
SUCCESSFUL PRACTICES FOR THE VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENT

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
OFFICE OF SMALL BUSINESS PROGRAMS
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AGENDA


- Overview
- Work/Life Bridge
- Accountability
- Culture
- Information Technology
- A/V, Web Conferencing & Collaboration Sites
- Summary

“OLD NORMAL”

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**“How long have I been working here?
Since I heard you walking toward my desk!”**

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- *“Multiple agencies are operating at sustained 95% telework...but we have seen that productivity hasn’t dropped.”*
 - Suzanne Kent, Federal CIO, Executive Office of the President and Keynote Speaker, Adobe Digital Government Symposium, 5/21/20

 - *“There’s no question that every employee at the Department of Transportation is more productive than ever.”*
 - Ryan Cote, CIO of the U.S. Dept of Transportation quoted in Federal Times Magazine, 5/20/20

 - *“We are preparing for a different kind of work environment...we have proven that it is possible to support.”*
 - Gary Washington, CIO of the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture and Speaker, American Council for Technology and Industry Advisory Council, 5/19/20

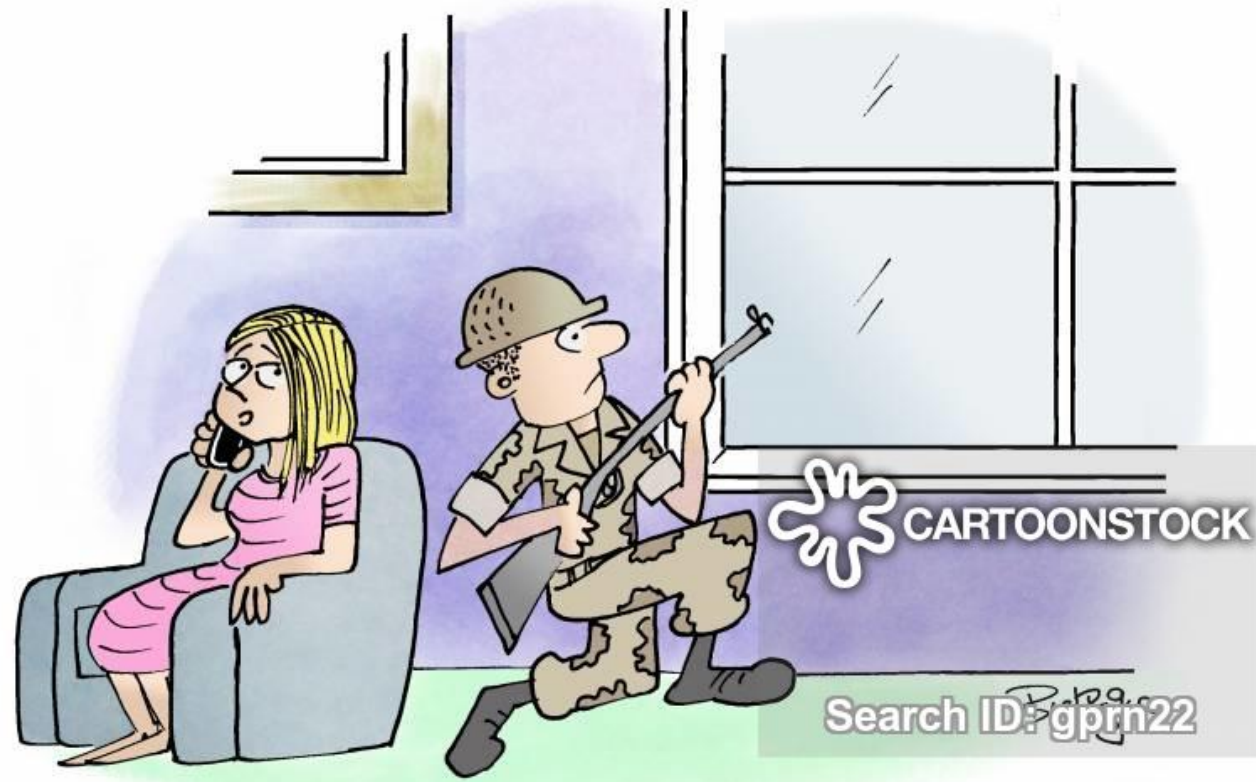
OVERVIEW

- A virtual office can be broadly defined as a geographically-disbursed organization of employees who function together by using a variety of communication and collaboration technologies.
- Common Features
 - Flexible, consistently-applied telework and hoteling agreements commensurate with the job duties performed.
 - Flexible and proactive management.
 - Regularly scheduled virtual meetings and occasional face-to-face meetings.
 - Weekly accomplishment reports and goal-setting reports.
 - Strong culture of mutual respect, collaboration and work-sharing.
 - Uniform web-conferencing and user-friendly collaboration platforms.

WORK/LIFE BRIDGE

- Telework agreements
 - Improve general work/life balance and worker morale
 - Prevent perceptions of unfairness or imbalance
 - example: Core work hour rules
 - Reconsider across-the-board limits
 - “think outside the box”
 - Focus on organizational achievements rather than in-office presence
 - Flexible and proactive management
 - Administrative impact
 - Credit hours, compensatory time
 - Travel cost estimation
 - Holidays

“TOO FAR OUTSIDE THE BOX”



“He is working from home today.”

ACCOUNTABILITY



**'MR. SMITHSON, WE HAVE TO TRUST THE
NEW TELEWORK POLICY WILL WORK.'**

ACCOUNTABILITY



"WE UNDERSTAND THE NEED FOR A WELL-MANAGED TELEWORK PROGRAM. IT'S THE ANKLE MONITORS WE HAVE A PROBLEM WITH."

ACCOUNTABILITY

- Autonomy and accountability are not mutually exclusive
- Accountability within a traditional office is a 1-way process
 - observation, check-ins, impromptu meetings
- Accountability within a virtual office is a 2-way process
 - Mutually agreed-upon deadlines
 - Regular discussions regarding workloads and capacities
- Requires disciplined and adaptable team players
- Weekly reports of completed deliverables and upcoming action items
- Weekly or biweekly 1:1 conversations (typically max. 30 min)
 - Closer familiarity with routines, projects, workloads, capacity
 - Opportunity for teleworker to seek feedback
 - Open/honest communication gives teleworker a sense of ownership and belonging

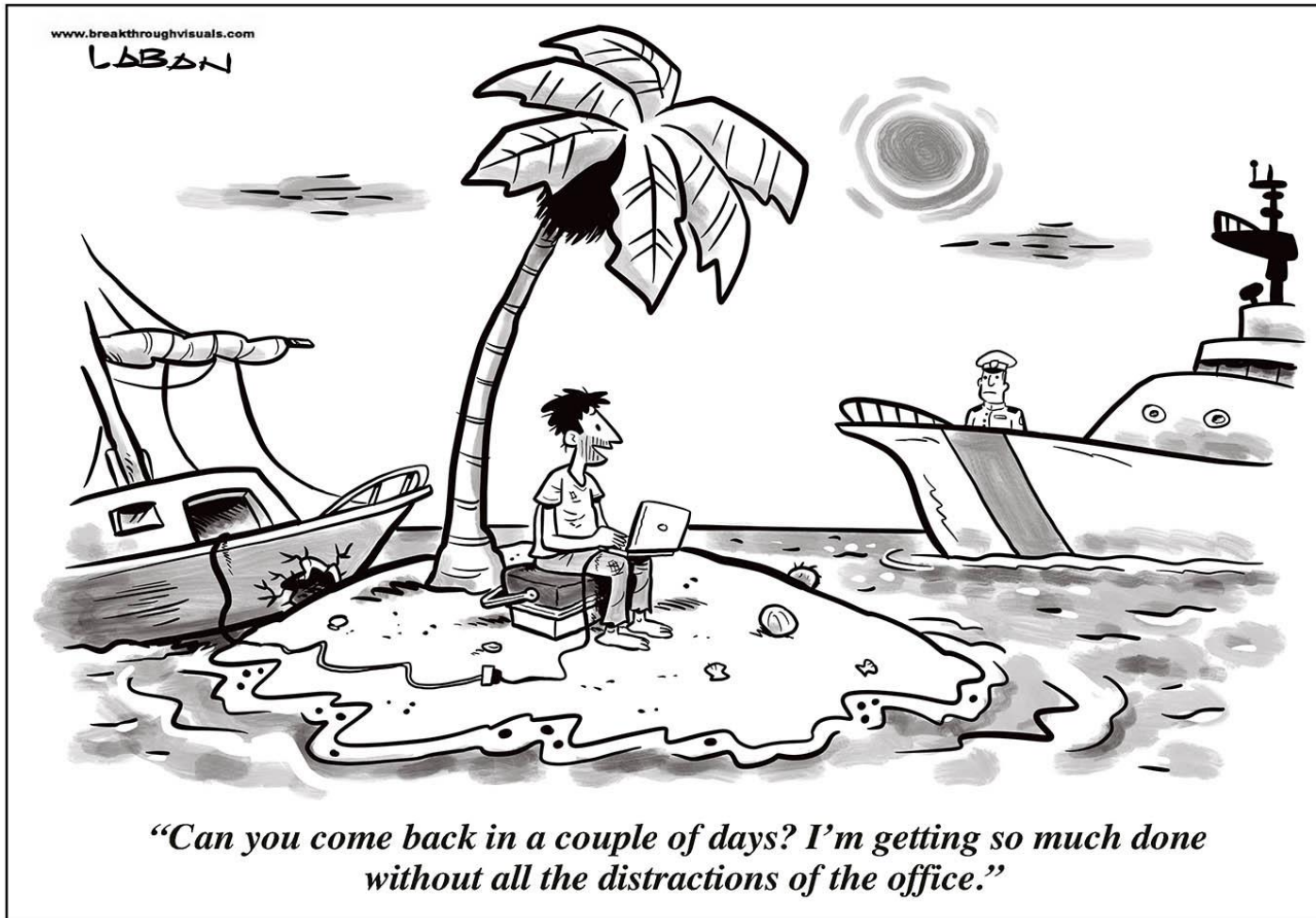
ACCOUNTABILITY (CONT'D)

- Structured and productive staff meetings
 - Regularly-scheduled virtual meetings
 - Face-to-face meetings on a quarterly, semi-annual, or annual basis (depending on dispersion of the virtual office)
- Best practices for facilitating meetings
 - Icebreaker exercise (if teleworkers are unfamiliar with each other)
 - Agenda and clear objectives
 - Establish ground rules
 - Sub-orgs/teams host meetings on a recurring/rotational basis
 - Only share status updates that effect the entire organization
 - Keep list of attendees to monitor/guide participation
 - Take small breaks during long meetings
 - Repeat decisions and action items at the end of the meeting (ensure objective were met)
 - If a smaller group, allow each attendee to give thoughts on the meeting overall

CULTURE

- Strong culture built upon the agency's mission
- Strong internal culture of work-sharing and collaboration
- New hires paired with mentors

CULTURE



IT CONSIDERATIONS

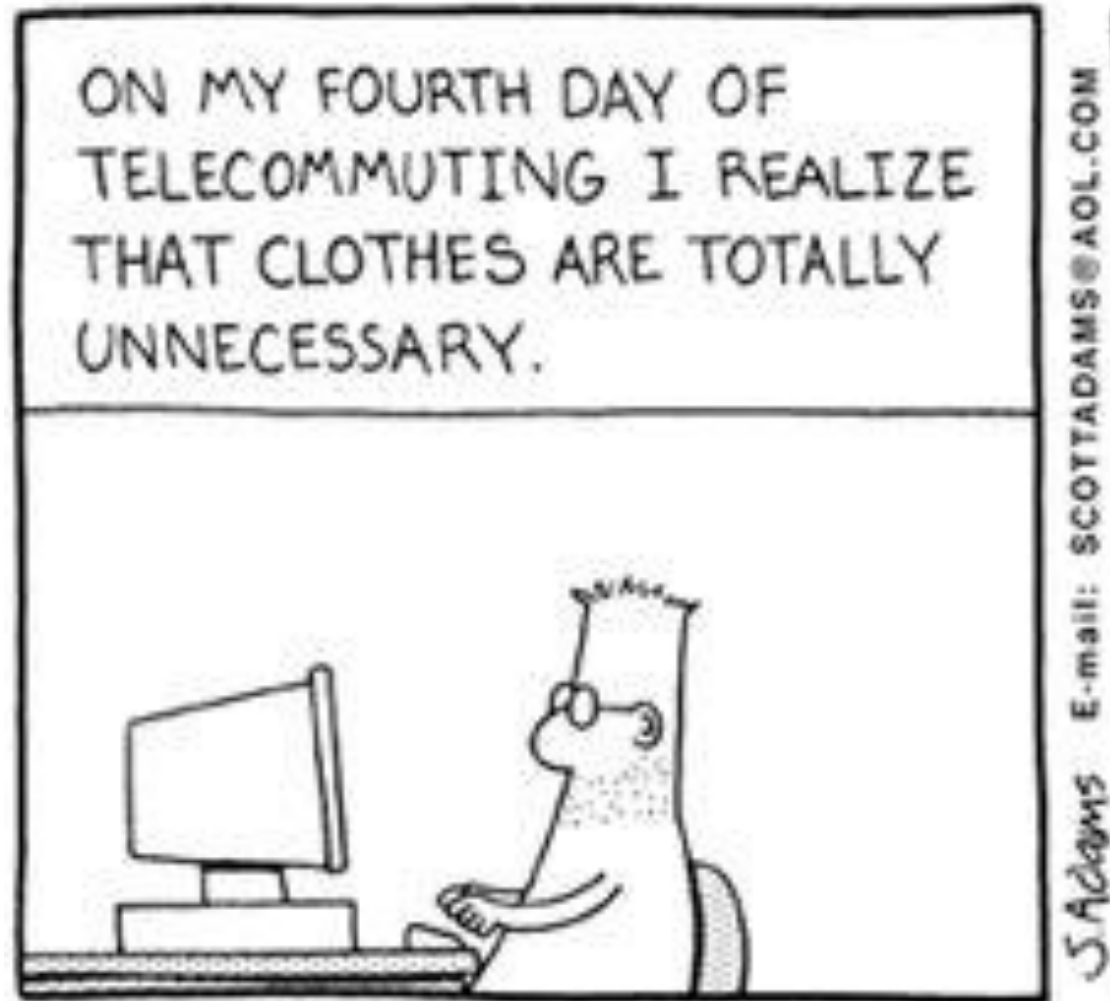
- Any replacement, upgrades, installs, diagnostics, or repairs of equipment that cannot be performed remotely will require the teleworker to either travel to a location where such services can be performed or send the equipment to that location (for teleworkers physically distant from the primary office/site)
- Costs
 - should be incorporated into the routine budget and work plan
 - Before going virtual, an office should confirm that it will have reliable funds to furnish equipment and supplies, and to absorb the costs of the maintenance and repair of that equipment; *if not, then the costs may need to be absorbed by the teleworker*

A/V, WEB CONFERENCING & COLLABORATION SITES

- These platforms replace the physical office
- Employees should know how to use all the tools available
- Office should come to a consensus on which platforms will be used and when
- Audio, Video and Web Conference Tools (examples)
 - WebEx
 - Adobe Connect
 - Microsoft Lync
 - Microsoft Teams
 - Zoom
 - Skype
- Collaboration Sites (examples)
 - SharePoint
 - OMB MAX
 - Microsoft Teams
 - Google Suite

****YOU MUST USE THE WEB CONFERENCING TOOL THAT HAS BEEN APPROVED BY THE AGENCY/OFFICE****

A/V, WEB CONFERENCING & COLLABORATION SITES



ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

- According to Cooman et al. (2013), the satisfaction that is derived from an important and observable job task is one of the most statistically significant antecedents to work effort.
- Lack of satisfaction will result in additional challenges with operating in a virtual model; especially in an office with a large population of junior or lower-graded workers (or inexperienced or inflexible managers)

SUMMARY

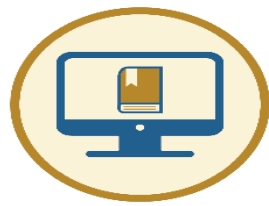
- Telework opportunities are a “win” for both management and staff
- Most important factor in the success of a virtual office is its management
 - Must be flexible and accommodating
- Proactive planning of shared accountability
- Productivity/performance must have a higher priority than physical presence and observation
 - “Out of sight, out of mind” approach is counterproductive
- Disciplined, adaptable team players

OPM HR SOLUTIONS

CENTER FOR LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT



Open enrollment courses & certificate programs for leadership and professional development



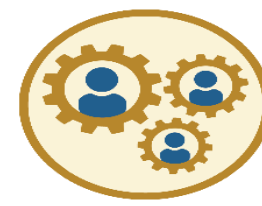
Virtual learning ecosystems to support the human capital lifecycle throughout government



Development programs focused on building decision-making skills through **human-centered design** and **process improvement**



Fellowship programs **to recruit and develop leadership skills** for highly-qualified talent for **Federal agencies**



Certification programs built specifically for government **skills for various professions**, such as the Federal HR Institute



Customized development program solutions to meet agency-specific needs

THANK YOU!

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