

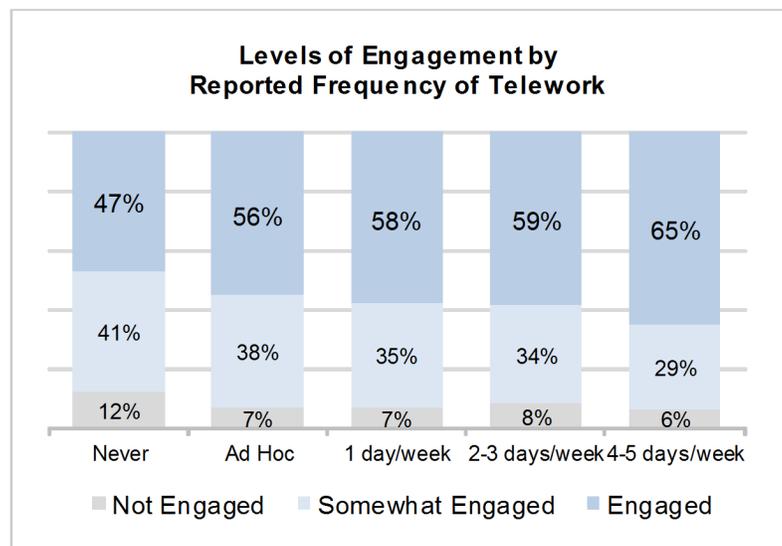


## Telework: Weighing the Information, Determining an Appropriate Approach

The fifth merit system principle states that “The Federal work force should be used efficiently and effectively.” Telework, which provides flexibility in where and when work is accomplished, is a tool that Federal organizations can use to support a high-performing workforce and further mission success. This October 2011 report discusses issues and considerations that organizations should weigh when deciding how to integrate telework into their business strategies and operations.

Telework has many potential benefits for organizations and employees alike. In addition to direct organizational benefits in areas such as continuity of operations, emergency preparedness, and office space, telework can yield direct employee benefits in the areas of work/life balance and commuting time and cost. It appears that the greatest benefit of telework is indirect: enhancing recruitment, retention, and employee engagement by supporting employee work/life balance. As illustrated in the chart, survey results point to an association between the practice of telework and employee engagement.

Further, our research indicates that the benefits of telework can be attained while maintaining productivity and performance, if telework is managed appropriately. That includes making thoughtful decisions about telework eligibility and identifying—and taking steps to mitigate—any concerns about telework.



To make effective use of telework, organizations must weigh benefits of telework in conjunction with any concerns, legal requirements, and implementation considerations. One such consideration is ensuring that supervisors have skills and support needed to manage performance in a telework environment. Good performance management skills are essential for supervisors to make wise decisions about the use of telework and ensure fair treatment of both teleworkers and nonteleworkers. Other keys to realizing the benefits of telework and mitigating concerns include—

- Fostering a culture that is conducive to telework. For example, leaders should emphasize results over physical presence (e.g., time in the office) when setting expectations and evaluating performance, and reinforce that emphasis by teleworking themselves;
- Establishing a well thought-out technology infrastructure that provides access to necessary business tools and maintains good communications, teamwork, and work unit dynamics;
- Being flexible, as the optimal approach to telework is likely to evolve over time and requires organizations to challenge assumptions and try new practices; and
- Continuously evaluating the effectiveness of telework.

*For the full report, including a holistic discussion of telework benefits, concerns, and implementation considerations, please visit [www.mspb.gov/studies](http://www.mspb.gov/studies).*