

IPC Steuerungssysteme GmbH: Award Winning Innovative Telework Concept: SME Case 17

Overview

IPC Steuerungssysteme GmbH with registered office in Bliedenstorf (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern) is a small development and service enterprise in the field of control systems for machines. The company consists of 4 employees 3 of whom practice telework. The company participated in the support initiative „Telework and Medium-sized Companies“ that was launched by the Ministry for Research and Deutsche Telekom AG in 1997. IPC was included in the support program and, in addition, gained an award for its in-house telework concept.

Practice

Tele-workplaces are equipped with all necessary technologies that can be found in a modern office: telephone, fax, internet, email, file transfer. In addition, employees are provided with the possibility of communicating with each other by video conferencing. Once a week the teleworkers are present in the company offices.

Prior to the launch of telework the future teleworkers were trained and prepared for work with all types of technologies and programs necessary (telephone system, ISDN card, GroupWare software, video conferencing, Windows NT 4.0).

Teleworkers have unlimited employee contracts and therefore enjoy the usual social insurance protection. The company does not reimburse the costs of the home workplace but pays the corporate communication costs.

Data security is handled as follows: employees must store work documents or data carriers in separate and lockable cabinets. Once a week all data is stored on external data carriers. One copy remains with the employee at home, the second copy is deposited in the company. Access to PCs for homeworking are password protected.

All three teleworkers are highly qualified in software programming. Recruitment of teleworkers is carried out by following certain criteria for successful teleworking.

Applicants should have the following skills and meet the following personal requirements: high technical qualifications (all three employees are engineers with a university diploma), ability to communicate, high motivation to telework, open to innovation, high degree of self-discipline and the ability to work on their own and to organise their own work.

Experience

The reality of telework requires a type of leadership that orientates itself by results. Employee tasks must be clearly defined and both factually and chronologically structured. This guarantees both the smooth handling of jobs to be carried out and undisturbed communication between teleworkers and company.

Due to the implementation of telework the company is mainly able to reduce expenses such as space, rental and workplace costs. Managing director Diethelm Wendlandt mentions as further advantages the higher creativity and increased productivity of employees. This is supplemented by a higher quality of work results as employees can work with more peace and higher concentration at their home.

Employees are also positive about telework. The reduction of commuting time is seen as an enormous advantage. Work time can be managed in a more flexible and more attractive way. Telework is a relief in particular to the physically disadvantaged employee of IPC Steuerungssysteme GmbH because it is much easier and more advantageous for him to balance his professional requirements within the home environment.