



Business English

ICT in Business

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Unit 12: ICT in Business

Objectives:

- Introduce language related to ICT in the workplace
- Reading for specific details and to transfer information
- Prefixes and phrasal verbs
- Listening for details outlining benefits
- Use information provided to write a summary of advantages/disadvantages using appropriate linkers and transitions

Skills: reading/listening/writing

I. PRE-READING

A/ Look at the following drawing and answer the questions:



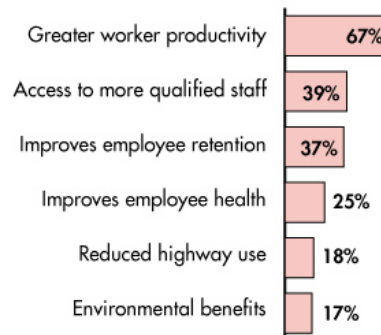
- 1. This drawing is about someone who is:**
 - a) Working in his office
 - b) Working from home
 - c) Relaxing and enjoying a leisurely breakfast.
- 2. The notice board behind the man and the child playing in the background point to the fact that the man is:**
 - a) Setting his own flexible work schedule
 - b) Having to deal with a tight work schedule
 - c) Being subjected to a timetable decided by his employers.
- 3. The presence of the child playing in the background is also suggestive of:**
 - a) The difficulty of drawing a boundary between home and work life for people who telework.
 - b) One of the advantages to be had by people working from home
 - c) One of the factors likely to lower productivity for these people

B/ Look at the following chart and answer the questions:



Telecommuting

Q: What benefits is your company realizing from telecommuting?



Source: 221 IT execs CompTIA 2008

1. This chart shows telecommuting benefits enjoyed by:

- a) Employers
- b) Employees
- c) Employees' families

2. The question is addressed to

- a) Companies using teleworking
- b) Companies thinking of using it
- c) Companies having used and abandoned it.

3. Almost 40% of the companies asked think that:

- a) It has contributed to a higher staff turnover
- b) Telecommuting has helped them hire more qualified staff.
- c) It has reduced their workforce.

II. READING

Read the following article from Biztech Magazine. Then do the tasks which follow

Productivity Propellant

Businesses find that telework cuts costs and makes it easier for workers to do their jobs.

By Amy Schurr, *Biztech*, August 18th, 2009

On Fridays, Latham's Atlanta building is virtually empty, yet the company's back-office operations continue to hum along. That's because the plant shuts down once a week and many of its knowledge workers telecommute that day.



Lathem, a maker of time and attendance products, synchronized clock systems and small business security solutions, launched its telework program a few years ago to counter pain at the gas pump. “We had several employees who commuted long distances, and it got very expensive for them to come to work,” says Grace Perry, Lathem’s human resources director. Atlanta traffic ranks among the worst in the country; the average round-trip commute is 39.4 miles, according to the Georgia Department of Transportation.

Nearly 70 percent of Lathem’s 105-person staff enjoy a compressed workweek of four 10-hour shifts, while another 10 percent telework. “It’s a big savings to employees in terms of the cost of commuting and wear and tear on their vehicle, as well as a time saver,” says Chris Croxton, network administrator at the company.

Perry adds telework is a low-cost benefit companies can offer that’s especially appreciated when businesses can’t grant salary increases. “All the way around, telework makes for a happier workforce,” she says. “It’s definitely a morale builder.”

Not only does telework foster work/life balance and reduce commuting costs, but the employer benefits, too. The business gains cost and energy efficiencies from shutting down on Fridays, and the telecommuting program aids recruitment and retention. For these reasons, many other businesses are taking notice.

“What we’re seeing overall is interest in telework not only from just the employees, but in organizations looking at the bottom line and how it can really affect real estate cost savings,” says Cindy Auten, general manager of the Telework Exchange.

Health and disability management consultancy HDM-Solutions has a virtual staff spread throughout multiple geographic locations and time zones. Founder Maria Henderson works from her home outside Denver, and the company’s employees telework, too.

Not having to lease office space allows Henderson to keep her company’s costs down. “Compared to the big consulting firms we compete with, our hourly rates are less than half of theirs,” she says. “It’s all related to overhead.”

At TechHouse, all but one employee telecommutes. Kathy Durfee, CEO of the small IT consultancy in Bradenton, Fla., says, “I am leasing traditional office space for one employee who likes to work in the office, but I just met with the landlord and want to try hoteling.” Durfee estimates her company saves about \$5,000 a month in facilities costs since implementing telework.

GeoConcepts Engineering launched its telework initiative in 2001 in part to lure a key employee the geotechnical engineering firm was courting. The potential new hire would have had a difficult commute, so President Vivian Lewis compromised and allowed her to telework.



“It’s a win/win situation,” says Lewis. While only a small portion of the Virginia-based business’s 53 employees telecommute, that option is open to more employees depending on the nature of the position. Such an arrangement boosts productivity and gives workers more flexibility, she says.

Telework appeals not only to workers, but to customers and clients, too. For example, HDM-Solutions’ Henderson says governmental agencies have rated her company higher on request for proposals because telework gives the business a smaller carbon footprint. “We’ve had clients specifically choose us for that,” she notes.

In addition, when considering a telework investment, don’t overlook the business continuity advantages the technology affords. “If anything happened where I wasn’t able to get into work, I can still get into my computer, process payroll and have the business function,” Lathem’s Perry says. “It might be limited, but remotely you can get a lot done.”

At Lathem, launching a telework program didn’t require a large capital investment. “It wasn’t a lot of expense because we already had the technology in place,” says Perry. “It was just a matter of managing what we had and applying it.”

Teleworkers use their home computers and must have an active antivirus software subscription. Workers are required to have a broadband connection in order to telecommute because dial-up is too slow for them to work efficiently, notes Croxton.

Employees gain access to all the files and applications they need to do their jobs through Microsoft Remote Desktop terminal server, and all work is stored on the server.

Croxton notes that users need their office credentials to log in. For even more security, he’s in the process of rolling out a WatchGuard virtual private network to give teleworkers a direct tunnel into the Lathem network.

Workers use Microsoft Outlook to keep their colleagues apprised of whether they’re in the office, teleworking or unavailable. And a Voice over IP PBX allows users to log in and forward their calls to an outside number. “The technology is very seamless,” Perry says. “Callers won’t know if you’re at home or work.”

If teleworkers have IT problems, call-center staff can use **Citrix GoToAssist** for remote troubleshooting. For any issues that can’t be solved remotely, staff must bring in their PCs. The arrangement works well for the most part, though “there’s always the challenge of trying to support hardware and software that you didn’t necessarily install,” Croxton points out. “Everybody’s environment is a little different.”

With solid technology in place, some of the obstacles that companies encounter when rolling out telework programs are cultural.

“It’s not something that works for everybody because you don’t have face-to-face contact,” says GeoConcepts’ Lewis. “There are things that come up in the office that a teleworker can’t address.”



Lathem requires employees interested in teleworking to obtain manager approval, then Perry reviews the application to validate that work can be done from home. Non-exempt employees, for example, aren't permitted to telecommute because of the difficulty of tracking their time.

"In the beginning, the hardest thing in adopting telework is trust — trust among the employees who aren't participating and managers who haven't worked with this situation before," Perry says. Though most teleworkers prove more productive because they tend to work longer hours, it's important to be able to back out of the arrangement.

As small business leaders can attest, the IT and management investment in telework pays impressive dividends. "It kind of puts a smile on everybody's face," Croxton concludes.

Source: http://biztechmagazine.com/article.asp?item_id=635

A/ The text (Tick the right option):

- a) Argues for teleworking
- b) Is critical of teleworking
- c) Gives a balanced view about this issue.

B/ The title "Productivity Propellant" suggests that the focus of the article will be on: (Tick the right option)

- a) The drawbacks of teleworking
- b) The benefits of teleworking, mainly for the employers
- c) The benefits of teleworking, mainly for employees.

C/The four companies mentioned in the article are used to:

- a) Demonstrate the technical feasibility of the teleworking arrangement.
- b) show the logistic problems encountered when implementing this system.
- c) Provide success stories illustrating the benefits of telecommuting.

D / Refer to the article and complete the following fact sheet about Lathem:

	105
Fields of activity	
Location	
Working hours	
	10%



Investment in technology	
Grace Perry	
	Person in charge of IT

E/ state whether the following are True or False and justify:

- a) Lathem has just started its telework program. That’s why only a small percentage of staff are involved in it.
- b) To commute to and back from work, Lathem employees have to drive an average 20 miles each way.
- c) Thanks to telecommuting, a lower staff turnover can be achieved.
- d) Lathem had to invest heavily in order to get its telework program going.
- e) Teleworking does not appeal to some employees because they miss the face-to-face contact.

F/ Choose the best option

What prompted Lathem to launch its telework program in the first place is ...

- the program’s obvious added value
- the cost of commuting for the employees-
- the trade union’s pressure.

G/ For employees to be able to telework, which equipment (both hardware and software) must they have available?

-
-
-
-

H/ The following telecommuting advantages are given in the article. Which benefit the employers, the employees, the clients and the community. (Drag and drop)

- Morale building
- Better work/ life balance
- Reduction of commuting costs
- Gains in energy cost and efficiency
- Better recruitment and retention tool
- Savings in leasing office space and reduction in real estate costs
- Higher productivity
- More flexibility for workers
- Lower carbon footprint



- Business continuity advantages thanks to the technology used

Employers	Employees	Customers, the community and the environment

I/: Guess the meaning of the following words and phrases as within the context in which they appear in the article

- 1) Lathem launched its telework program to counter **pain at the gas pump**.
 a) pain as a result of injury b) displeasure as a result of higher gas prices
- 2) Telework is a **morale builder**
 a) boosts employees motivations b) enhances the business ethical values
- 3) It's all related to **overhead**.
 a) it's to with running costs b) it's to do with fares
- 4) Not having **to lease** office space allows to keep costs down
 a) to hire space b) to purchase it
- 5) The initiative was **to lure** a key employee.
 a) to discourage him b) to attract him
- 6) The technology is **seamless**.
 a) worthless b) flawless

III. POST-READING

A/ Words with the prefix tele-

The following words are recurrent in the article: telework –teleworking – telecommute – telecommuting. Many other words can be formed with the prefix ‘tele’ which means doing something from a distance.

Provide words beginning with the prefix’ tele’ for which the following definitions are given:

1		sending pictures through the air over distances to be seen on a screen.
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2		a device used to send sound or some other signal over long distances by waves.
3		an electric system for sending messages by a code over wires from a distance
4		instrument for viewing distant objects (as in outer space).
5		a message in code sent by electronic means over wires from a distance.
6		a photographic system using telescopic lenses to produce large images of distant objects
7		a conference of individuals in different locations, as by speaker-phone, closed-circuit television, etc
8		Use of telecommunications technology for medical diagnosis and patient care when the provider and client are separated by distance.
9		Thinking the same thing as someone else
10		A scientifically unexplainable power to move objects without physical contact, as by means of psychic forces from a distance.
11		Using the telephone to promote and sell goods and services
12		a device providing a written script from a distance, visible to a performer or speaker on television, but not to the audience

B/ Phrasal verbs: matching them with their meaning

The following phrasal verbs appear in the article: shut down - keep down - log in – roll out- point out – come up – back out.

1. Match these verbs in column A with their meanings in column B

A	To back out	1	to close something like a factory, school or hospital, usually forever.
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B	To roll out	2	if you do that for something, you stop it from increasing in size or number.
C	To come up	3	to tell someone something you think they should know.
D	To point out	4	to appear, occur, or become available.
E	To log in	5	to introduce a new line of products or services.
F	To shut down	6	to do certain things, like typing in a user name and password, in order to access an online application or a computer network.
G	To keep down	7	To withdraw from something like an agreement or a deal deciding not to follow through on it.

2. Fill in the blanks with suitable phrasal verbs from those given in the previous exercise:

Before management decides to (1)_____ a telework program, it should consider whether the new program would really contribute to (2)_____ the company's running costs. In addition, the program's benefits should be (3)_____ to all employees to ensure their commitment. In any case, the whole approach should be kept flexible and should serious problems (4)_____ in the course of the program's implantation, provisions for a (5)_____ plan should be made.

C/ Subject –verb inversions with negative openings

We sometimes begin a sentence with a negative word to give more emphasis.

Look at this sentence taken from the article:

“Not only does telework foster work/life balance and reduce commuting costs, but the employer benefits, too”

Now, rewrite the following statements as indicated:

- They had scarcely started the telework program when logistics problems began to arise.
-Scarcely _____
- They have never had such a flexible arrangement before.
-Never before _____
- The employees understood what the program was worth only then.
- Only then _____
- We must not back out of this agreement at any time.
- At not time _____
- We will not start the telework program until everyone is bought in.



- Not until everyone is bought in _____
6. The management did not know much about the telework program.
- Little _____
7. You will not find a more pleasant working atmosphere anywhere else.
- Nowhere else _____
8. The telecommuting program is so appealing that more and more companies are going for it.
- So appealing _____

Pronunciation

A/ Choose the most appropriate meaning according each time to the stressed word in the sentence

1. At TechHouse, **all** but **one** employee telecommutes.

- a) not in other companies next door.
- b) the total workforce except for one.
- c) not a manager, an employee.
- d) works from home, not in the office.

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2. At TechHouse, all but one employee **telecommutes**.

- a) not in other companies next door.
- b) the total workforce except for one.
- c) not a manager, an employee.
- d) works from home, not in the office

3. At TechHouse, all but one **employee** telecommutes.

- a) not in other companies next door.
- b) the total workforce except for one.
- c) not a manager, an employee.
- d) works from home, not in the office

Listening



Listen to the following file entitled 'Teleworking benefits for the employer' (audio file from www.ictgcse.com). Then do the tasks which follow:

A/ Drawing on the knowledge you acquired in the previous sections of this unit, fill in the following table about some of the advantages of telecommuting as indicated.

	Employers	Employees	Environment
Advantages			
Disadvantages			

B/ The extract aims at:

- a) giving a general overview of telecommuting practices
- b) focusing mainly on telecommuting benefits and drawbacks for the employers
- c) showing telework success stories.

C/ Complete the following statements with the right piece of information from the extract:

- a) The smaller offices are, (the lower/ the higher the rent/ lease) is;
- b) Working from home can be anywhere on (the planet/ in the universe)
- c) If I am working from home, I will be on my (workstation/ play station) all day
- d) You can get software that lets you look at what (they're/you're) doing on the computer. The problem is that you're going to (waste/ spend) a lot of time monitoring...

D/ Complete the table with information from the extract on the major advantages and disadvantages which employers can get from teleworking:

Advantages	1.
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	2.
Disadvantages	1. 2.

FORUM: Which jobs lend themselves more easily for teleworking. Make a list of these occupations and post it for discussion on the forum.

Writing

Visit this telecommuting forum at <http://www.squidoo.com/Telecommuting#module3672814>.

Focus on the advantages and disadvantages of working from home. Then write a letter to a forum on telework pointing the disadvantages an employee may experience when working from home