

## Convincing Your Boss to Let You Work From Home

If you are currently employed but are experiencing challenges due to your MS, you may want to consider a reasonable accommodation request to work from home one or more days a week. Although as an individual with a disability, you have the right to request a reasonable accommodation (see the accommodation section on our website), your employer needs to agree that the request is reasonable and that what you are asking will work for them as well.

According to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), an employer is not required to grant you the accommodation you request if it would pose an “undue” hardship for the business; however they are required to work with you to try and find a compromise. That could mean although you request to work from home three days a week they may decide that two days or a move to a quieter office works better for them.

Christine Durst and Michael Haaren suggest in their book “[Work at Home Now](#)”, that if you plan to broach the topic of telework with your boss, keep the company perspective in mind at all times. Doing so can mean the difference between hearing “We don’t do that here” and “Okay, let’s give it a try, and see how you do.” They suggest having a well thought out plan before approaching your boss. Below are their recommendations on how to accomplish this.

Please keep in mind the authors did not write this with a reasonable accommodation request in mind but you may find some of their tips useful in developing a strong telework accommodation request that will get you what you need.

You may want to swap out some of the telework proposal language with language for requesting a reasonable accommodation. Use the sample [reasonable accommodation request letter](#) from the Job Accommodation Network as a sample to help guide you.

### Creating a winning telework proposal

Here we will walk you through a step-by-step process for creating a winning proposal. These steps will include:

1. Drafting an attention-grabbing opening statement.
2. Outlining the benefits to the company.
3. Breaking down your daily tasks and commitments.
4. Proposing a schedule and highlighting your flexibility.
5. Suggesting methods for quantifying your productivity.
6. Reminding your boss what a valuable asset you are to the company.
7. Describing your home-based workspace and equipment.

### Drafting an attention grabbing opening statement

Open your proposal with a short statement that will make your boss want to read more. Although this section will appear first, you'll want to write it last, so that you can weave in supporting statistics and other data you find in your research.

#### Example

Dear (boss name)

Now more than ever, corporations large and small are embracing telework and letting employees periodically work from home. Many factors are driving the movement, including increased employee productivity and decreased turnover, business-continuity concerns, rising real estate and fuel costs, and the company's environmental image.

Some companies, like Best Buy, have gone even further, significantly boosting productivity and reducing turnover by adopting a "results-only work environment" permitting employees to work from anywhere as long as they achieve their targets.

I have assessed my duties and as this telework proposal will show, I believe I can be an even greater asset to the company if I am permitted to work periodically at home. Indeed a "time and task" audit that I recently completed of my in-office work revealed that eliminating drop in interruptions alone could result in % X more productivity on days when I am working from home.

I will look forward to a discussing this proposal with you, and exploring how a trial telework period might demonstrate substantial benefits for our team and a positive impact on the company's bottom line.

Respectfully,

(your name)

### Outlining the benefits to the company

We usually refer to this as the "what's in it for them?" section of the proposal. Here you will show in detail how you've considered a telework arrangement from the employer's viewpoint, and you'll lay out reasons why it would directly benefit the company.

Using the following chart, and thinking specifically about what motivates your company and its managers, outline what you assume the benefits of a telework arrangement will be to the business. We've listed several "action words" and benefits as thought starters.

Consider the buzz words and phrases that recur in company meetings and memos, and conversations with you and your boss.

Through adoption of the proposed telework arrangement, the company will	
Save	Time and money
Increase	Revenue customer satisfaction, customer loyalty
Improve	Productivity, morale, recruitment and the quality of its workforce
Reduce	Expense, sick time, absenteeism
Promote	A family-friendly image, a "green" public image or business practice

Now with your list as a reference point, you can begin the research that will back up your assumptions with hard facts! Ideally, you'll want to gather meaningful statistics from respected studies and industry reports.

With these goals in mind, start your research with your favorite search engine. Use search terms that include the form of the information you're seeking plus the assumptions you are hoping to support (ex: "telework saves time")

For example, using action words save and increase, which we listed in the chart, your search terms (which would not be enclosed in quotation marks because you're searching for concepts and not exact phrases) might include:

- Statistics + telework saves time
- Studies + telework saves time
- Findings + telework saves time
- Research + telework saves time
- Statistics + telework saves money
- Studies + telework saves money
- Findings + telework saves money
- Research + telework saves money

(You can continue to do this with the phrases telework increases income and telework increases customer satisfaction or whatever relates to your business.)

To find additional data, try searches using telecommute or telecommuting in the place of telework.

In reviewing your search results, give the greatest weight to information found on sites with a solid reputation in the telework arena, or that your boss will otherwise consider reliable. Examples of respected telework resource sites include but are not limited to:

- InnoVIsions Canada: [ivc.ca](http://ivc.ca)
- Telework coalition: [telcoa.org](http://telcoa.org)
- Telework Advisory Group: [workingfromanywhere.org](http://workingfromanywhere.org)
- Telework exchange: [teleworkexchange.com](http://teleworkexchange.com)
- Commuter Challenge: [commuterchallenge.org](http://commuterchallenge.org)
- Network World: [networkworld.com](http://networkworld.com) (search the site for “telecommuting”)
- Euro-Telework: [ero-telework.org](http://ero-telework.org)
- JALA International: [jala.com](http://jala.com)
- [Telework.gov](http://Telework.gov) and other federal government telework sites.

To strengthen your case, do some research to see if your company’s competitors—or firms it respects, have telework programs and cite their successes.

Now, compile your most compelling findings in an easy to skim format. A bullet point list usually works best but if you have a knack for organizing data in another format or know how your boss prefers information by all means do so.

Note: Although as a person with a disability, your need to work from home differs from someone who wants to be home for their children, making a case for how it would benefit the company can only help strengthen your request.

### Breaking down your daily tasks and commitments

This section of your proposal is the reality check and assessment of whether your job can actually be done from home.

Analyze every aspect of your job—the tasks you manage, who you interact with, what resources you use, how you deliver your work, and so on—explain which duties you can do from home and how.

We suggest conducting a “time and task audit”, in which you record everything you *really* do. Though this can be tedious and takes time, the data can reinforce your proposal substantially.

Below is a sample audit worksheet. Separate your typical workday into 10 minute increments. (The following shows the first two hours of a workday).

Throughout the course of the workday:

In the activity column briefly note the task you were involved in during the time specified on the left.

If the activity could be done as well or better from home, place an X in the Home Column, if better done in the office place an X in the Office column.

Each time your activities are interrupted for non-productive reasons, place an X in the AI column.

Time	Activity	Home	Office	AI
8:00	Check/reply/email	X		
10	Herb-talk about TV show			X
20	Sherry- discuss Abbott account	X		
30	Check/reply/email	X		
40	Check/reply/email	X		
50	Call re: reorder	X		
9:00-10:00	Sales meeting	possible phone participation	X	

At the end of your audit you should have a snapshot of your typical workweek and an accurate idea of how much of your work you can do from home.

Armed with your audit, you can present your boss with a comprehensive overview of your duties, the percentage of work you can perform from home and the productive time you'll be gaining by relocating yourself to a setting more conducive to uninterrupted work.

#### Proposing a schedule and highlighting your flexibility

The key to an acceptable telework schedule is to transition into the arrangement conservatively at a pace your boss can be comfortable with. A preliminary schedule of just one or two days per week can often work well, weighted toward days that would best work for your boss and colleagues.

Regardless of the schedule you propose, be sure your boss knows you're willing to be flexible. Some managers, regardless of how well weighed the plan will want to tweak it a bit to make it their own. Now is the time to give a little, and show you're a team player.

Remember even if your boss concedes to one telework day a week, this still gives you the opening to demonstrate the value of that day to the company, and the value of more.

#### Suggesting methods for quantifying your productivity

It's important to remember that most managers have never supervised a remote workforce, and you may be asking yours to take a step outside his or her managerial comfort zone. Regardless, managers often note their concern that employees will be unproductive if unwatched. In this section of your proposal, you can ease any such concerns by suggesting ways in which your productivity can be measured.

As an example you might:

- Provide your boss with a list of measurable goals, against which he or she can gauge your performance.
- Suggest applications such as Norton PCAnywhere or Citrix GoToMyPC to enable you to work on your office computer from your home computer. This will permit your boss to monitor your activities simply by looking at your in-office computer screen.
- Agree to e-mail a report at the end of each day summarizing activities and outcomes.
- Make yourself available by instant messenger during business hours.
- Commit to check messages and return phone calls within a certain time.
- Set a schedule for phone check-ins.
- Make it known that you can be at the main office within a certain time if urgent situations arise.
- Set up a pager or other backup communications methods your boss can rely on in the event normal systems fail.

As you, your boss and your colleagues adapt to your home based work arrangements, you may find that your boss doesn't require the reassuring touches he preferred in the beginning. But regardless, the more pains you take to make the trial period transparent, the more likely you will be moving toward a permanent and flexible telework schedule.

#### Reminding your boss what a valuable asset you are to the company

The goal is to get your boss to focus on traits that you and ideal teleworkers share. For example you want your boss to know that you are:

- A self-starter
- An excellent organizer of time, tasks, and priorities
- An independent problem solver
- A solid team player
- Self-disciplined
- Self-directed
- Technically savvy and able to manage basic troubleshooting
- An excellent communicator

#### Describe your home-based workspace and equipment

In your office description, be sure to include details that show you've given due consideration to security and safety issues. Be sure to address any unique or extraordinary concerns your company might have about confidentiality of information and system security. Similarly, if telework will require the company to provide equipment for your home office, address those issues here. Other points to consider include:

- Will you need a fax machine, an additional phone line, or an external hard drive?

- How will you handle backing up your system?
- Will the company provide insurance to cover any loss of equipment or data from the home office?

Finally, diffuse any concerns there might be about your personal life encroaching on your work at home.

### Be prepared to talk about your proposal

You should be prepared to state your case live as you have in writing. You probably know your boss well so, anticipate any questions he or she might have, and be ready to address them. Your ability to answer questions with confidence and clarity will strengthen the likelihood of the “yes” you are hoping for.

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