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■ Education & Careers

Help for employees who prefer to do their home work

Certain careers are best suited to telecommuting

By **CLAUDE SOLNIK**

If you'd like a career that lets you work part or full time from home, chances are getting better you'll find one. But some sectors have been faster to take the ramp onto telecommuting than others.

The percent of firms allowing telecommuting by part-time workers rose from 26 percent in 2006 to 35 percent or about one-third in 2008; the percent allowing full-time telecommuting rose from 19 percent to 21 percent, according to a Society for Human Resource Management survey.

Telecommuting is becoming more common because it benefits employers and employees, letting workers spend more time working rather than traveling to work.

"If they don't have to do that commute, you may get more productivity out of them," said Jonathan Trafimow, a partner and head of the employment and labor law practice at Moritt Hock Hamroff & Horowitz. "There are incentives to do it, particularly in recruitment and retention. You keep good people happy and save the time and expense of commuting."

While the trend is toward more telecommuting overall, it's more common in certain professions. Telecommuting is catching on at least part time in many service professions that rely on work done on computer, such as accounting, law and architecture. Publicists, even at larger firms, may work from home offices rather than headquarters.

"A person could work all day from their house in public relations," said Jeannette



Bob Giglione

Moritt Hock's Jonathan Trafimow said the incentives for companies to allow telecommuting include greater employee satisfaction.

Boccini, a principal at Manhattan-based public relations firm the LVM Group.

Nearly half (46 percent) of nonprofits allow part-time telecommuting, making this the friendliest sector in that regard, according to SHRM. About 40 percent of for-profit firms allow part-time telecommuting compared to 33 percent in government and 31 percent at publicly traded firms.

Publicly traded firms, however, are the leaders in full-time telecommuting, with 30 percent on board, possibly because of a desire to tap expertise far from headquarters.

Only 24 percent of nonprofits allow full-

time telecommuting, compared to 18 percent of private firms and 13 percent in government.

While telecommuting increasingly is an option, workers typically don't use it regularly. Uniondale-based Farrell Fritz, for instance, has a number of lawyers and paralegals who occasionally work from home, but only one attorney does so one day a week.

When gas prices spiked to \$4 a gallon nearly two years ago, Farrell Fritz saw a surge in telecommuting.

"When we had a gas crisis, more people worked from home because it made sense if they lived further," said Dominique Camacho Moran, a Farrell Fritz partner. "A lot more people worked from home one day a week because it prevented the cost of traveling and commuting."

There are risks to telecommuting for certain tasks. Even though it's possible for attorneys to depose witnesses by phone, for example, being there can lead to better depositions.

"Most lawyers have done it [taken depositions over the phone] on occasion. But even so, if it's a critical deposition in a case with a lot of money at stake, you might decide it's worth the trip," Trafimow said. "I think you'll have a more effective deposition than by phone."

While measuring results from telecommuters may be simple, measuring effort or time can be tougher, which can become a problem. Trafimow cited a Florida recruiting firm whose employees work primarily from home.

"Their employees spend most of their time [working] out of their homes telecommuting," Trafimow said. "It is difficult to monitor productivity that way."