

# ***MANAGING REMOTE TEAMS***



**INSTRUCTOR GUIDE**

**½ DAY COURSE**

**HRDQ<sup>®</sup>**

***MANAGING REMOTE TEAMS***

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Phone: (800) 633-4533  
Fax: (800) 633-3683  
Web: [www.HRDQ.com](http://www.HRDQ.com)

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# Instructional design and learning philosophy

We are committed to providing the best core skills content possible for Instructor-Led Training (ILT). The following principles are applied in the development of programs:

## Sound Instructional Design

All course content is developed using a variety of research techniques. These include:

- Brainstorming sessions with target audience
- Library research
- Online research
- Customer research (focus groups, surveys, etc.)
- Subject Matter Experts (SME)
- Interviews with trainers

Expert instructional designers create imaginative and innovative solutions for your training needs through the development of powerful instructional elements. These include:

- Learning objectives — effective tools for managing, monitoring and evaluating training
- Meaningfulness — connects the topic to the students' past, present and future
- Appropriate organization of essential ideas — helps students focus on what they need to know in order to learn
- Modeling techniques — demonstrate to students how to act and solve problems
- Active application — the cornerstone to learning — helps students immediately apply what they have learned to a real-life situation
- Consistency — creates consistent instructions and design to help students learn and retain new information
- Accelerated learning techniques — create interactive, hands-on involvement to accommodate different learning styles

## Application of Adult Learning Styles

Adults learn best by incorporating their personal experiences with training and by applying what they learn to real-life situations. Our experienced instructional designers incorporate a variety of accelerated learning techniques, role-plays, simulations, discussions and lectures within each course. This ensures that the learning will appeal to all learning styles and will be retained.

## Course timing

### Module One: Today's Reality

Type of Activity	Segment	Time
	Reality of remote supervision	15
	Benefits and challenges of remote supervision	10
	Why is it difficult to manage remote teams?	10
	Sample telecommuter agreement	10



Reading



Written Exercise



Facilitate



Group Activity

### Module Two: Organizing Your Team

Type of Activity	Segment	Time
	Where are you now?	10
	Getting off on the right foot	10
	Creating a team charter	15

# Course timing

## Module Three: Virtual Management



Reading



Written Exercise



Facilitate



Group Activity

Type of Activity	Segment	Time
	Developing and maintaining trust	10
	Dealing with perceived loss of control	5
	Proactive coaching	15
	Results-oriented management	10
	Long-distance team building	15
	Long-distance celebrations	5

# Course timing

## Module Four: The Digital Workplace

Type of Activity	Segment	Time
	Making the most of conference calls	10
	Web meetings and e-mail	10
	Using "teamware" to boost productivity	10
	Intranet applications	10



Reading



Written Exercise



Facilitate



Group Activity

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## Course objectives

Successful completion of this course will increase your knowledge and your ability to:

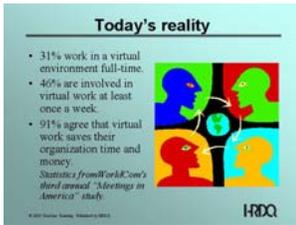
- Recognize the benefits and challenges of remote supervision
- Monitor legal and safety issues for telecommuters
- Assess the traits and habits that contribute to success
- Acclimate new employees to the team successfully
- Develop expectations for communications and meetings
- Develop and maintain trust
- Avoid the tendency to micromanage
- Engage in proactive coaching
- Implement a results-oriented management style
- Conduct conference calls effectively
- Choose appropriate collaborative software
- Establish Intranets to facilitate knowledge sharing
- Hold long-distance celebrations



# ModuleOne



***TODAY'S REALITY***



Welcome the group, introduce yourself, cover the logistics and program objectives.

**Activity:** Because this is essentially a new team that will exist for half a day, conduct your favorite ice-breaker activity.

What is remote supervision?  
Managing teams across space, time, and organizational boundaries.

There are two aspects that contribute to the reality of remote supervision:  
Telecommuters and geographically distributed employees.

Statistics regarding Telecommuters are from a survey conducted by the International Telecommute Association and Council (ITAC) in 2001.

For another perspective, consider this quote from Jessica Lipnack, coauthor of *Virtual Teams*: "MIT's Tom Allen has been doing research for more than 20 years. Data indicate that when people are more than 50 feet apart, their likelihood of collaborating more than once a week is less than 10%. **Point:** You don't even have to be in two different offices to need a remote management mind-set."

## Reality of remote supervision

### Telecommuting

Twenty-eight million, or 1 in 5 employees in the United States, engage in some form of Telecommuting.

- at home
- on the road
- in satellite offices

The typical Telecommuter works at least one day per week away from the office.

### Geographically distributed employees

- Multinational offices spanning the globe
- Expertise located at another office
- Joint ventures with other organizations
- Cheaper development cost in Third World countries
- Subcontract or outsource part or all of a project
- One physical location is not enough to contain all staff

# Benefits and challenges of remote supervision

## Benefits

- Increased productivity
- Lower overhead costs
- Increased job satisfaction
  - Greater balance of work and non-work life
  - Greater commitment to their organization
- Less pollution and traffic congestion (for Telecommuters)

## Challenges

- Resistance to managing by results, rather than “line of sight management”
- Over-reliance on or resistance to new technologies that facilitate remote supervision
- Consistent use of data security measures and procedures
- Equitable selection of workers who participate in remote management—as supervisors or team members
- The need to share information and establish best practices regarding the challenges, trends, and applications of remote supervision

Benefits on this page are from the ITAC survey previously cited. Among the reasons given for increased job satisfaction are an improved ability to concentrate, access to high-speed connections and a better balance between work and family responsibilities. Other benefits (not documented in the survey but reported anecdotally) include less stress, less commuting pressure, reduced absenteeism caused by day-to-day personal needs, improved ability to recruit and retain workers and improved management abilities due to management by results rather than line-of-sight management.

### Challenges:

Overcoming myths such as: “Out of sight means out of control!”

Make certain you provide necessary technical training and support, but realize technology isn't the main issue. Quote from Lipnack/Stamps (authors of *Virtual Teams*): “People confuse virtual teams with technology. It's 90% people and 10% technology. Some of the best virtual teams use very little technology. E-mail serves the purpose for many efforts.”

Beware of EEOC exposure when choosing who will participate—especially Telecommuters; that's usually a risk issue in informal programs.

Provide examples of successful and unsuccessful experiences with remote supervision.

Technology adoration: E-mail, chat rooms and desktop conferencing are tools that make effective teams better—but they can't fix a team that is flawed in the first place.

Big picture versus detailed perspectives: When multiple sites are involved in a project, there is usually someone in charge of the overall project. However, seemingly unrelated problems reported separately at each site may actually be connected, and managers often lack information to link the issues.

Tracking costs: Costs incurred at individual locations may not be attributed to the project until total project costs have escalated, or perhaps never, leaving inaccurate information about the actual project cost.

Discovering the sources of problems: Finding the true source of a problem is always difficult; with geographically dispersed teams it's just that much more difficult. For example, a software bug could be created by merging software from two places incorrectly, not because of something wrong with the code itself.

What this all comes down to in one word is "communication."

## Why is it difficult to manage remote teams?

### Problems shared by remote teams

- Technology adoration
- Balancing big picture and detailed perspectives
- Tracking costs
- Discovering the real sources of problems

### Problems common to any team

- False consensus
- Underground conflict
- Closure avoidance
- Calcified team meetings
- Uneven participation
- Lack of accountability
- Forgetting the customer

# Special issues for telecommuters

## Legal and safety issues

- Worker's compensation
- Automobile insurance
- Equipment insurance
- Liability insurance
- State and local income taxes
- Home business deductions
- Mileage reimbursement and other work-related expenses
- Software licensing
- Regulatory compliance (e.g., OSHA, ADA)

## Crafting an effective agreement

- Equipment ownership
- Availability on-site
- Job assignment versus entitlement



Legal and safety issues: Participants should consult their own legal counsel. However, a couple of items are discussed in the trainer notes on the next page.

Crafting an effective agreement: Components typically include the following information:

Equipment provided by the company for use at home remains the property of the company and must be returned in case of separation or termination. Upon request, telecommuters must come into the office for meetings or other purposes - and the manager has the right to end the telecommuting arrangement if the employee's work falls below acceptable levels. Telecommuting is a job assignment, not a benefit or entitlement. No one is guaranteed the opportunity to become or continue working as a telecommuter.

**Insurance issues:** Who provides insurance; whether the employee's or the employer's insurance covers remote worksite equipment for damage, accidents or theft; and whose coverage applies to injuries an employee suffers at the remote worksite or liability to third parties arising from a Telecommuter's acts. It's a good idea to check coverage issues with the employer's personal property, general liability and worker's compensation insurance carriers, as well as with each Telecommuter's homeowner's insurance carrier. It may be possible to have the employer added as an additional insured on employees' homeowner's policies when the employer installs expensive equipment in the employees' homes.

**Equipment and services:** What equipment (computer, printer, phone, furniture) and services (phone, data transmission) employees need at remote worksites; and who pays for each item or service.

**Maintenance, repairs and supplies:** Who provides and pays for maintenance, repairs, upgrades, and supplies.

**Access and security:** The employer's right to monitor communications involving its customers and other employees; how the employer can review and retrieve any data, program, or other information stored on any of its computers or other equipment at the remote worksite; and how to safeguard proprietary information or products an employee accesses from outside the central workplace or develops at a remote worksite.

## Sample telecommuter agreement

*This agreement was developed by Gil Gordon Associates. For more information on telecommuting, visit [www.gilgordon.com](http://www.gilgordon.com). You are encouraged to consult with a qualified professional to adapt this generic agreement for your own use.*

The purpose of this agreement is to clarify some of the issues involved in a telecommuting program sponsored by Company XYZ 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, there are new conditions that arise that were never intended to be covered by Company XYZ 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 Company XYZ is an experiment to see how well the work-at-home concept works for the ABC 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 six 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 Company XYZ, 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 Company XYZ 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 the entire ABC department or to other departments at this time. As such, no Company XYZ 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 Company XYZ 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 coworkers, you are free to vary your hours to suit your preference. Your manager may require that you work certain "core hours" and are accessible by telephone during those hours.
8. We are planning to work toward 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. Company XYZ 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. Company XYZ will provide the necessary computer, modem, software and other equipment needed for you to do your job. All of these items remain the property of Company XYZ and must be returned to Company XYZ upon request, in case of an extended illness, upon your resignation or termination, or if the program ends. When they are to be returned, you agree to return them yourself or to allow Company XYZ to arrange to pick them up from your home.
11. Company XYZ will reimburse you for the cost of installation and monthly service on a telephone line to be installed for your use during the program. This is considered to be for Company XYZ purposes only and not for personal use. Company XYZ will reimburse you for all Company XYZ-related business use of this telephone line when you submit a reimbursement request. It will be your responsibility to insure that no one else has access to the phone.
12. Office supplies as needed will be provided by Company XYZ; your out-of-pocket expenses for other supplies will not be reimbursed unless by prior approval of your

ADA compliance: The main issue is whether or not telecommuting should be offered to disabled employees as a reasonable accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act ("ADA"). Several cases resulted in ruling against allowing telecommuting; however, the court emphasized that it based its decision on the specifics of the plaintiff's disability and job duties and not on any presumption against telecommuting as a reasonable accommodation. So it's reasonable to assume that disabled employees who can no longer perform their in-office jobs should be allowed to telecommute if they can perform the essential functions of the telecommuting job.

manager. Also, Company XYZ 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.

13. The computer, modem, software and any other equipment or supplies provided by Company XYZ are provided primarily for use on Company XYZ 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. The equipment and software should not be used by other household members or anyone else. Company XYZ-owned software may not be duplicated except as formally authorized.

14. 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 the Company XYZ property is NOT covered, you agree to notify your manager and, if requested, take out additional coverage at Company XYZ's expense to cover the property.

15. Any Company XYZ 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.

16. Company XYZ 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. Company XYZ 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. 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, Company XYZ will help you in this regard.

17. Company XYZ will be responsible for any work-related injuries under our state's Worker's 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. Company XYZ 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. Company XYZ 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 \_\_\_\_\_

COMPANY XYZ REPRESENTATIVE  
SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

