

# Everyone benefits from home work

Despite its advantages, there remain many perceived barriers to flexible working, writes **Keith Humphreys**

» Companies, particularly large ones, often require their employees to work from home, for a variety of reasons. The main one is economic: hot-desking saves costs because it cuts the amount of office space required. Another reason may be that the president has a weekly broadcast which is compulsory viewing for employees.

If the company is multi-national, such as Ford Motors or IBM, then some employees will definitely have to work at home at some point or another.

Successive UK governments have been very slow to reap another benefit of home working: the fact that it reduces congestion on our overloaded transport system.

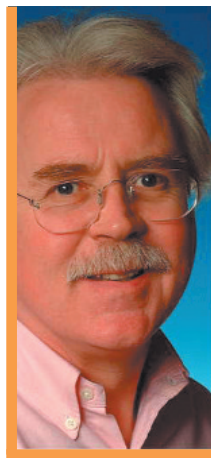
This could be remedied with a combined 'carrot and stick' approach. For example, the 'carrot' could be a reduced or zero National Insurance contribution, while the 'stick' could be a tax on the number of cars in the company car park.

IP telephony vendor Inter-Tel recently looked at employees' attitudes to home working. Interestingly, most respondents did not feel that flexible working was necessarily a right they should be entitled to, with 82 per cent considering it to be a privilege. Just 18 per cent of respondents believed home working should be one of their rights.

However, 90 per cent agreed that all employees, whatever their domestic or parenting situation, should have the same right to apply for a more flexible working life.

But just over half of respondents said they did not know if all people were treated equally in their organisation when it came to making a request, and 30 per cent said the decision was not equally applied in their organisation.

Trust in the employee was also perceived to pose a problem, creating a barrier to making requests to work from home. Forty per cent of the respondents said they did not think their employer would trust them to work as hard at home as they would in an office environment.



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Keith Humphreys,  
EuroLAN

When asked about the most important reason for applying to work flexibly, more than two-thirds said it would be their desire for a better quality of life, while 22 per cent said it would be to spend more time with their family.

Only six per cent thought that flexible working would mean they could enrol in more non-work related activities, such as educational courses, while three per cent cited a wish to have long weekends for travel.

Nearly 60 per cent of office workers believe that putting in requests to work more flexibly by those without children could have a negative impact on their career prospects. Making a request for a more flexible work/life balance might be seen to reflect an unwillingness to work alongside other people, or a lack of motivation.

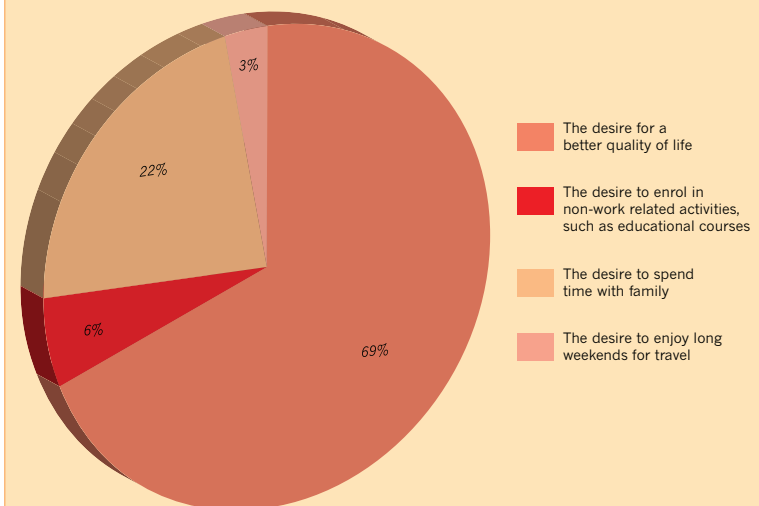
Then the question arises about who should supply the technology. Should it be the enterprise, or the worker, or the enterprise with a contribution from the worker? And what type of equipment should be used: enterprise class or SME? If we take the Ford/IBM example from earlier, a robust corporate solution is required to enable centralised management.

This is where the channel comes in. The enterprise solution is business as usual for the corporate reseller or networking VAR, while the SME solution is manna from heaven for the commodity channel reseller. **CRN**

» Keith Humphreys is managing consultant at EuroLAN.

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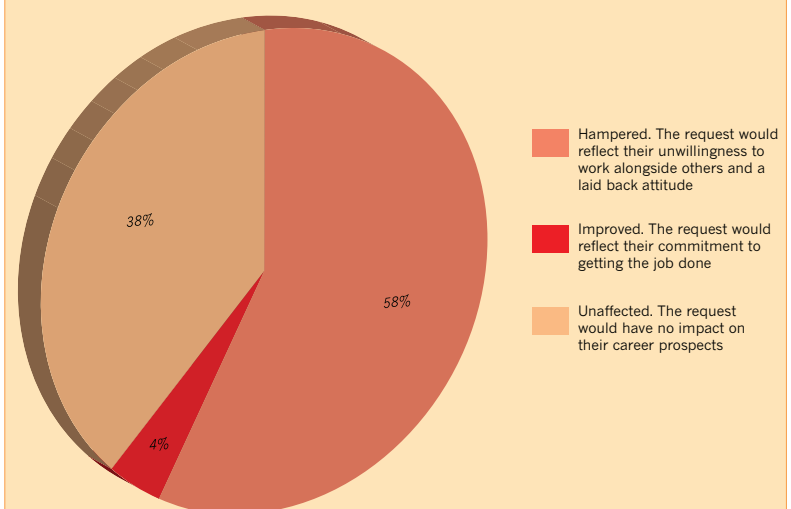
## REASONS STAFF CITED FOR MAKING FLEXIBLE-WORKING APPLICATIONS



Source: Inter-Tel

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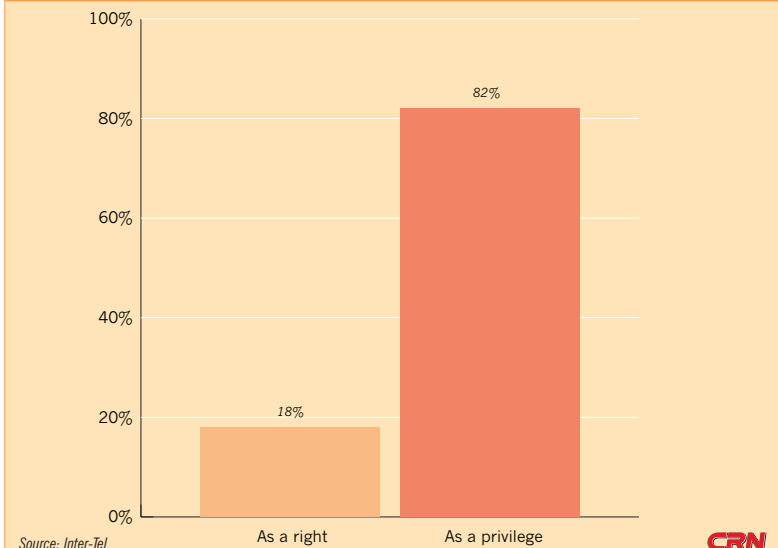
## EMPLOYEES' PREDICTIONS ABOUT WHAT IMPACT MAKING REQUESTS TO FLEXI-WORK WILL HAVE ON THEIR CAREER PROSPECTS



Source: Inter-Tel

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## PERCENTAGE OF EMPLOYEES THAT VIEW FLEXIBLE WORKING AS A RIGHT OR A PRIVILEGE



Source: Inter-Tel

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