code § 382.05193

Virginia- TeleworkVA Up to \$35,000 Credit

Washington- (ARCW) § 28B.130.005 Trip Reduction Act

Besides tax credits for telework programs, the following states also offer programs that provide loan assistance or funds available to purchase telework office equipment for employees that are disabled and allowed to work from their homes.

Alabama	Maine	South Carolina
Arizona	Maryland	Utah
Arkansas	Massachussetts	Vermont
Delaware	Michigan	Virginia
Florida	Minnesota	Washington
Georgia	Missouri	Wisconsin
Illinois	Nevada	Wyoming
Iowa	New Mexico	
Kansas	North Dakota	
Kentucky	Oklahoma	
Louisiana	Pennsylvania	



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CHAPTER
6

How to Approach Your Boss About a Telework Arrangement

For contact information on the telework loan assistance programs these states offer, visit: TeleworkAdvocacy¹⁰

According to a 2009 Telework Survey conducted by Cisco, the average annual cost-savings per employee that telecommutes is \$10,000.¹¹ This includes savings by the employer in space and equipment, reduced absences, higher employee retention and increased productivity.

For comprehensive online cost-savings calculators for employers, please visit: Tjobs.com⁶ and TelecommuteCT⁸

Cost-Savings for the Employee

Less Commute Equals Savings- Less commuting saves both time and money for employees. Telecommuting allows employees to save costs on both fuel and wear and tear on their personal vehicles. An estimated \$1,200 per year is saved on fuel by those who telecommute.⁹ This survey doesn't take into account savings on decreased wardrobe costs or eating out for lunches.

Improved Balance in Work and Life- People spend a lot of their time commuting to work that could be spent with their families, or decreasing their work day. According to the 2009 U.S. Fact Finder Census, those who do not work from home, spend an average of 50 minutes each day commuting to and from work. That adds up quickly to over 4 hours per week, and close to 20 hours per month.¹²

Increased productivity and personal satisfaction- Various studies have shown that increased productivity and satisfaction with their job is one of the main benefits seen by employees when they are allowed to telecommute. Given the option of working in a self-controlled environment, many employees feel more satisfied with their work output and experience an increase in productivity and loyalty to the company.



CHAPTER
6

How to Approach Your Boss About a Telework Arrangement

The benefits of telecommuting are increasing in popularity and recognition throughout our globally changing workforce. Employers are able to reduce costs and gain better employee performance, while employees are able to save money spent on commuting and gain a greater balance between work and personal life. Well-planned and executed telecommuting arrangements offer a beneficial work setting for all those involved.

Putting Your Telecommute Proposal in Writing

Creating a well-written proposal to submit to your current boss or HR office is crucial to your chance of being allowed to telecommute on a regular basis. Using the [Telecommute Compatibility Job Worksheet](#), you can identify those areas that will demonstrate to upper management the viability of modifying your current position to allow telecommuting. Included in the next section is an example work situation, including a sample [Telecommute Arrangement Proposal](#).

Example Case Study - Susan, Office Administrator

Susan works in the Portland Oregon metro area, but lives in Vancouver Washington, an average daily commute of 31 minutes each way.

Susan has worked for the past three years as the office administrator for a pest control company. She is an excellent employee who rarely takes sick days, or shows up late. She completes all of her responsibilities on time and is very respected by her boss. Her position involves the administrative tasks of confirming appointments, coordinating service calls, receiving customer payments by phone and by mail, making deposits, ordering office and equipment supplies and managing the office secretary. Her normal work schedule is Monday through Friday, 8am to 5pm.



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CHAPTER
6

How to Approach Your Boss About a Telework Arrangement

Lately, Susan has been considering the benefits that working some of her hours from home would provide. She could save up to five hours of personal time per week by reducing her commute. She would also be available when her two older children returned home from school each day to make sure they started on their homework.

Susan begins to track the amount of time she spends at work completing responsibilities that could be done from her home. Her daily record looks like this:

7:20am - Leave home and commute to work

8-10am - Coordinate service calls and email schedules to contractors.

10-11am - Order new supplies for office and pest control equipment if needed.

11-12pm - Enter customer payments into accounting system.

12-1pm - Lunch

1-3pm - Confirm service appointments for next business day.

3-4:30pm - Assist office secretary with filing and other misc. duties. Weekly staff meetings on Mondays.

4:30pm - Leave work to make daily deposit

5:00pm - Commute Home

5:30pm - Arrive home



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How to Approach Your Boss About a Telework Arrangement

Susan keeps track of her daily tasks for three weeks before coming to the following conclusions:

- 4 hours each day are spent making phone calls to customers and coordinating service calls between contractors.
- 2 hours total per day are spent commuting to and from work and on her lunch hour. She is located too far from home to be able to return for her lunch, so she usually spends a minimum of \$7 per day eating out.
- Out of the 9 hours she spends involved with working each day, only 4 hours are spent doing things that require an in-office presence.

Susan realizes that if she adjusts the order of how she carries out her responsibilities, her position would allow telecommuting for up to four hours per day. Susan must take into consideration her other job responsibilities that require her to be onsite, before presenting her telecommute proposal to her boss.

1. Susan is required to make sure the secretary shows up and completes her shift each day at the office.
2. She is required to attend weekly staff meetings on Monday afternoons.
3. Susan is required to enter customer payments and make bank deposits on a daily basis.
4. Susan is responsible for tracking and ordering office supplies, pest control chemicals and equipment on a daily basis.

Now that Susan has divided all of her duties into work that can be completed offsite, versus work that must be done onsite, she can begin to construct a new daily work schedule as part of her telecommute proposal.

Susan decides that it would be best to work all day Monday in the office, making her available to handle any 'beginning of the week' issues, and be present for the in-office weekly meeting. She



**CHAPTER
6**

How to Approach Your Boss About a Telework Arrangement

also thinks it is best to work in the office during the mornings to be sure the secretary shows up for work and is on track for the day. Susan also notes that because she will only be working on a computer on Mondays in the office and for one hour daily entering payment information, she would easily be able to share a simple workstation with the secretary, or use her own laptop to connect to the company accounting system. She is planning on proposing a four-day per week, partial telecommuting proposal.

Susan comes up with the following daily work schedule for Tuesday through Friday:

7:20-8am - Leave home and commute to work.

8-9am - Order new office and pest control supplies.

9-10am - Enter customer payments into accounting system.

10-11:30am - Assist secretary with filing and misc. duties.

11:30-12noon - Make bank deposit.

12:30 -1pm-Commute home.

Susan has decided that once she is home, she will confirm the next day service appointments sometime between 1pm and 5pm, and coordinate the next day service calls for the contractors before she goes to the office the next morning.

Susan has also made sure that she has a complete home office to allow her access to the internet, faxing, printing and email in order to complete her work. She will also have a separate phone line installed from which she can make business calls to customers.



How to Approach Your Boss About a Telework Arrangement

She will also phone into the office twice between 1 and 5pm as well make herself available through an online collaboration tool, such as Skype or Chat for immediate contact.

After Susan has figured out in what ways telecommuting will work for her position, she makes a list of the benefits for herself and for the pest control company she works for.

Personal Benefits:

- Flexible afternoon schedule allows for availability to family.
- \$145 monthly savings in lunch costs by eating at home.
- Less stress by completing work via telecommuting and cutting out 4 additional hours per day away from home.

Company Benefits:

- Reduced costs by removing an extra workstation.
- Increased productivity by Susan while working from home.
- Tax benefits offered by the state of Oregon for companies that allow telecommuting.
- Reduced time off by allowing Susan to work from home instead of taking personal leave for her children, or sick leave when needed.

With her proposed telecommuting schedule outlined and the benefits of the schedule written down, Susan is now ready to write up her formal Telecommute Arrangement Proposal and submit it to her boss for review.



**CHAPTER
6**

How to Approach Your Boss About a Telework Arrangement

Telecommute Arrangement Proposal

Proposed Telecommuting Weekly Schedule:

- Monday: In-office all day
- Tuesday-Friday: In-office until 1pm, telecommute from home 1pm to 5pm
- Able to come into the office or stay past 1pm on telecommuting days as needed.

Accessibility by In-Office Staff:

- Will be available during business hours to take phone calls, or have cell phone available.
- Will be logged into networking program such as Skype or company chat for instant availability.
- Will make two afternoon phone calls into office.
- Will check email every hour for updates from office.

Home Workspace and Equipment:

- 2010 Mac home computer with necessary software
- Printer and Fax capability
- Dedicated phone line for business calls
- High-speed internet connection

Tasks to Be Completed While Telecommuting:

- Confirm next day service appointments by phone with customers.
- Coordinate service call schedule for contractors for next day, bring into the office in the mornings.
- Call into the office at scheduled times to check in on secretary and find out if there are any updates or needs.



**CHAPTER
6**

How to Approach Your Boss About a Telework Arrangement

Weekly Reporting of Work:

- Will provide daily log of work completed at home and turn in each Friday.
- Will assess during weekly meetings any changes or additional in-office work needed for the upcoming week.

Additional Information:

- Will sign a waiver for company legal responsibility for 'on the job' injuries that may occur in her home office.
- Position will begin with a one month trial period before fully implementing the telecommute agreement.
- All home office supplies, internet connection and phone lines will be provided and paid for by Susan and the company will have no responsibility for reimbursement. (Note* Some companies are able to and very willing to cover these costs)

Approaching your manager or human resources department about telecommuting can be a seemingly daunting task, however, with your research completed in-depth, a solid Telecommute Arrangement Proposal written, and the benefits for both you and your employer in mind, your telecommute proposal stands a good chance of being seriously considered and approved.



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Special Concerns: Using Life Experience as Work Experience & Telecommuting with Disabilities

This chapter will focus on two areas of special concern specifically relevant to telecommuting. Those who are in the most need of utilizing telecommuting are sometimes the people with the added difficulties of having been out of the workforce for a long period of time, or those who have some kind of disability that would make it difficult for them to work in a traditional office setting.

This chapter will focus on helping those who find themselves in the following situations:

1. Someone wishing to telecommute who has been out of formal paid work for years, usually due to caring for children and running a household.
2. Those who have a disability that prevents them from being able to work in a traditional office setting.

Handling Gaps in Employment and/or Little to No Formal Education

- **Using a Functional Resume'**. Functional resumes are used in situations when the chronological history contains large gaps between formal education and employment history, or when there is a lack of either. A functional resume' in these situations focuses on the skills and abilities gained through life experience, rather than your last job title or degree earned.

Don't be afraid to list those skills you have learned over the years by managing a household or doing volunteer work. You will want to emphasize the fact that although you have not been formally employed, your experience is very well rounded and involves working with real people, and gaining very useful skills that can be applied within a professional work environment.



Special Concerns: Using Life Experience as Work Experience & Telecommuting with Disabilities

Some areas to consider for your resume' include:

Managing the Household:

- Daily, weekly or monthly accounting, checkbook balancing, budget creation, managing investment accounts,
- Appointment setting for family members.
- General scheduling for family members.
- Making business phone calls to insurance companies or requesting medical records.

Volunteer Work:

- PTA involvement
- Religious leadership or service
- Fundraising
- Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts leadership,
- Political involvement, voting committees.

Personal Skills:

- Organization
- Detail oriented and dependable
- Problem-solving and research

(You may also want to consider asking those closest to you to list any personal strengths they think you have that you may not be aware of.)

Skills Testing: This topic is discussed in depth in Chapter 8, however, it is worth mentioning here that if you are adept at using the computer, it would be extremely beneficial to take some skills testing for typing and software such as the basic Windows programs.



**CHAPTER
7**

Special Concerns: Using Life Experience as Work Experience & Telecommuting with Disabilities

After you have compiled a list of skills for your resume', you can utilize the example template for a functional resume' located at the end of this chapter,

Please see next page for a Functional Resume' Template Example.

* Please keep in mind that if you are applying for a telecommute position using a functional resume' you will want to be sure and include the level of ability you have to work from home, including the details of your home office in your skills summary section.



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Special Concerns: Using Life Experience as Work Experience & Telecommuting with Disabilities

Julia R. Sample

756 S. Hollow Rd.
Charlotte NC 98675
Julia.Sample@email.com
764.234.4567

Summary of Skills

Skilled and responsible individual seeking re-entry into the workforce; experienced with administrative support and fundraising for local children's group, PTA Treasurer for school district.

- General Accounting
- Appointment setting
- Administrative Support
- Fundraising Experience
- Word Processing
- Dependable

Experience

Girl Scouts Organization (2008-Current)

Volunteer Troop Leader

Responsible for organizing weekly events, coordinating schedules, accepting and managing club fees and fundraising monies. Planned and successfully carried out fundraising event for Annual Cookie Drive, exceeding sales goals by 20%.

Black Hawk School District (2009-Current)

Parent Teacher Association-Treasurer

Responsible for creating reports for monthly PTA meetings on how monies are spent, balancing account statements and making deposits.

Education

Trinity State University (1989)

Bachelor of Social Science

*References available upon request.



CHAPTER
7

Special Concerns: Using Life Experience as Work Experience & Telecommuting with Disabilities

Telecommuting Options for the Disabled

Working from home is a viable option for those with disabilities that make working in a traditional office unrealistic. With the increase of technology including the internet and computer systems, it is now possible for those who are home bound to work on a telecommuting basis.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), “prohibits private employers, state and local governments, employment agencies and labor unions from discriminating against qualified individuals with disabilities in job application procedures, hiring, firing, advancement, compensation, job training, and other terms, conditions, and privileges of employment.”¹³

With this in mind, many employers today are making a greater effort to employ and/or retain qualified individuals who are disabled under the ADA’s definitions. However, those who are disabled must also be capable of working in a telecommute environment, and in many cases, have a home office setup in place if necessary.

Your Home Office- One of the many things an employer will be concerned about is your home office setup, whether you have a current computer, reliable internet connection, fax and printer, or other necessary equipment for the job you will be doing. If the job entails working with confidential information, you will most likely need some kind of secure filing cabinet or storage system to keep your records stored in during off hours.

There are now state mandated programs known as Assistive Technology Loans in place that will provide disabled individuals with loans specifically to purchase equipment for a home office.



Special Concerns: Using Life Experience as Work Experience & Telecommuting with Disabilities

For general information regarding your state's specific loan assistance program, please visit TeleworkAdvocacy.

100% Telecommute Positions- In many instances, those with disabilities only have the option of working in positions that are fully telecommute with no requirement for in-office visits. These positions are many times customer service related. There are many companies that provide customer service related phone jobs that provide all of the training online or by phone. VirtualVocations has an extensive list of companies, many of them customer service related in our Work at Home Company Database.

The National Telecommuting Institute- The National Telecommuting Institute (NTI) is a non-profit organization specifically focused on assisting those with disabilities that are home bound to find telecommuting work. Any person with a documented disability can go through the application and screening process and will be matched with telecommuting positions as they become available. All NTI agents are required to complete a certification program before they can be considered for open positions.

NTI matches individuals who pass their screening and certification program with positions in the following areas:

- Customer Care
- Technical Support
- Quality Assurance
- Medical Transcription
- Sales
- Other relevant telecommuting positions



**CHAPTER
7**

Special Concerns: Using Life Experience as Work Experience & Telecommuting with Disabilities

For more information, or to start the screening process, please visit the National Telecommuting Institute.

As of 2002, 18% of Americans had some form of disability, with 32.5 million being severe.¹⁴ With current technological advances and the support of the government by instituting policies such as the Americans with Disabilities Act, working from home will make life much easier for many people who find themselves in this situation. If you are one of these people, preparing yourself and your home for telecommuting and taking advantage of the laws that are available to assist your independence will aid you in your search for employment.



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CHAPTER
8

Skills Testing for Telecommuters

As a telecommuter, being able to demonstrate your skills through certification is a very good way to put yourself at the top of the list of candidates considered for remote positions. Employers appreciate being able to view the skill level of potential candidates, especially for positions that require a certain level of education, such as graphic design, programming and technical support. When applying for less technical positions such as administrative support and customer service jobs, applicants can still have an edge by completing certification or testing in general software use and typing.



There are various online certification and testing resources that are credible and an asset to any job seeker in gaining certification. Many of them are very affordable with skills tests ranging from free to \$200, depending on the depth of certification or testing you would like to complete. Testing can take anywhere from 30 minutes to several hours, but is well worth the time and investment to add certifications to your resume' or portfolio.

Online Skills Testing Services

Brainbench

Brainbench is one of the leading online skills testing services available for skills certification. Brainbench provides over 600 possible skills certifications. Since it's beginning in 1998, Brainbench has provided skills testing to over six million individuals.

Individuals can complete a free registration with Brainbench and be eligible to take a free test to try the system. The costs per test range from Free for some tests, including those in beta, to \$49.95



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Skills Testing for Telecommuters

for most of the certifications, or individuals have the option to purchase annual or monthly subscriptions, which provide unlimited access to certification, for either \$99.00 monthly or \$199.00 annually.

Visit Brainbench for additional information.

ExpertRating

ExpertRating is another well-known competitive online skills testing site. Aside from basic certification courses, ExpertRating also has many online courses and tutorials that are affordable and include certification upon completion of the course. ExpertRating was founded in 2000, and has had close to 3 million certifications completed since that time.

Certifications are generally \$14.99 per test, with full courses and tutorials ranging from \$130 and up. ExpertRating is a member of the International Organization of Standardization, which is a quality management standard of operation for businesses.

Individuals seeking skills testing can register for free at ExpertRating and take a free skills tests before purchasing certifications. Once a certification is passed, individuals receive a printed certificate that can be used for verification purposes for potential employers.

Visit ExpertRating to learn more.

Elance

Elance.com is a bid-for-hire site that also offers a wide range of skills tests and certification for members to list on their Elance profiles. An Elance membership is required to access the skills test. They do have a free basic membership that allows users to test in up to five areas, with different levels of paid memberships starting at \$10 per month, which allows 10 skills tests, with plans that are up to \$40 per month that feature unlimited skills testing.



Skills Testing for Telecommuters

Although Elance profiles are created in conjunction with the use of their bid-for-hire site, other potential employers that are interested in applicant's skills can still publicly view the profile.

Visit Elance for more information.

An additional option for skills testing include certification courses available with various online colleges. If you opt to take part in a full certification course plus skills testing, be sure to do your homework about the online institution to make sure it is credentialed.

Some of the most well-known and respected online schools that offer certification programs include:

[Kaplan](#)

[University of Phoenix](#)

[PennFoster](#)

[Ashworth](#)

Skills testing is a necessary component of your resume' or online portfolio when searching for a telecommute position. Employers rely on skills testing to narrow down their candidates when looking for potential employees. Having those skills certified and viewable by employers when they are considering hiring a remote worker can have a significant impact on your chances of being hired. This is especially true if you lack a substantial amount of employment history, or if you are trying to break into the telecommute employment industry.



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Laura Spawn is the co-founder and CEO of VirtualVocations, Inc. Spawn has been involved in the telecommuting industry since 2003, and in 2007, along with a family member, founded VirtualVocations, an online telecommute job board. Laura Spawn is married with three children and recognizes telecommuting as, *"the best option I have come across for balancing both work and family life in todays hectic society"*. Aside from spending her time working on VirtualVocations, Inc., she is also a contributing expert for BizyMoms Expert Corner.

VirtualVocations has helped over 200,000 people who are interested in telecommuting jobs. With its hand selected and screened telecommute jobs, professional resume service, extensive work at home company listing, online portfolio system and more, VirtualVocations is one of the leading companies online that helps people find employment in the telecommuting employment industry.



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