Courseware for Telework Training

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Introduction to Telework
Telework means »applying information and communications technologies (ICTs) to enable work to be done at a distance from the place where the work results are needed or where the work would conventionally have been done«[1]. This implies a changing of the accepted geography of work.

The concept of telework, or telecommuting as used in the USA, has been introduced by Jack Nilles, a US researcher, who in 1973 worked on the first documented pilot project in this area for an insurance company[5]. His idea of telework was to move the workplace closer to the worker and therefore to avoid or at least reduce the worker’s displacement.

A recent advance in telecommunication facilities and an increasing number of available computers has fostered an evolution in the telework concept. Actually, there are three different modes of performing telework:
- working at home,
- working at a mobile station
- working at telecenters.

Telecenters are workplaces equipped with all necessary hardware, software, communication and office facilities to be used by teleworkers of several companies. In the near future, telecenters might create a considerable number of new jobs and companies as well as individuals may benefit tremendously from them.

The chances given by a carefully implemented telework scenario are:
- The worker has more flexibility and less commuting stress, the quality of life will be increased due to the better balance between job and private life.
- Reduced commuting means less pollution and traffic jams and gives us the resulting environmental benefits.
- Less workplaces at the company means a reduction of costs and a better usage of office space.
- Telework could help the development of fringe regions and stop large numbers of workers migrating to the metropolitan centers hoping to find work.

One of the big challenges of introducing telework is posed by the overall objection of companies and workers to accept labor arrangements for teleworking. The most important obstacles can normally be observed in the companies. The fear to manage new paradigms arises from the fact that the worker is far away and it is therefore difficult to control his or her work and productivity. The skepticism felt by the worker is mainly based on the supposed loss of social contacts that he might face if he does not work at a traditional workplace.

However, we think the major difficulty in establishing telework scenarios and policies is the level of people’s (potential teleworker’s) knowledge and aptitude to use ICTs. This means that an intensive teaching and training of concepts, technology, solutions, advantages, disadvantages, integration strategies, etc. along with live demonstrations, must take place prior to the development of any actual teleworking scenarios.

Training on Telework Technologies
Accordingly, the establishment of specific initial teaching and training on the subject is a fundamen-
tal aspect which has to be consid-
ered if teleworking policies are to
be implemented. This is even
more important in regions where
contact with information technol-
gy is low or non-existent.
This process can be substantially
improved by using specific multi-
media courseware that helps to
increase the acceptance and effi-
ciency both of the company and
the worker.
A computer-based course using
rich multimedia elements permits
to explore the expressiveness of
information up to its limits, allow-
ing a higher degree of interactivi-
ty with the course contents.

CCG is currently developing an
interactive course on telework
issues, focusing especially on tech-
ology, solutions, strategies and
recommendations for its integra-
tion in daily life. This follows a
growing demand coming from
companies that start to see tele-
work and the ICTs as valuable
tools for cutting costs and improv-
ing their organization and work
processes. Thus, the target audi-
ence of this course are IT profes-
sionals and SMEs.

To achieve these goals the
course employs multimedia tech-
nologies for a better explanation
of the subjects, combining text
elements, pictures, animations,
video and sound to intensify the
acquired knowledge. Moreover, it
allows a higher degree of interac-
tivity which leads to an improved
understanding of the different
concepts presented in the course.
The trainee will be able to assess
his learning progress all by him-
self at the end of each unit.
The course also includes online
tests and demonstrations, in
which learners may start applica-
tions and tools (e.g. e-mail, video-
conferencing, etc.), allowing them
to access small practical ICT exam-
pies. Also, an essential component
of the course materials empha-
sizes social and, even, potential
familiar problems associated with
telework. Advice on how to solve
or avoid these problems are
described in detail.
The main structure of the course
is a set of modules covering the
following subjects:
- Historical introduction.
- Telework definition.
- Essential Enabling Technolo-
gies.
- Supporting tools.
- Main Benefits and Drawbacks.
- Advice
- Limitations.
- Security aspects.
- Strategy for Integration

A public version of the course will
be available by winter 1999.

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