

Remote Connections

2017 The Year of the Remote Employee

HIGHLIGHTS

- In 2017, 3.9 million U.S. workers, or 2.9 percent of the total U.S. workforce, worked from home at least half of the time.
- The 2017 number is up 115 percent from 2005, when 1.8 million employees worked remotely.
- The average telecommuter is 46 years of age or older, has at least a bachelor's degree, and earns a higher median salary than an in-office worker.
- Remote workers are gender neutral, with roughly the same population of women and men.
- Working remotely is most common among baby boomers.
- In more than half of the top U.S. metro areas, telecommuting exceeds public transportation as the commute option of choice.

Source: The 2017 State of Telecommuting in the U.S. Employee Workforce Report; produced in June 2017 by Flexjobs & Global Workplace Analytics

WORKING SOMEWHERE OTHER THAN THE OFFICE ISN'T A FAD. AND IT JUST MIGHT BE THE RECRUITMENT TOOL INSURERS IN RURAL LOCATIONS NEED TO SUCCEED.

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In the early 2000s, allowing an employee to work outside the office on a regular basis was a foreign concept to most employers. It happened, but only rarely and usually because of unusual life circumstances that required special treatment. Today, having employees who work remotely is not only a routine part of the business environment, it's also become an increasingly important factor for recruitment, as insurance companies focus on attracting new talent to the industry.

That's especially true for small and midsize insurers, many of which are based outside of major metropolitan areas. **Marie Jewett**, president and CEO of **Co-operative Insurance Companies**, says about 30 percent of Co-Operative's more than 80 employees work remotely on a full-time or part-time basis. Given the company's location in Middlebury, Vermont, Jewett believes offering the remote option is important.

"I think for us it's the reality of limited workforce options in our area," she says, "and if you're looking for the best hire, you're very likely to not find someone who lives within twenty-five miles of us. So, if we're serious about enhancing or attracting and gaining quality employees, we have to be open to where they live. And if they're not interested in relocating, then can we make it work."

Ultimately, though, Jewett says it comes down to the individual and to having a well-defined set of guidelines and parameters for remote workers that determine success.

"It has to be a good employee; we wouldn't allow someone who's on a performance improvement plan to work from home," she explains. "They've got to have a good work ethic and performance. We do have a contract with each individual that states what we've agreed to. It also says that it could change at any time and that there may be instances where we require people to be in-house for meetings or different things that are going on."