

## **empirica GmbH: Telework in a Consultancy Company: SME Case 12**

### *Overview*

empirica Association for Communication and Technology Research mbH, Bonn, a private research and consultancy company with 30 employees, is active in the telecommunications and computer utilisation sector. One of the company's most important areas of business is telework. The company has 15 years of Europe-wide experience in the research of trends and in consultancy for practical implementation of telework.

### *Practice*

At empirica a substantial amount of the everyday work is also carried out using telework, with locations of the decentralised workplaces spread all over Germany (and further afield). For individual projects temporary competence teams of full time employees and freelancers are formed, who work together irrespective of their location – even though face-to-face interaction, naturally, plays a very important role within teamwork and will also do so in future.

Spatial flexibilisation of work is practised in diverse organisational models at empirica:

A large number of empirica employees regularly work one or more weekdays in their own home. Consultants as well as managers appreciate the opportunity to handle tasks requiring a high level of concentration in the peace of their home and undisturbed by office routine distractions. A further motive are the – in some cases – very large commuting distances that suggested this work organisation model with newly hired staff.

There are also female employees who work mainly from home for childminding purposes and who occasionally join meetings at the office premises.

One employee is physically disadvantaged. He suffers from a progressive loss of peripheral vision requiring him to use special visual aids, voice output and other special technologies at his PC. This workplace, specially tailored to his requirements, is located in a teleoffice near his home; he is present at company headquarters only 2 to 4 times a month. Here, only meetings are taking place, which include the presentation of work results, the making of strategic decisions and the personal exchange of relevant occurrences of a corporate nature.

- When required, a translator living in Scotland works for empirica.
- In addition to telework from home the possibilities of mobile telework have been utilised intensively. A personal notebook is available to employees who are often away on business travel and those with high commuting distances; all others have access to the corporate equipment pool. Thanks to mobile technologies travel times can ideally be used for preparation and analysis; documents are

electronically available at any time and can be presented and recorded without change of media at the customer's premises.

All legally relevant aspects of telework are governed by agreement. In principle the possibility for telework is open to all employees. empirica provides the technical equipment (PC or notebook as well as periphery equipment) and covers arising communication costs.

In order to gain experience for consultancy activities the teleworkers test several remote access means when connecting to the in-house network (AVM NetWays, ISDN-router, modem, rerouting via external providers). Internal communication on teleworking days is carried out by telephone, fax and email. Electronic mail in particular has proved extremely well as an asynchronous communication method. For many years the company has worked with numerous cooperation partners in Germany and abroad by using the most up to the minute communication technology. Workplace related videophone technology is available at some office workplaces. The information exchange by traditional „snail“ mail on the other hand is now already an exception.

### *Experience*

empirica supports the practice of telework with their employees due to the clear preponderance of the positive aspects of telework. One main motive is the higher work productivity of the teleworkers; an experience that was gained by the two managing directors themselves. The findings gained by their own utilisation of the new work model have been directly implemented and thus increase the quality of the consultancy services.

Managing director Werner B. Korte, an alternating teleworker for more than 10 years himself, comments: „empirica should, of course, be a living example of what they preach. Thanks to our own experiences my co-workers and I are able to come across as much more convincing and credible in the everyday business world.“