

The Ultimate Small Business Guide To Setting Up A 'Work From Home' Or Remote Network Access System For Your Staff

Critical Facts And Insider Secrets Every Business Owner *Must* Know Before Installing A 'Virtual Network' To Allow Employees To Work From Home, On The Road, Or From A Remote Office

If you are the owner of a small or medium sized business that is thinking about implementing a “work from home” program for your employees – or if you want to install a virtual network to enable you and certain key employees and managers to work on the road or from a remote office – DON’T - until you read this eye-opening guide.

This report will explain in plain, non-technical terms best practices for setting up remote access for you and your staff, as well important questions you should ask any computer consultant to avoid making the most commonly made, costly mistakes made when setting up the technology for a work from home program.

You’ll Discover:

- What “telecommuting” is and why so many small and medium sized businesses are rapidly implementing work from home programs.
- The single most important thing you **MUST** have in place before starting any work from home or remote office initiative.
- How one company saved \$11 million after implementing a work from home program – and how you might implement the same money-saving strategies for your small business.
- How one company slashed its turnover rate from 33% to nearly 0% – and increased productivity by 18% - all by implementing a “work from home” program.
- 8 **CRITICAL** *characteristics you should absolutely demand* from any IT professional you’re considering to set up your remote office technology. **DO NOT** trust your infrastructure to anyone who does not meet these criteria.
- How to get a **FREE** “Home Office Action Pack” (\$97 Value).



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From the Desk of: Ron Shoe

President/CEO

SIP Oasis

Dear Colleague,

Imagine being able to get double the work out of your employees while simultaneously slashing overhead costs, padding your bottom line, and securing incredible loyalty from your staff.

Sound too good to be true? *I assure you it's not...*

My name is Ron Shoe and for over 25 years, I have provided business and technology consulting services to hundreds of small and medium businesses in the Greater Birmingham area.

While it may seem like I'm making radical statements, I want you to know that I'm not a "radical person." As a matter of fact, one glance at the enclosed fact sheet about my background and expertise will show that I'm a very grounded and conservative-minded technology consultant with a long track record of helping my clients enjoy more stress-free productivity, lowered costs, and competitive advantages.

That's why I published this business advisory guide.

There is a fast-growing trend among small and medium businesses that is drastically increasing productivity, cutting costs, and driving more profit to the bottom line. Is it a new management style or marketing trend?

No - it's telecommuting, which is a \$5 word for allowing your staff to work from home or while on the road.

Sure it doesn't sound very sexy when you first hear it, but when you see the bottom line impact it has on profits and productivity and talk to business owners who rave about how much money it's saving them, you'll start to see what all the excitement is about.

What Is Telecommuting And How Is It Going To Help My Business?

Telecommuting is a fancy word for allowing employees to work from home, in remote offices, or while on the road. While this is not a new concept, recent advancements in remote access technology and security have made it very affordable and easy for even micro business owners.

Why would a business want to do this? Some businesses are being forced to because they've run out of office space or to accommodate "road warriors." But many are doing it for these reasons...

- Business owners (and key managers) working 60+ hours a week are using it as a way to continue working after hours and on weekends from the convenience of a home office.
- Allowing employees to work from home means businesses can cut back on office space, lowering rent and utility bills. Furthermore, according to a recent survey of small businesses, nearly 40% of small and medium businesses have (or plan to) cut down office space and allow employees to work remotely from home to save money. Not only is this lowering overhead, but also it's making for happier employees who no longer have to fill their gas tanks.
- Telecommuting actually increases employee productivity, lowers stress levels, and improves retention. Contrary to what you may believe, employees who work from home tend to work *more*, not less. Because the computer is right there in the home, they will often put in extra hours during the evening and on weekends when they normally wouldn't be able to access the network. Plus, employees working on detailed programs, graphics, and projects tend to get more done when they don't have to deal with office distractions.
- Some companies are allowing their employees to work from home two or three days out of a week instead of giving them a raise – a bonus many will gladly take over more money. This also works well if you have limited office space because employees can rotate desk usage.
- It allows you to keep great employees that need or want to relocate, need to stay home to take care of a sick family member, or who are sick, injured, pregnant, or otherwise unable to come into the office.

Common Myths, Mistakes, and Misconceptions About Allowing Your Employees To Work From Home

One of the biggest fears many business owners have about allowing employees to work from home is the loss of control they have over that person. Owners fear that without supervision, employees will goof off during work hours and become LESS productive.

But the hard numbers show a different reality...

Telecommuting has grown at a steady 3% per year for more than 15 years. Currently, more than **23 million people are working from home** at least one day a week. The increase in teleworking programs is no accident – it really IS working.

Admittedly, original telecommuting experiments were “do-gooder” projects focused on being earth-friendly and generating business savings by reducing use of high priced big-city office space. However, when businesses started seeing how it drastically improved turnover and productivity, this “fad” became a hot trend.

Take the Los Angeles Bank for example; they decided to test telecommuting to see if it would help their 33% turnover rate. Here were the results...

The experiment worked and within a year the turnover rate was cut to nearly zero and to everyone’s surprise productivity went up 18%, saving the regional bank more than \$3 million dollars per year.

Since then there have been numerous, well documented program studies reflecting promising results. For instance, AT&T allowed employees to telecommute on a regular basis from home in a New Jersey office of 600 people.

Over a 5-year period, a region of AT&T saved more than \$11 million annually. Half the savings came from real estate savings while the other came from a measured increase in incremental work hours from employees who were able to have a higher level of concentration with fewer interruptions.

You’re probably thinking, **“But I don’t have 600 employees...how does this apply to me?”** No matter how small your business or your real estate situation, you can save money. It’ll just be a bit smaller than AT&T. For instance:



On average, small businesses report saving \$85,000 to \$93,000 per year in lower turnover, reduced operating costs (gas, utilities, office space), and increased productivity after implementing teleworking programs.
(Source: International Teleworking Advocacy Group)

Of course, telecommuting might not be right for every employee on staff, but it is a great option (and reward) for key managers or employees who are self-motivated and measured by results rather than hours worked.

The Single Most Important Thing You Must Have In Place Before Starting A Work From Home Program Or Setting Up Remote Access For Road Warriors

Before you go “whole hog” with a telecommuting or remote access, we recommend conducting a small test where you (and possibly a few key managers) are set up to work from home.

Once you are comfortable with the concept, you may start allowing a few key employees to work from home one day a week or a couple of days a month. Or, you can simply allow employees to use it while traveling or if they are forced to stay home to take care of a child, on a snow day, etc.

But the single most important thing for you to do first is to find a very experience IT consultant who will recommend and implement the right technology to support YOUR specific situation and needs. This is unbelievably important to avoiding expensive mistakes and unnecessary frustration.

8 CRITICAL Characteristics You Should Absolutely DEMAND From Any IT Professional You’re Considering To Set Up Your Remote Office Technology; DO NOT Trust Your Infrastructure To Anyone Who Does Not Meet These Criteria!

There is no "one size fits all" solution. The best solution is greatly dependent on your specific business needs, the applications you use, how many people will be accessing your systems remotely, the available equipment, and dozens of other factors.
That's why you want to look for a consultant who meets the following criteria:

1. Look for a consultant who has experience setting up remote access and STRONG (and recent) client references.

Do you really want to be the person who “pays” for your consultant’s training? I’ve found that the price to correct problems created by novices is much greater than the cost to do it right the first time with an experienced technician. Ask for *recent* references and call them! Past performance is generally a good gauge of future performance.

2. Make sure they do a THOROUGH evaluation up front

If your consultant doesn’t insist on doing a thorough evaluation BEFORE handing you a proposal, do NOT hire them! If they don’t do their homework, they could easily sell you the wrong solution, causing you to have to spend MORE money and MORE time, leading to MORE frustration in getting what you really need. Most consultants will do a quick, cursory review and provide a free recommendation (proposal) because they want to close the deal fast. Here is a short list of the things they should investigate or ask you:

- What are your overall goals and specific objectives for allowing your employees to work from home or on the road?
- How many employees will be working remotely? Will they be accessing the network at the same time or at different times?
- What applications (including specialty or proprietary apps) and data will your employees need to access?
- What type of devices will your staff use to access the network? (Home computers, PDAs, Blackberries, laptops, etc.)
- What type of Internet connection will be available on the sending AND receiving end?
- What levels of security do you want in place?
- What level of monitoring do you want in place? For example, are there certain web sites and content you want “off limits?”
- Will the remote worker need to print documents?
- What are your 1-year and 3-year plans for growth?

3. Make sure they are able to TRAIN you and your staff.

So many computer consultants are great at installing the “stuff” but fall short on training you and your staff how to use the great “whiz-bang” technology they’ve just sold you. Make sure you hire someone who is able and willing to do the “hand holding” required when installing any new process or technology...we’re only human after all.

4. Make sure they can provide help desk support AFTER hours.

One of the main appeals to teleworking is the ability to work at night or on weekends; that means you need someone to be “on-call” during those off-peak hours if you or your employees have technical problems logging in or accessing the network. Bottom line, if your consultant doesn’t offer after-hours support, don’t hire them to do the job. There is no benefit to having remote access if you have to wait until Monday or 9am the next day for support.

5. Make sure they INSIST on maintaining the network

Virtual office networks require more 'care and feeding' to make sure they work properly and stay secure. You cannot "set it and forget it" or you're asking for problems. Only hire someone who is prepared to perform regular check-ups and updates of your network, usually under a maintenance or managed services plan.

6. Look for someone who can also solve the phone piece of the puzzle, not just the network access piece.

If you want your work-from-home employee to be able to make and receive calls and APPEAR as though they are in the office to the caller, then look for someone who can set up your phone system to work with your remote employee’s home phone or cell phone. Usually this can be accomplished with VoIP technology (Voice Over Internet Protocol). Confirm that the company you hire can either provide these services or has a partnership with a reputable vendor who has this expertise.

7. Make sure your consultant is willing and able to be a vendor liaison for your specific business applications or other specialty applications.

It's amazing how many critical applications work fine within the office network but then slow down or shut down when accessed through a remote location. It's important to ensure your consultant can confirm that your applications will operate efficiently remotely, which means they may need to get on the phone with the help desk of one or more of your software vendors. Some consultants do NOT offer this service or will charge you extra for it.

8. Look for a consultant with expertise in setting up employee monitoring and content filtering.

It's more difficult (but not impossible) to protect company secrets and proprietary information when it's stored on a location outside of your office. Therefore, make sure the company you hire has expertise in setting up and managing content filtering and security for remote machines.

Not Sure If You Are Ready To Set Up Remote Access? Our Free Remote Access Consultation Will Help You Decide

As a prospective client, we'd like to offer you a free Remote Access Consultation. At no charge, we will come to your office to review your current situation and business practices and needs. We'll provide recommendations on how you can quickly and easily set up remote access for you and your staff.

We will also discuss your options, clarify any grey areas, and answer any questions you have. We will also map out the costs and steps involved so you know exactly what to expect.

You are under no obligations to do or buy anything; this is simply our way of introducing our services to you and demonstrating how we can make your remote access project a complete success.

Plus we'll give you a FREE "Home Office Action Pack" just for meeting with us! This package include:

- Home Office/Remote Office Checklist to help you verify the home or remote office is a safe and productive environment for the employee to work.
- Employee Agreement Template to outline the rules for your employees when working from home.



- Employee Equipment Issue Agreement to outline the rules of use and maintenance for any computer equipment, cell phones, PDAs, laptops, printers, etc. that are issued to the employee working remotely.

We Can Show You How To Enjoy The Benefits Of Remote Access, Just Like These Current Clients...

**David Hughett, CPA, Poythress Hughett, and Matthews
Reliable Customer Service and an Easy, Versatile Product.**

SIP Oasis provides a telecommunications system that offers versatility, ease of use, and integration with other technology. The exceptional functionality comes at a good price point as well. Finally, we appreciate SIP Oasis' reliable customer service, both in troubleshooting problems and assisting us in operating the system.

**Susan Garrison, Chief Operating Officer, Synergy
Understanding Our Unique Needs**

As a small commercial furniture dealer, we use software and other processes that are unique to our industry. SIP Oasis listens to our needs and works to improve our network, thereby enhancing efficiency, improving our decision-making, and accommodating our specific business functions. Furthermore, the response time when we have issues is excellent, and their helpful techs explain the problem with patience and resolve it quickly. That has freed me from being involved with everyone's computer problems. If you cannot afford to have an inhouse IT department, SIP Oasis should be your obvious choice. Their entire staff is fantastic.

**Greg Williams, Capstone Development Partners
Our Choice Was Clear.**

After assessing other options from various competing companies, we found SIP Oasis to have significantly better functionality, higher quality,



and lower cost. Ron listened and asked questions about our needs rather than simply trying to sell me something

What To Do Now

To request your Free Remote Access Consultation and FREE Home Office Action Pack,” do one of the following:

1. Complete and send in the enclosed “Fast Action” response form.
2. Call us direct at 205-623-1200
3. Schedule your appointment directly:
4. Send me an e-mail: rshoe@sipoasis.com

Someone from our office will call you to schedule a convenient time for us to meet for 20 minutes. Remember, there is no obligation for you to buy or do anything – this is simply a discovery meeting to see if remote access is right for you.

Good networking,

Ron Shoe, President/CEO
SIP Oasis

P.S. If you would like to speak to a few client references prior to our meeting, simply contact us and we’ll be happy to provide the names and phone numbers for several clients we’ve worked with.

P.P.S. Please make sure you visit our web site to see the incredible 100% Money-Back Guarantee that we put on our services. You won’t find another IT consultant in Birmingham who is confident enough in their services to put as bold a guarantee in writing as the one we have.



Fast Action Response Form:

☐ “Yes! Please reserve a Free Remote Access Consultation in my name so I can find out what my options are, get answer to my questions, and get a handle on the steps and costs involved. I also want to get a copy of the “Home Office Action Pack” – a \$97 Value – FREE. I understand that I’m under NO obligation to do or buy anything by signing up for this consultation.

Please Complete and Send Back:

Name: _____
Title: _____
Company: _____
Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
Phone: _____ Fax: _____
E-mail: _____

**Do you have any other questions or problems you would like to discuss?
Simply outline them below:**

Send this form to aburke@sipoasis.com