

Intel GmbH: Home Office für Field Service Employees: SME Case 16

Overview

Intel GmbH located in Feldkirchen, with approx. 280 employees, is the German branch of Intel. Intel is the largest manufacturer of microchips worldwide. The company specialises in innovative technologies for the PC sector in which it carries out substantial research and development. Intel markets its new products, such as the Intel Pentium processor family, very successfully. Andy Grove, longstanding head of Intel (US), became famous with his statement that if the worst came to the worst he would be able to manage his company without light, air-conditioning or heating but never without email.

Practice

The everyday handling of modern technologies in the PC sector became the starting point for considering telework and its subsequent implementation. The deciding factor for setting up tele-workplaces was the search for an organisational model that is completely tailored towards the customer. In order to build up a saturation marketing network in Germany, in 1993 mobile tele-workplaces were set up for 58 employees from the marketing and distribution department, among them some managers. As a result it was possible to optimally establish close contact with customers.

While drawing-up the tele-workplaces the following requirements were considered: same accessibility as in the office, same data exchange and electronic meeting integration. Each employee's equipment therefore includes all components found in a classic office. Each teleworker is provided with a Pentium notebook with docking station and CD-ROM drive, a laser printer, a basic ISDN connection with remote LAN access, call diversion and forwarding, internet access, desktop video conferencing ProShare, fax, photocopier and mobile telephone.

A particularly important equipment component is the ProShare desktop conference system. Because of this tool teleworkers can participate in internal meetings from their home office or observe customer contacts by video. The fact that this communication tool increases work productivity is the most important aspect of this. However, technology cannot fully replace personal conversation. Therefore a meeting of teleworkers is arranged once a month as direct contact also plays a vital role.

Experience

Experience showed that some necessary changes had to take place before the new organisational structure could produce positive results. Questions regarding postal logistics and support with home office technology at a distance had to be settled. A shift in thinking was required from employees and management. Management and

employee assessment proved more difficult with regard to telework. In Intel's experience, new employees cannot immediately be deployed to a home office. However, the practice of telework so far has brought positive experiences and findings for Intel GmbH. Firstly employee satisfaction needs to be mentioned. „Our employees are delighted. Nobody wanted to return to the office,” says Joachim Rissmann, managing director of Intel GmbH. Free time management and higher flexibility are the most important advantages and are stressed time after time. Work time can be adjusted to the individual requirements of the employees as long as commuting times are a thing of the past. Customer contact was also intensified which, in turn, was a motivation to the Intel employees. Because of the close contacts via video conferencing higher efficiency in the electronic cooperation within the company was achieved. In addition to all of this a cost reduction has been achieved. A cost comparison between a tele-workplace and the classic office workplace resulted in an average cost saving of DM 250 per month.