

Background

*Remote working

Do you dream of never having to make that long journey to work again? In today's business world laptop computers, mobile phones, and VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) technology means more and more companies are *encouraging their employees to work at home. Remote working or tele-working has many benefits for businesses and employees. Companies save money on *premises and *bills and see increasing *productivity; while workers see reduced stress levels because they no longer have to travel to work and can spend more time with their families. But as with everything there are two sides to the story. We spoke to two people who have tried working from home with mixed success.

Simon Smith

Two years ago my company decided to start a remote working scheme and it was an immediate success. The first week was difficult – I found it difficult to **get down to** work with family and television **putting me off**, but once I got into a routine it was fine. In fact, I noticed straight away I got more done. On the days I was working from home I would **get up** at the same time as when I was going to work, but instead of spending time on the train I was getting onto the system and **getting things done**. On the days I did go into work for meetings I would **look forward to** it. Work became more of a social place – a chance to **catch up with** colleagues. I

even found managing my staff easier – employees were set clearer targets so it was simple to monitor them and believe it or not their *absenteeism has reduced too. Before the remote system was introduced, I was leaving the house before eight in the morning and getting home after eight at night. My children were **growing up** without me. Now I can still get all my work done, but be a family man too.

Christine Carter

Our remote working system came in a year ago and I hate it so much I am now looking for a new job. The company moved to smaller premises to save money and this means that we have to *take it in turns to come into the office. I come in on Wednesdays and Thursdays. I have to share a desk with two other people, which means I can never find anything and there are always dirty cups on my desk. Work has become less personal – it's not my office, it's just an office. Also my husband and my boss don't know where the *boundaries are. My husband thinks because I'm at home all day I can do the housework and the cooking. He doesn't seem to understand I am still working even if I am not going to work. And my boss phones me at all hours. Whether it's 7.00 a.m. or 9.00 p.m. she still expects me to **turn on** the laptop and **deal with** a problem. She thinks because I work from home I am always at work. I really hope I get a new job soon, I don't want my home to be my office, I want it to be a place where I can **switch off** and relax.

Glossary

**absenteeism* = being frequently away from work or school, especially without good reason

**bills* = pieces of paper telling you how much you have to pay for services or products you have bought

**boundaries* = a real or imagined line that shows the edge or limit of something

**encourage* = to make someone more likely to do something

**premises* = the land or buildings used by an organization

**productivity* = the rate at which work is done

**remote working* = when people do their work at home using a computer that is connected to their company's computer system

**take it in turns* = when people do the same thing, but not at the same time – they do it one after the other

Exercises

1 Work with a partner and discuss these questions.

- 1 Do you like working in an office?
- 2 Would you prefer to work from home?
- 3 What are the advantages and disadvantages for a company if their employees work from home?

2 Read the first paragraph of the text. Compare your answers to question 3 in 1 to the information in the text.

3 Student A you are going to read about Simon Smith. Student B, you are going to read about Christine Carter. Read your section of the text. Then tell your partner if the person enjoys remote working or not.

4 Read the text again and answer these questions in your own words.

- 1 Why was the first week difficult for Steve?
- 2 How did not needing to travel by train make a difference?
- 3 Why doesn't Christine like her office?
- 4 Why does she criticize her husband and her boss?

5 Match the phrasal verbs in bold in the text to definitions 1–10.

- 1 to get out of bed: _____
- 2 to develop into an adult: _____
- 3 to begin; to make a start: _____
- 4 to solve a problem, perform a task: _____
- 5 to start the flow of electricity, gas, water, by moving a switch, button, etc. : _____
- 6 to take someone's attention away from what they should be doing: _____
- 7 to work on and finish a task or tasks: _____
- 8 to feel excited about something that is going to happen: _____
- 9 to talk about and find out about other people's latest news: _____
- 10 to stop thinking about something or paying attention to something: _____

6 Work with a partner. Make a new sentence for each of the phrasal verbs in 5.

7 Look back at the text and choose three words that you could use in your day-to-day work.

8 Work with a partner and discuss these questions.

- 1 Is your opinion about remote working more similar to Simon or to Christine? Why?
- 2 Do a lot of people in your country work from home? Why? / Why not? Will this change in the future?