



4-24-2003

## A Telecommuter Program for Second To None, Inc.

Michael J. Postma

Western Michigan University, Mipo777@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: [https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/honors\\_theses](https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/honors_theses)



Part of the Business Administration, Management, and Operations Commons, and the Human Resources Management Commons

---

### Recommended Citation

Postma, Michael J., "A Telecommuter Program for Second To None, Inc." (2003). *Honors Theses*. 1152. [https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/honors\\_theses/1152](https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/honors_theses/1152)

This Honors Thesis-Open Access is brought to you for free and open access by the Lee Honors College at ScholarWorks at WMU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors Theses by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at WMU. For more information, please contact [wmu-scholarworks@wmich.edu](mailto:wmu-scholarworks@wmich.edu).





**THE CARL AND WINIFRED LEE HONORS COLLEGE**

**CERTIFICATE OF ORAL EXAMINATION**

Michael J. Postma, having been admitted to the Carl and Winifred Lee Honors College in Fall 1999 successfully presented the Lee Honors College Thesis on April 24, 2003.

The title of the paper is:

"A Report on the Telecommuting"

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mark Orbe", written over a horizontal line.

Dr. Mark Orbe, Communication Department

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Julie Apker", written over a horizontal line.

Dr. Julie Apker, Communication Department

# A Telecommuter Program for Second To None Inc.

Prepared for

Mr. Jeff Hall  
President  
Second To None, Inc  
3045 Miller Road  
Ann Arbor, MI 48103

Dr. Mark Orbe  
Western Michigan University

Dr. Julie Apker  
Western Michigan University

Prepared by

Michael Postma  
Western Michigan University

April 25, 2003

# Table of Contents

Table of Contents.....	2
Letter of Transmittal.....	3
Executive Summary.....	4
Introduction.....	5
Purpose.....	5
Scope.....	5
Assumptions.....	6
Literature Review.....	6
Limitations.....	9
Possible Issues.....	10
Equipment Issues.....	10
Computer Requirements.....	11
Hardware.....	11
Software.....	12
Phone System.....	12
Internet Service Provider.....	13
Human Resource Issues.....	13
Hardware Responsibility.....	14
Agreement.....	14
OSHA.....	14
Environment.....	15
Selection Issues.....	15
Quality Assurance.....	16
Criteria.....	17
Minimum Service.....	17
Home Office.....	18
Reviews.....	18
Personality.....	19
Conclusion.....	20
References.....	22
Appendix A.....	23

4541 Wimbeldon Way  
Kalamazoo, MI 49009  
April 1, 2003

Mr. Jeff Hall  
President  
Second To None Inc.  
3045 Miller Road  
Ann Arbor, MI 48103

Dear Mr. Hall:

Enclosed is the report that I was authorized exploring the possibilities of a telecommuter program and how it would best fit Second To None. Second To None can benefit from establishing a telecommuter program while providing a valuable work experience for its employees. To establish a telecommuter program, Second To None needs to:

- Develop a set of criteria for selecting possible telecommuter candidates.
- Begin the program before it is critical with a select pool of participants willing to assist in refining the program through feedback.
- Pilot the program with Quality Assurance people for the first trial period.
- Design the program to allow employees to work a 2 days home/ 3 days at the office work week in order to promote camaraderie among the coworkers and allow 2 people to share one work space.
- Thoroughly review the telecommuter contract with the employees so insure complete understanding of the agreement before beginning the telecommuter arrangement.

The information for this report came from online and print sources, as well as interviews with managers of various departments at Second To None. I especially value the guidance of Belinda Dulin in referring me to various sources and to the managers who took time from their busy schedules to meet with me.

Thank you for the opportunity to prepare this report and ability to do the research necessary for it. This internship is a wonderful opportunity for me and it is my sincerest wishes that this report furthers the growth and future of everyone at Second To None. If you have any questions about the material in this report, please contact me.

Sincerely,

Michael Postma

## Executive Summary

Telecommuting, or working from a remote location, is a very popular idea that has gained growing support from employees and companies over the past decade. The opportunity to stay home and do their work appeals to employees, and the ability to reduce overhead cost appeals to the company. Developing a program that outlines how this arrangement would take place is vital. Outlined are a few of the components that should be included in this type of arrangement.

First, the telecommuter situation will be on a trial basis for a predetermined amount of time. The company or the employee has the right to terminate this arrangement at anytime and the employee will be allowed to return back to the office.

Second, the employee will work at home for three days a week and be in the office for two. This will allow the telecommuters to stay in touch with the office environment while allowing two workers to effectively share the same space.

Third, the employee is responsible for furnishing his or her own equipment and furniture. This includes a computer, internet access, as well as a office space. Second To None needs to develop a set of guidelines as to what the employee must furnish as well as what an acceptable home office looks like. Employees unable to meet this standard will not be allowed to telecommute.

Fourth, Second To None will be able to support telecommuters through software and hardware upgrades within a few months. There are a few minor upgrades and overhauls that they are completing, and new time clock software would need to be purchased, but this could be done with relative ease.

Fifth, Second To None should be very selective in who they allow to participate in the program. A strict acceptance policy, based on company service time, formal discipline, and annual reviews is necessary. Employees not meeting the required standards will not be allowed to participate.

Finally, Second To None should begin a trial program with a few participants soon. This will allow everyone involved to work out the inevitable kinks in the program before it is opened up to the entire company. It will also allow time for error before the office building is full and there is a need to start telecommuting.

Second To None has positioned itself to be a leader in mystery shopping. Part of the company's philosophy is to foster company growth by "hiring great people, supporting them, and allowing them to give of their deepest selves." Instituting a telecommuter program is an excellent match to this philosophy and proves that Second To None will strive to maintain its status as an industry leader.

## **Introduction**

Many companies are looking for innovative ways to reduce overhead during times of brisk growth (Johnson, 2003). The lack of office space and resources can often hinder how rapidly these companies progress (Nilles, 1998). Telecommuting, or working from home on a computer, has been the answer to this problem for many companies (Gordon, 2001).

Telecommuting has arisen over the past decade as a very viable solution to solving this employer resource problem (Nilles, 1998). It has also been proven to increasing employee morale by allowing them to opportunity to work out of a home office (Solomon, 2000).

Second to None, Inc, a company of roughly 40 fulltime employees, is examining the possibility of allowing some its employees to telecommute. Jeff Hall, the founder and president of Second to None, has been approached by employees inquiring about the possibility of telecommuting.

“In our management meetings we had discussed telecommuting before, but we never pursued it seriously before because of the fear of the unknown,” said Hall. “We started to take a better look at telecommuting after we had filled up more than 80% of our office space after only two years. Our lease lasts for ten years.”

## **Purpose**

The purpose of this report is to research and recommend what type of telecommuter program would most effectively meet Second To None's needs.

## **Scope**

In this report, I will focus on three topics: what are issues that need to be addressed by a telecommuter program, who should begin working in the telecommuter program, and how to select teleworkers.

## **Assumptions**

My report is based on these assumptions:

1. Telecommuting is something that the company is interesting in pursuing and willing to experiment with.
2. There are employees working at Second To None willing to begin telecommuting.
3. Any employee who telecommutes will be treated in the same regard as any non-telecommuter that holds the same position.

## **Meatods**

For this report, I utilized many trade and business journals, academic reports, online journals, and interviewed some of the managers at Second to None.

## **Literature Review**

Many of the sources (e.g. Reilly, 1997; Solomon, 2000) cited in this research paper are articles written for business periodicals. I found these sources to be particularly useful because they related directly on how to put the idea of telecommuting into practice.

## *General*

The Gil Gordon website was very insightful. Gil Gordon is considered one of the grandfathers of telecommuting. His site has many articles and links to various other telecommuting topics. The generic form of the telecommuting



agreement was taken from this website and used with permission (Gordon, 2001).

Another resource that covered many aspects of telecommuting, but more in depth was *Managing Telework* (Nilles, 1998) This book has a managerial slant and is very helpful in tackling telecommuting from a personnel point of view. It details possible selection processes for telecommuting jobs as well as personalities. He tackles many problems that can arise with telework such as communication between coworkers, and technology independence, and how employees and managers and employees can recognize these. This source also provided much useful information on how constructing a home office.

### *Equipment*

Equipment issues are possibly the greatest challenge faced in telecommuting today. The Kensington Telecommuting Survey (1998) was administered by the Kensington Technology Group in an attempt to determine future trends in home-based technology. The study determined what equipment is most used by telecommuters, the average cost of home office equipment, and how much of the cost is covered by the employee.

Another concern each telecommuter faces is determining what method of connection they will use to log into the companies. A research article (Bumblis, 2001) provides information on each type of connection possible from a residence and the pros and cons of each. The article lists the availability, cost, and speed of each connection. This information, combined with the information provided by the Information Technology department assisted in the equipment section of this report.

Kraut (1989) examines the growing reliance that people are putting on telecommuting. He also describes the idea that as more people do information work, technology will allow work flexibility. This can be applied to the type of position, such as data processor or Scheduler that lends itself to telecommuting.

### *Human Resource*

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (2001) has issued a statement as to how the employer should treat a home office in regards to safety. It explains that OSHA does not require employers to inspect home offices, and all home offices are not subject to inspection by OSHA. Dr. Diane Hatch (2000) explains how to interpret this directive and how employers can comply. McGonegle (1996) explains how companies deal with inspecting these home offices to make sure they meet company expectations. The employers can issue a list of expectations that the employee must agree with. The employer can even choose to inspect each office.

Getting Results (1997) talks with Ken Radziwanowski, the manager at AT&T school of business in charge of transitioning employees from onsite workers to offsite workers. He cites one of the criteria a possible telecommuter must meet is the ability to provide an adequate working area. If they are not able to provide a separate room with the specific purpose of work, they are not allowed to participate in the program because adequate working area is a requirement for participating.

### *Selection*

The selection of a telecommuter is very important and extensive research has been done regarding this issue. Hamilton (1987) and Pynes (1997) detail the

various characteristics and personality traits that a telecommuter should possess. They believe that a telecommuter should have a high degree of competency in their job so they are able to be productive on their own (Hamilton, 1987).

This idea is supported by a study done of current telecommuters by Baruch and Nicholson (1997), which ask the respondents what the most important personal characteristic a person should possess if they want to telecommute. They responded that a telecommuter should be independent and assertive.

Reilly (1997) expresses the belief that telecommuters need to be independent individuals. They need to be able to handle issues by themselves and self motivated.

Hamilton (2001) declares that any possible telecommuter should be examined to make sure they have the necessary technological skills to assist themselves should a problem arise. These skills include ability to run all equipment necessary for the telecommuter's job, as well as the ability to follow troubleshooting problems over the phone.

A telecommuter should also have a have a sense of connection to the organization they are working for (Pynes, 1997). This is important so that an employee not working onsite still has a connection to the company they work for.

Finally, Rayasam (2001) documents some of the positive effects of telecommuting for employers discovered thus far such as increased productivity, decreased turnover, and decreased absenteeism. These statistics support the use of telecommuting for many companies.

In my research I found that the relative newness of telecommuting, combined with constantly changing technology makes it a difficult subject to study. There were many articles and books regarding the perceived pros and cons of telecommuting, but not many studies have been done. The technology changes so rapidly that a source older than about five years is obsolete. The managerial resources were very helpful. They were in depth and will enable me to make educated suggestions to Second to None about the feasibility of starting a telecommuter program.

### **Possible Issues**

Before beginning a teleworker program, it is important to look at the many needs, and possible problems that need to have policy decided on. This report does not contain an all-inclusive list of these issues as some of them may arise during the course of the initial trail. What follows is an overview of what issues do need to be decided on before beginning a program.

### **Equipment Issues**

In order for workers to telecommute, there are certain equipment issues that need to be addressed. The first issue is a list of actual equipment that the worker needs to do their job. While this list may differ for certain jobs, a general list includes a desk, chair, computer, printer, fax, phone, and office supplies. The average home office costs upwards of \$3,500 (Kensington, 1998).

There is no clear consensus on what the employees supply and what the workers supply for this home office. Some companies choose to pay for everything while others pay for nothing. According to one survey of teleworkers,

44% said that their employers didn't pay for essential tools; 29% said their employers didn't pay for any computer accessories (Kensington, 1998).

A good rule of thumb to follow is that if the company is paying for it, then it is for business use only (Solomon, 2000). This means that if Second To None supplies the computer and printer, then the employee is not allowed to use it for their or their family's personal use. This would apply to everything in their office that the company furnishes including data lines and office supplies.

Currently it is Second To None's policy that teleworkers furnish their own equipment. I believe that it is in this company's best interest to continue this policy. The amount of resources that would be required to supply teleworkers their equipment would overwhelm the company, and be a strain on it financially. The cost of purchasing new computers and hardware is significant, and the cost of maintaining and repairing these machines would be very high and require a separate IT technician solely for assisting telecommuters.

As long as telecommuting is an option that an employee chooses to participate in, and not a requirement for the position, then there is no valid argument as to why Second To None would be required to purchase equipment for teleworkers (Gordon, 2001).

### **Computer Requirements**

Any telecommuter would need the equipment necessary for their job to be available at their home work site. This includes furniture, electronic hardware and, computer software.

### **Hardware**

Informational Technologies team has provided a list of minimal requirements that a telecommuter's computer would need in order to function properly. A telecommuter needs to have a computer with Microsoft Windows 98 (or higher), Internet Explorer 6, Microsoft Outlook, and an Internet connection. According to the IT department, Macintosh's are currently much more difficult to use than PC's, so a PC would be needed. The use of Macintosh's could be explored in the near future.

### **Software**

As far as Second To None's software capabilities are concerned, the company is almost ready to start a telecommuter program at anytime. The software used in tracking the reports and scheduling shops has been changed into web-based software so it can track people logged into our system from anywhere.

There only few software issues that need to be worked out such as a web based time clock system and remote file storage, but these could easily taken care of with a few new software purchases that the IT department is looking into. These software purchases are already in the preliminary planning stages, and the upgrades could be accomplished within a few weeks, depending on the priority given to them.

The list of required programs a telecommuter's PC must posses includes Internet Explorer 6 (free), Microsoft Outlook 97, and Lucent Technologies CentreVu(R) IP Agent 1.1 for the phone system. The employees must also have some sort of virus protection (such as McAfee or Norton) on their PC, and this has been provided by Second To None in the past.

## **Phone system**

The current phone system at Second To None is made up of entirely digital phone lines. This allows any Second To None teleworker the ability to remotely access a voicemail box with any phone after Lucent Technologies CentreVu(R) IP Agent 1.1 has been installed on their PC. A telecommuter would then be able to access Second To None's system through their computer and our network, thereby ensuring our ability to govern the calls while enabling the employee to have the features of voice mail and call waiting, without the extra cost. They would not need a separate telephone line to access this, only their internet connection.

## **Internet Service Provider**

One of the IT department's main concerns companies have with telecommuting is the ability of the employee's computer to access and process information as quickly as a computer on site. Second to None has an internal Ethernet network capable, enabling each computer to transmit or receive up to 100 M/bs. The typical connection for a home computer using a cable modem is 256 K/bs, a dial up modem only around 52 K/bs (Bumbis, 2001). The internal Ethernet connection is then significantly faster, anywhere from 400 – 2000 times faster.

According to the IT department, the telecommuter's ISP could be any type of connection; the speed is not really a factor. While workers using a cable or DSL connection would notice a small difference in download speed, a dial up service would still service the worker's need without a large difference in the amount of work an employee would be able to do. This is because our servers do

all of the processing, not the remote computers, so there would be less downloading required.

### **Human Resource Issues**

The institution of a program like this requires the Human Resource department to examine any issues that might arise with such an agreement.

### **Hardware Responsibility**

One thing that does need to happen before telecommuting begins, is a meeting between the IT department and the HR department. They need to sit down and develop a set of guidelines on how to respond to certain technological problem scenarios. If an employee's computer gets a virus, what is the company's response? What if there is a hardware problem? What if they can't do work because their computer is broken or in the shop?

With clear policies in place before telecommuting begins, managers will know how to handle situations when they inevitably arise. This will also allow the employees to understand what their responsibilities are before beginning to telecommute so that they are not surprised and upset when they are held liable for a certain problem.

### **Agreement**

Second To None should prepare an agreement to be signed by the teleworker explaining every aspect of the telecommuter arrangement in detail. (Gordon, 2001) This arrangement would cover employee responsibilities, employer responsibilities, and guidelines for the teleworker arrangement. Human resources should take the time to carefully review the document with each



individual and answer any questions the employee may have before signing the agreement. An example of such an agreement can be found in Appendix A.

## **OSHA**

In November of 1999, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA, 2001) issued an interpretation letter detailing that employers would be held liable for the safety of employees in home offices. This meant that if an employee had an accident at home, it could leave the employer open to liability and litigation. This letter created immediate and forceful backlash and was viewed as a severe obstacle to overcome for the possibility of telecommuting (Hatch, 2000).

As a result of this immense pressure, OSHA has issued a new directive that reverses the organizations policy on home offices. The current position of OSHA on home offices is that employers are not required to inspect home offices. If an employee complains to OSHA about home office job safety violations, the agency will inform the complainant of this policy, but may still informally contact us (OSHA, 2000). Should this happen, the manager for the employee can discuss the employee's safety concerns and offer assistance.

## **Environment**

Second to None may want consider composing a list of guidelines that an employee must follow in establishing and maintaining their home work environment (Gordon, 2001). This would ensure that the employee is safe, has the proper equipment installed, and will be working in a setting free from domestic distractions such as a TV, children, and appliances.

Approving the environment may require a supervisor to review the work environment before the employee begins working to ensure a satisfactory work atmosphere. Some companies insist of seeing a teleworkers office, but most simply reserve the right to inspect the office (Nilles, 1998).

### **Selection issues**

Once the decision has been made to start a telecommuting program, it must be determined who will be allowed to participate. Certain jobs lend themselves to telecommuting better than others (Nilles, 1997). Personality of the individual employee is also important in determining their ability to telecommute effectively (Hamilton, 1987).

### **Quality Assurance**

The first question to ask when selecting telecommuters is what jobs lend themselves to telecommuting? Certain jobs are able to apply the concept of telecommuting better than others. One key is to look at the main tasks involved with a job. If the job involves data collection, talking on the phone, data entry, ect, this type of informational work is allowed more flexibility through technology (Kraut, 1989).

The management at Second To None has identified two positions, the Quality Assurance and Scheduler, as positions that would work well telecommuting. The Scheduler is a position that is almost entirely data entry with email and phone interviews. The Quality Assurance processor is position where the employee does strictly data entry. After conferring with the IT department, I recommend that we start telecommuting with the Quality Assurance team first. The reasons for this recommendation are as follows:

First, the Quality Assurance (QA) team does not require a company phone access. Currently the QA employees do not have phones at their desks, and have no need for one because they strictly enter information into a computer. Any phone calls necessary could be handled on the employee's personal phone or over the digitized phone network.

Second, the amount of mail system capacity and network access needed by a Quality Assurance employee is much smaller than that of the Scheduler. This would not put an unnecessary strain on our company's server.

Finally, the Quality Assurance position lends itself to monitoring productivity easily. The QA position has a general amount of reports that they should be able to process within a given day. If someone is not producing well, it will be very obvious in the quantity of their work. This will allow the management team to identify who is not working well with the telecommuter arrangement.

### **Criteria**

Second To None has many capable and qualified people who have expressed interest in telecommuting, and there is a chance that feelings may be hurt if they are not selected for the telecommuter program. A definitive list of qualifications needs to be drawn up so that Second To None has a legitimate way to make the selection process. Possible qualifications include:

#### *Minimum amount of service at Second To None*

The people selected to participate in the telecommuting program should have a defined length of time working here at Second To None so that they are familiar with the company, their jobs, and the people working with them. After a certain amount of time the employees are much more comfortable in their job,

and more self-sufficient (Hamilton, 1987). This makes them much more likely to be successful working away from the office. It also gives the manager enough time to build faith in the employee's work ability and establish a trusting relationship.

Another argument for a service criterion is to enable teleworker to foster personal relationships with people in the office before they begin working at home. Second To None is often described as a family atmosphere, but telecommuting can make it difficult to bond with fellow employees due to the lack of interpersonal interaction. By selecting employees that have been with the company for a while, there is a higher likelihood of good communication, which is vital to the success of a telecommuter (Pynes, 1997).

The idea of a company service criterion is not to be confused with seniority. If we select teleworker candidates based upon the basis of seniority, we may be forced to select someone who has the most seniority, but whose personality or work ethic may not fit the demands of the teleworker position.

### *Home Office Space*

A teleworker candidate needs to have a separate working area in their residence that they can commit solely to the purpose of working at home. Gordon (2001), a leading researcher on the subject of telecommuting, states that a separate working environment is essential to the success of a teleworker. "The office should be a separate, dedicated work area; away from distractions and (household) traffic," said Gordon. "There should be enough space for a desk, filing cabinets, and a chair, with enough room left over for the employee to feel comfortable."

The company can enforce this through a variety of ways. Some companies choose have the employees take photos of their work area. Others even send a manger to inspect the site (Nilles, 1997). I would recommend that Second to None use photos as documented evidence of what the office looks like.

### *Above Average Reviews*

A teleworker candidate should be someone who has already been doing excellent work for Second To None, going above and beyond what is normally expected of them. Telecommuting is a privilege, and should be treated as such, given to those who have earned it. Applicants should have above average reviews, especially in areas of "Work Knowledge", "Self Competency", and "Communication." The applicants should also have no disciplinary action in their file within the past 6 months and shown a marked and documented improvement on any disciplinary action within the past year. This will ensure that only the most dedicated and motivated employees are allowed to telecommute (Pynes, 1997).

This requirement is essential because it also protects Second To None legally against any formal complaints of discrimination. It means the company can prove that it is picking people based on excellence in previous reviews, not favoritism or discrimination.

### **Personality**

One of the hardest parts of implementing a telecommuter program is whom you select to participate in it. Choosing the wrong person can led to ineffectiveness on the employee's part, and often creates jealousy among coworkers. Ken Radziwanowski is the worldwide product and marketing manager

for AT&T's school of business and is in charge of a curriculum for managers making the transition to telecommuting (Getting Results, 1997). He recommends that a manager assess the following criteria when deciding on whom to select to telecommute.

*Can the person work independently?*

Telecommuters are typically self-motivated people who have the knowledge and ability to work offsite (Reilly, 1997). Someone who needs on hand holding or lacks the knowledge to work alone may not do well at home, and create a large burden upon their colleagues back in the office.

Current telecommuters in the UK were asked to identify personal characteristics important in a good telecommuter. Their top three responses were self-motivation (45%), ability to work alone (42%), and being organized (29%) (Baruch and Nicholson, 1997).

*Can the employee construct a productive home environment?*

How well can the telecommuter establish a working area for himself or herself? This includes a workspace adequate to meet the employee's needs and free from distractions. Many employers require their employees to have adequate physical space for a home office, as well as dependent care arrangements for children (McGonegle, 1996). Many women desire to Telework because of the rising costs of daycare (Johnson, 2003). Unfortunately these women often discover that attempting to take care of children while still working fulltime from a home office is not a feasible expectation.

*Does the employee have adequate computer skills?*

Telecommuters must be able to use the software and hardware required to effectively connect to the company's server. A telecommuter should have an average or higher degree of technological competence. (Hamilton, 2001) many telecommuters have to solve small technical problems when they arise on their own. If necessary, the employee will still be able to contact the Network Administrator for assistance, but must be able to follow over-the-phone instructions for troubleshooting.

### **Conclusion**

There were a few limitation to my study. I was unable to talk with any of our non-managerial employees about their ideas on a possible telecommuter program due to the sensitivity and confidentiality of the report. This did not allow me the opportunity to gather their views, concerns, and desires on a possible program.

Another issue I faced was the inability to assist with implementing the telecommuter program. My internship lasted for only four months, so I was unable to see if the program has worked.

There have been many proven benefits on telecommuting and the statistics are encouraging. The International Telework Association and Council (ITAC) has found that Telecommuting reduces turnover by an average of 20%, boosts productivity by 22%, and trims absenteeism by around 60%. (Davis, 2001).

The trend really benefits small and medium sized businesses, according to Ray Boggs, an analyst at International Data Corp. "It's the small and medium-sized firms that are really taking advantage of it," said Boggs (Getting Results,

1997). "One (of the reasons) is that, unlike larger companies, these smaller firms can't always afford the real estate. If they can use their worker's home, that problem is solved."

The key to making telecommuting work is a commitment from the employee as well as the manager to put their best efforts forward in making the arrangement work. With good communication and a little patience, telecommuting can be a profitable situation for the employee as well as the company. I believe that if Second To None puts a positive effort into making this arrangement work, telecommuting can become a reality at Second To None.



## References

- AT&T trains managers to supervise telecommuters. (1997, Jan). *Getting Results*, 42(1), 12.
- Baruch, Y., & Nicholson, B. (1997). Home sweet work: Requirement for effective home working. *Journal of General Management*, 23(2), 15-30.
- Bumblis, J. (2001). Public Communications Infrastructure Support for Telecommuting. *Telecommuting and Virtual Offices: Issues and Opportunities*. New York: Macmillan
- Gordon, G. (2002). A telecommuting agreement. Available:www.gilgordon.com
- Hamilton, C. (1987). Telecommuting. *Personnel Journal*, 2, 91-101.
- Hatch, D. (2000, May). OSHA policy exempts home offices from inspections. *Workforce*, 79, p. 114.
- Kensington Technologies Group. (1998). *Kensington Telecommuting Survey*. San Mateo California.
- Kraut, Robert E. (1989). Telecommuting: The trade-offs of home work. *Journal of Communication*, 39(3), 19-47.
- Mconege, K. (1996). Taking work offsite: AEGON's telecommuting program. *Employment Relations Today*, 23(1), 25-38.
- Nilles, Jack. (1998). *Managing telework*. New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc.
- Occupational Safety and Health Administration (2000, Feb 28). *OSHA Directive on Home-Based Worksites*. Washington,CD: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Pynes, J.E. (1997). *Human Resources management for public and nonprofit organization*. San Francisco:Jossey-Bass.
- Rayasam, R. (2001, August 1). Telecommuting is a flop so fix it already - Five ways to make it work for your business. *Ziff Davis Smart Business for the New Economy*, p. 64.
- Reilly, E.M. (1997). Telecommuting: Putting policy into practice. *HRFocus*, 74(9), 5-7.
- Solomon, C. (2000, May). Don't forget your telecommuters. *Workforce*, 79, 56.

## Appendix A

### Second To None Telecommuter's Agreement

The purpose of this agreement is to clarify some of the issues involved in a telecommuting program sponsored by Second To None for some of its employees. Because telecommuting is a relatively new way of working, some of the standard policies and procedures we have in place to cover work in the office may not apply, or have to be changed. Also, if there are new conditions that arise that were never intended to be covered by Second To None policies.

Please read this carefully and discuss it with your manager or your Human Resources representative if you have questions, and also, perhaps, with your spouse if applicable.

---

1. The telecommuting program at Second To None is an experiment to see how well the work-at-home concept works for your department and its employees. We expect to continue with telecommuting as long as we believe the results are satisfactory, and there is no definite ending date set at this time. However, we expect the pilot program to last approximately three months.

2. As a telecommuter you are volunteering for this program based on having been given thorough information about the program and the pros and cons of telecommuting. You, like Second To None, have every reason to believe it will work out. However, if you find that telecommuting is not to your liking and want to return to your office work location you can do so by notifying your manager.

Those who are selected as telecommuters are being asked to commit to a minimum trial period of three months. We believe this is the least amount of time needed for everyone to learn how well telecommuting works. If, however, you or your manager find that there are serious personal or work problems arising before three months are up, you certainly will be able to return to your job full-time in the office sooner.

3. While we expect this program to continue, it is possible that it may be terminated at the discretion of Second To None management. If it is terminated, you will be asked to return to your job at your office location. Also, if your work performance suffers and your manager decides it will be in your best long-term interest to return to the office full-time, you will be expected to return to the office. If you choose not to return on the expected date, this will be considered to be a voluntary resignation and will be treated as such under our standard policies.

4. Telecommuting is not an employee benefit intended to be available to your entire department or to other departments at this time. As such, no Second To None employee is entitled to, or guaranteed the opportunity to, telecommute.
5. Your salary, job responsibilities, and benefits will not change because of your involvement in the program, except as they might have changed had you stayed in the office full-time, e.g., regular salary reviews will occur as scheduled, and you will be entitled to any company-wide benefits changes that may be implemented. You agree to comply with all existing job requirements as now are in effect in the office.
6. Your total number of work hours are not expected to change during the program, and you will be responsible for providing information for the weekly time sheet according to standard Second To None policy. In the event that you expect to work more than the standard number of hours, this must be discussed and approved in advance by your manager, just as any overtime scheduling would normally have to be approved.
7. Your daily work schedule for the days when you are working at home is subject to negotiation with and approval by your manager. If your job duties allow it and your manager feels a change would not impair your ability to be in contact with co-workers, you are free to vary your hours to suit your preference. Your manager may require that you work certain "core hours" and to be accessible by telephone during those hours.
8. We are planning to work towards a goal of three days per week at home for all telecommuters. We will begin with one day a week for the first month and will then increase it depending on your willingness and your manager's assessment of the quality of your work and the type of supervision you need.
9. There may be times when you will be requested to come into the office on a day that you might have planned to spend at home. Second To None and your manager will try to minimize these unplanned office visits, but we ask that you recognize the need for them and agree to come in when requested. Similarly, there may be weeks when you have to spend more time than planned (up to the full five days) in the office when the nature of the workload requires it. It will be your responsibility to come into the office as requested during these times.
10. You are responsible for providing the necessary computer, modem, software, internet connection, and other equipment needed for you to do your job. You will still have access to the STN servers, however you must provide your own internet connection. You will also be allowed to access the STN phone system and voice mail over your current phone line.

11. Office supplies as needed will be provided by Second To None; your out-of-pocket expenses for other supplies will not be reimbursed unless by prior approval of your manager. Also, Second To None will not reimburse you for travel expenses to and from the office on days when you come into the office, nor for any home-related expenses such as construction, renovations, heating/air conditioning, lighting, or electricity.

12. Any equipment or supplies provided by Second To None is provided primarily for use on Second To None assignments. However, you can use these items for reasonable personal purposes as long as these do not create any conflict of interest with your job. No other person, including household members, shall use this equipment and software. Second To None owned software may not be duplicated except as formally authorized.

13. The security of company property in your home is as important as it is in the office. You are expected to take reasonable precautions to protect the equipment from theft, damage, or misuse. You are required to contact your homeowner's insurance carrier to determine to what extent this property is covered under your homeowner's policy. If any Second To None property is NOT covered, you agree to notify your manager and, if requested, take out additional coverage at Second To None's expense to cover the property.

14. Any Second To None materials taken home should be kept in your designated work area at home and not be made accessible to others. In no case will you take proprietary or confidential materials home except with the approval of your manager.

15. Second To None is interested in your health and safety while working at home just as it is while you work in the office. For this reason, you are required to maintain a separate, designated work area at home. Second To None has the right to visit your home work area to see if it meets company safety standards; such visits will be scheduled with at least 24 hours' advance notice.

16. Any equipment provided should be placed where it is adequately supported and there is no danger of it falling. It should be connected to a properly grounded electrical outlet and all wires kept out of walkways. If you have any questions about the adequacy/safety of your home work area, Second To None will help you in this regard.

17. Second To None will be responsible for any work-related injuries under our state's Workers Compensation laws, but this liability is limited to injuries resulting directly from your work and only if the injury occurs in your designated work area. Any claims will be handled according to the normal procedure for Worker's Compensation claims.

18. Telecommuting is not to be viewed as a substitute for dependent care. Second To None expects that you will make arrangements for someone to care for your children or other dependents (if applicable) if needed. The company recognizes that one advantage of working at home is the opportunity to have more time with dependents, but it is your responsibility to insure that you are fully able to complete your work assignments on time.

19. It will be your responsibility to determine any income tax implications of maintaining a home office area. Second To None will not provide tax guidance nor will the company assume any additional tax liabilities. You are encouraged to consult with a qualified tax professional to discuss income tax implications.

---

I have read and understand this agreement and accept its conditions.

Employee Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Second To None Representative Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_