IT Radix Resource

Celebrating Earth Day — April 22

April 2009

Home Offices—Today's Workplace!

The number of jobs filled by telecommuters could grow nearly four-fold to 19 million and deliver substantial economic, environmental and quality of life benefits for the United States over the next 12 years. Thanks to its potential to *cut costs*, *increase productivity*, and *expand the supply of potential employees*, telecommuting is emerging as a standard business strategy for a large number of organizations. Spurred by advances in IT, especially the spread of broadband services, telecommuting is the fastest growing mode of getting from home to work. Facilitated by continued expansion in broadband, especially higher speed broadband, telecommuting is poised to become more popular than transit and employee car pools as a means of accessing work.[1]

Top Benefits of Telecommuting to Organizations:

- Improved productivity
- Cost savings (travel/real estate)
- Access to more qualified staff
- Employee retention
- Improved employee health (reduced stress)

Significant Challenges of Telecommuting to Organizations:

- Securing corporate information systems
- Limiting use of unauthorized and unsupported devices
- Controlling personal use of corporate mobile assets

Measures that Organizations Have Taken to Meet Challenges:

- Upgrades in network circuits and VPN equipment
- Expanded security
- Training
- Implementation of new virtualization technologies and applications[2]

Considering telecommuting? Give us a call! We'd be happy to share the benefits that we've seen not only for ourselves but also our clients.

[1]"Improving Quality of Life Through Telecommuting," by Wendell Cox, ITIF, Jan 2009

[2]"Trends in Telecommuting," CompTIA Research, Sept 2008

Our Clients' Thoughts on Telecommuting

Many of our clients currently incorporate telecommuting into their business practices. We recently interviewed three clients who have some, if not all, remote office employees and would like to share their opinions, challenges and success stories with you.

Business acceptance of telecommuting is growing; however, many business managers are still reluctant to allow employees to telecommute. Despite the empirical evidence showing productivity gains, many employers remain skeptical about the level of performance they can count on from employees working outside the direct view of supervisors. **Bill Gerber, OSI Business Services**, stresses that you "must hire responsible people. However, the only way to find out if they are responsible is to give them responsibility, which is a hard thing for small business owners to do." **Cathy Marshall, D2 Direct,** stresses that hiring "mature employees who have good time management skills established and measurable productivity are good candidates for working from home. Telecommuting is a great time saver when you eliminate commuting. People

What is a Virtual Private Network (VPN)?

Many companies have facilities spread out across the country or around the world, and there is one thing that all of them need: A way to maintain fast, secure and reliable communications wherever their offices are.
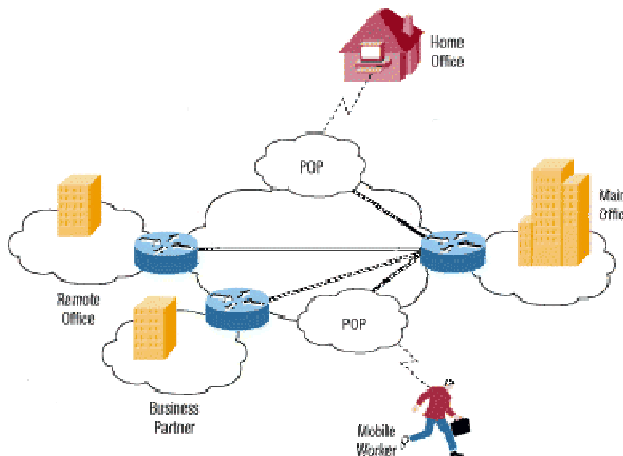
Until fairly recently, this has meant the use of **leased lines** to maintain a **wide area network** (WAN). A WAN had obvious advantages over a public network like the Internet when it came to reliability, performance and security. But maintaining a WAN, particularly when using leased lines, can become quite expensive and often rises in cost as the distance between the

offices increases. A typical VPN might have a main LAN at the corporate headquarters of a company, other LANs at remote offices or facilities and individual users connecting from out in the field.

As the popularity of the Internet grew, businesses turned to it as a means of extending their own networks. First came **intranets**, which are

password-protected sites designed for use only by company employees. Now, many companies are creating their own **VPN** (**virtual private network**) to accommodate the needs of remote employees and distant offices.

Basically, a VPN is a private network that uses a public network (usually the Internet) to connect remote sites or users together. Instead of using a dedicated, real-world connection such as leased line, a VPN uses "virtual" connections routed through the Internet from the company's private network to the remote site or employee.[3]

[3]http://computer.howstuffworks.com/vpn.htm> 18 February 2009

Introducing…Jandy Stamm

Here at IT Radix, we practice what we preach. Today's technologies have enabled us to implement many of the remote office opportunities that we discuss in this month's newsletter.

Jandy Stamm (yes, Jandy is her "real" name) works behind the scenes at IT Radix coordinating many of our internal systems—implementing our client relationship management system, automating sales and marketing systems as well as facilitating a variety of client-oriented activities. Jandy also publishes, edits and contributes articles to our newsletter.

Jandy has a strong background in Client Support and End-User relations, having worked for Exxon's IS Department for 15+ years. She also worked as a Vocational Evaluator and Job Coach with Deaf and hard-of-

hearing adults in south Jersey for 4+ years.

Jandy now resides in a suburb of St. Louis, Missouri, with her husband and twin daughters. Born and raised in NJ, Jandy still considers herself to be a "Jersey Girl" and is often questioned about her roots by people in the Midwest when she starts talking and saying words like "coffee" and "you guys." She enjoys volunteering at her daughters' elementary school and with her children's missions projects at church. Jandy can be frequently spotted in her "Life is Good" attire while catering to her Starbucks addiction. Jandy also enjoys ice skating with her adult synchro skate team.

Jandy's personal philosophy: Really Rick Warren says it best—"it's not about you." I'm constantly reminded that there's more to life than just meeting my own needs and that is what I want to instill in my children and strive to remember myself.

"Do all the good you can,
By all the means you can,
In all the ways you can,
In all the places you can,
At all the times you can,
To all the people you can,
As long as ever you can."

—John Wesley

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What Are Some Effective Communication Tools for Keeping Employees in Touch With the Office?

Keeping remote employees in touch with the rest of the office can present a few challenges. A lot of people use email as their primary method for communicating with co-workers. Sending e-mail is fast and easy, and people who spend a lot of time at a computer can send messages without disruption to their work. But email lacks several of the signals that people use to communicate effectively, like facial expressions, tone of voice and body language. Its efficiency and impersonal nature can also lead people to say things via email that they might not say in person or on the phone.

For these reasons, experts often suggest that people who work from home rely more on the telephone than on email. People can get to know their co-workers better by phone, and

tone of voice and other vocal cues also make the telephone a more effective form of communication. **Conference calls** are also a good tool for group discussions, planning and general meetings.

Web conferencing keeps remote employees in touch with the office through both audio and visual means. A variety of web conferencing software and services are currently on the market, and their features vary considerably. In general, companies can purchase software and host meetings themselves, or they can use a hosting service. Using a web conferencing program, employers can create virtual rooms in which to conduct real-time training, brainstorming sessions and other meetings. Users can even give permission to another user to "take over" the control of their computer

in order to fix a problem or demonstrate a task.

Looking for more solutions to keep your remote employees connected? IT Radix is here to help!

ECO-FRIENDLY: In addition to the flexibility inherent in at-home arrangements, there are numerous *environmental benefits*. For example, the Department of Energy estimates that by 2010, the United States will count 29.1 million telecommuters, or 27.4% of the workforce, saving close to $100 million in fuel costs.

How to Adjust Your Insurance if You Work From Home
by Elizabeth Riopel, KRA Insurance

- **This document was intentionally printed on two sides to save paper.**

- **This document was printed with eco-friendly solid ink.**

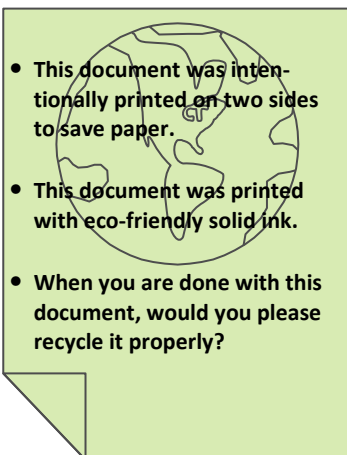- **When you are done with this document, would you please recycle it properly?**

There are a lot more people who are working from their homes these days and not out of a traditional office. Sometimes it suits the convenience of the employee, sometimes it suits the economics of the employer. Regardless, when you work from home you need to make sure your homeowner's or renter's policy will properly protect you for exposures that have not traditionally been anticipated by the insurance company:

- Many insurance companies will broaden their contracts to accommodate those that work at home as long as they are aware of it. Make sure you discuss any change in your work circumstances with your agent or carrier.

- Most insurance companies want to limit their exposures and may have a maximum amount of revenue that can

be generated from home or restrict extending the homeowner's coverage to only those professions that don't generate a lot of "foot traffic."

- Make sure your policy language will respond to a property loss to business personal property in your home.

- If your occupation includes the occasional use of public space, such as a conference room for public speaking, then using your homeowner's policy to cover your business is not the best option.

- Sometimes writing a small commercial policy that includes coverage such as contractual liability, accounts receivable and valuable papers is the best option. Perhaps your homeowner's policy should protect you the way it was originally intended. Premiums for some business property and liability exposures can be as low as $350.

Finally, always review your options for protecting your assets and exposures with a qualified insurance professional. For more information, feel free to contact Elizabeth Riopel, KRA Insurance, directly at ElizabethR@krainsurance.com.

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Steve's Lawn & Landscaping Service, Inc.

We are pleased to introduce you to **Steve's Lawn and Landscaping Service, Inc.**

With over 30 years of experience providing horticultural services, Steve's team is committed to providing exceptional service and establishing and maintaining a level of trust with their customers. The talent and dedication of Steve's staff has enabled them to complete projects varying in size and scope—from residential service, to commercial designs and country estate management.

Here are just some of the services offered:

- ☑ Outdoor Living Spaces
- ☑ Landscaping & Plantings
- ☑ Ponds, Waterfalls, Fountains
- ☑ Fencing & Retaining Walls
- ☑ Patios, Walks, Driveways
- ☑ Landscape Lighting
- ☑ Sprinkler System Installation
- ☑ Property Maintenance

For more information and special offers, visit www.steveslandscaping.net

Steve recommends the following steps to **make your landscape more earth-friendly:**

- Start a compost pile and feed it with recycled yard waste.

- Switch to earth-friendlier lawn-care practices, such as: mowing high, letting the clips lie, core-aerating to reduce compaction, using pesticides only as needed, and letting the lawn go dormant in droughts.

- Reduce weed problems by covering bare ground with organic mulch (i.e. wood chips, bark, leaves), by using dense groundcovers and by spacing landscape plants so they just touch when mature.

- Hand-pull bigger weeds instead of using herbicides, and spot-spray patches of lawn weeds instead of applying herbicide routinely over the whole lawn.

- Use organic fertilizers.

- Reduce runoff by regrading to allow rain to soak in on site and/or by adding garden beds that absorb water better than compacted lawns.

- When adding hard surfaces, go with water-permeable choices such as gravel or brick paths and paver-block sitting areas instead of concrete and asphalt.

- Prevent erosion by using terraces or retaining walls.

- Do plant-selection homework before planting, not only to match the right plants to the right site, but also to pick plants that are unlikely to get serious bug or disease problems.

- Reduce water demands by selecting plants that are drought-tolerant.

- Reduce heat and air-conditioning bills by planting deciduous trees to the south of the house and evergreen screens to the north and west.

Getting the Most Out of Your Printer

Courtesy of Cartridge World—Morris Plains

Good, quality printing is critical to today's businesses. Being gentle and cleaning your printers regularly will provide consistent results and longer life.

Tips for InkJets

Erratic Head Behavior/ Flashing Lights/ Will Not Accept Inks

- Clean encoder strip, cartridge and printer contacts with 99% Isopropyl alcohol
- Ensure correct inks are Installed (refer to yellow label on unit)
- Try a set of new OEM inks (this will eliminate the possibility of bad circuitry on your refilled ink)

Paper Pickup Problems

- Clean rear pickup rollers and rollers beneath carriage with Isopropyl alcohol

Tips for Lasers

Paper Pickup Problems

- Clean pickup rollers and separation pads with rubber restorer or Isopropyl alcohol
- Clean exit delivery rollers with Isopropyl alcohol

Imaging Problems

- Clean transfer roller with crunched up paper

Blank Pages

- Confirm your toner's drum flap opens

- Confirm the laser mirror is clear
- Confirm no paper is stuck in machine.

Laser Printer Maintenance

- Monthly: Clean pickup roller and separation pads
- Never use surge protectors with lasers (they often cause "strange" behavior on laser printers)
- Always use 99% proof Isopropyl alcohol on a lint-free cloth for all cleaning.

Cartridge World is a market leader in InkJet refilling and laser cartridge manufacturing. Visit their website for a store near you:
www.cartridgeworldusa.com.

Our Clients' Thoughts (cont.)

have different work habits and hours of peak productivity. If I can cash in on this flexibility and the employee is happy, we are both ahead."

Our clients have noticed a decrease in costs and increase in productivity. Bill expressed that he notices a decrease in costs and that "more work gets done when there is no water cooler." He also sees savings as far as training expenses. "In the early days, we used to fly people in to train on site, which did not seem to be the most productive use of time. Now we promoted a seasoned employee who stepped up to be the trainer for new employees. We use *GoToMeeting* to train virtually." Cathy shares that over time their work model "went from P/T to its current F/T model. Our employees were required to come in on most days when we had an office overhead and a 'team' environment to support. When Peter realized that he, more often than not, was emailing an employee on the other side of the glass office dividers, or the office down the hall…that became the big 'ah ha' moment. We have since eliminated the $20K a month office and all of the associated overhead. Our reduced overhead has made us very competitive with larger advertising/media agencies. We have been able to pass on to our clients vendor discounts and reduced costs, without feeling we are hurting or cutting into our overhead. Clients like saving money and receiving the benefits from our cost management solutions."

Telecommuting expands the supply of potential employees since you are not limited to only hiring geographically-desirable candidates. **Pam Popat, RE/MAX Properties Unlimited,** employs a *Virtual Assistant.* Virtual Assistants are people who provide professional administrative and technical assistance to clients from a home office. They help small businesses expand their business instead of dealing with administrative duties. "Utilizing a Virtual Assistant allowed me to retain a valued employee," states Pam. "When my assistant announced she was moving to South Carolina, I was not forced to interview and retrain another employee. Since my assistant performs all of her work through her computer, the transition was seamless." Cathy reflects that "two of our key media and print production buyers are able to work from home (one in Westchester, NY, and the other in Austin, TX) without affecting the continuity of communication between them and our clients or vendors. Each was able to make important lifestyle changes, like semi-retirement or moving to their dream location, without affecting our client service."

Advances in technology have greatly facilitated communication and help support a "team" environment while working remotely. OSI Business Services has a server environment allowing them to share calendars, tasks and emails. They initiate several conference calls throughout the week as well as use *GoToMeeting* for screen sharing. Bill notes that "when working virtually, you develop a lot of new processes that compensate for not being in the office. Working with today's technology increases productivity—telecommuting makes you use these technologies." Cathy stressed that at D2 Direct "email is critical. We use Outlook and everyone is copied on all important emails, kept up to speed on changes and part of relevant decision making. Outlook and Skype are great for our needs.

We provide employees with web cameras and can have video Skype meetings for free. This provides face time when needed. The technology keeps getting better and better. Now we have use of an external server set up by IT Radix, so I know ours and employees' data files are backed up regularly and accessible as needed. This is a comfort for security and any non-disclosure protection issues. I log in remotely to access my computer from my laptop when I travel or am on vacation. I can have meetings and share data with my accounting firm or client remotely as well. We also provide employees with all-in-one fax/copier/scanner machines for under $150 each so they get the benefits of the larger office environment."

All three clients unanimously agree that a telecommuting environment is an optimum business solution. Cathy notices that "valued employees are staying longer so less need for frequent hiring." Pam knows that hiring a Virtual Assistant was a smart choice for her since it "frees her up to do what she does best—sell houses!" Bill commented that "all of our employees are success stories. They all work full-time from home in a paperless environment. A lot of people would love the luxury of working from home if you offer a competitive salary and scope out the work details. It's a win-win for both sides."

If your business is considering telecommuting and would like to learn more about advances in today's technologies that will help you build your business remotely, let IT Radix assist you!

Go Green…and Let Your Insurance Respond Accordingly!

By Elizabeth Riopel, KRA Insurance

Did you know that there is an insurance company that will not only be there with you if you have a loss, but also support you when you restore or repair the damage in an environmentally correct manner? The Travelers Insurance Company offers coverage to building owners that:

- Provides up to $25,000 in additional coverage to support clients that elect green products or materials and green methods of construction to repair damaged buildings or personal property after a loss.

- They will also increase the period of restoration for business income and extra expense coverage by 30 days if the repair or restoration work is done using environmentally acceptable materials.

- Additionally, any expenses to attain a pre-loss level of green building certification from a recognized green authority are covered up to $25,000 subject to five percent of the amount of the direct damage loss to the building plus the deductible amount.

Contact a Travelers representative to learn more about how they can save you money and help save the environment at the same time! For more information on this and other insurance-related topics, please contact Elizabeth Riopel, KRA Insurance, at ElizabethR@krainsurance.com.

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IT Radix

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We make IT work for you

From the desk of: Cathy Coloff

Subject: Who ya gonna call?

You're sitting at your desk watching the mouse move, words auto-magically typing on the screen and various screens opening and closing all without your intervention . . . has your PC been possessed? More likely, you're on the receiving end of IT Radix' remote support. We have been using remote support for a few years now with great success. I love it because it's an extremely "green" way to do business, but not only is it green; remote support has so many advantages for you, our clients.

Some of these advantages are quite obvious: (1) immediate or close-to-immediate help when the problem occurs, (2) increased productivity for you or your staff, and (3) reduced downtime.

Some less obvious benefits include: (a) allowing the IT Radix team to be better prepared to provide service should an on-site visit be required, and (b) training for your staff, as many people watch and learn as our team resolves your issue. Quite often the person being helped will also bring up other issues or questions about using their PC during a remote control session and our team is able to show or train them on new ways of using the PC or simply become more proficient at using their computer.

Of course, remote support does not always work and we truly enjoy being on-site and interacting with our clients up close and personal.   So, I encourage you to go green, and give remote support and maintenance with our team at IT Radix a try!

Cathy

P.S. I'd like to thank all our clients, partners and vendors who have contributed to this month's newsletter. I hope you'll find the information as useful as I did!

Enter and Win!

The first person to send an email to resource@it-radix.com with the correct answer to our trivia question will win *GreenPrint* software.

Q:

What Is the fastest growing municipal waste stream (meaning, that people toss out) in the US?

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January Trivia Challenge

What revolutionary product was introduced in a "creepy" Superbowl ad in 1984? (Answer: Apple Macintosh Computer)

Congratulations to our winner, Cathy Marshall, from *D2 Direct.,* now the proud owner of the password management software, SplashID.

Recycling to Save Our Planet

Did you know…
Every day huge numbers of InkJets, toner/laser cartridges, cell phones, iPods and Laptops are discarded and sit in America's landfills.

- Cartridges/laptops never decompose
- Cell phone/iPod batteries leak toxins into the environment
- Precious natural resources are depleted when manufacturing new products

IT Radix is committed to helping our environment stay clean and safe. With this in mind, we partnered with Global-Resource Funding, Inc., to recycle used printer cartridges (both laser and inkjet), cell phones, laptops and iPods. Some items are refurbished and reused. Items that are not reusable, are properly recycled.

100% of the proceeds are donated to *The Nature Conservancy* whose mission is "to preserve the plants, animals and natural communities that represent the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive." (www.nature.org) If your company would like to partner with IT Radix to make our planet a better place, email us at resource@it-radix.com when you have items to pick up and we'll take it from there.

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www.glasbergen.com

"I started my own business from home because I want to meet new challenges, discover my true potential, find a more rewarding life…but mainly because I like to sing along with the radio real loud!"