

7 Strategies to Reduce Your Company's Travel

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We can all admit that traffic in Austin is not getting any better. Many Austinites now spend 2-3 weeks of their life in the car going to and from work every single year. Traveling less is one of the best things you can do to improve your health, save money and conserve resources! There are more than 650,000 people getting to work each day just in Austin. Just imagine the improvement in traffic if all of these people used one of these options just one day per week! Almost all companies can do that!

1. How do your personnel travel to work?

The first step to creating a trip reduction plan is to look at how you travel. Distribute a commuter survey to your employees and find out how they get to work. Via bus, bike, or car? What parts of the city are they commuting from, and do they drive alone or with others? The answers to these questions will help you determine which trip reduction strategies will be most effective for your team.

2. Public Transit

Encourage employees to take public transit instead of driving to work if available in your location. Find out which buses and trains drop off close to your offices, provide links to trip planners, and pass out public transit maps to make it easy for employees to plan commutes on public transit. Many transit authorities offer bus passes for companies to purchase in bulk at discounted rates. You can give these to your employees for free or at a reduced price.

3. Carpools and Vanpools

Once you review your commuter survey results and determine what areas of town people are commuting from, you'll be able to help arrange carpools for employees who live close to one another. You can create an online forum for employees on your company's intranet that will help them coordinate with one another and share rides. Local transit agencies may also offer vans for daily use by large groups of employees at low or no cost to your company.

4. Rideshares and Bikeshares

Carshare programs like Car2go and Zipcar can be helpful for companies with multiple offices in a single city. These programs have fleets of cars that are quickly accessible for people to grab and go for short distance trips. They're ideal for employees who make frequent trips between offices. You can also join a local bike share program or buy a fleet of bicycles for your employees to use for short trips during the day.

5. Walk, bike, or run. Exercise your way to work!

Promote commuting to work through physical activity! Employees who live in close proximity to work can avoid driving altogether by exercising their way to work. Tout the health benefits of cycling and walking and even how commuting this way will help save people time. You can set up bike racks, install showers, and provide lockers to employees who walk or bike to work. After exercise, no one wants to start their day at the office without first freshening up!

6. Cash out

Create incentives for your employees to take alternative commutes by offering a "cash-out" option. In a cash-out program, your company provides a monthly stipend to employees who commit to taking public transit, carpooling, biking, and other forms of alternative transportation. These programs allow employees to "cash-out" on their parking spaces and are a great way to motivate people to drive less.

7. Mobile Work

Thanks to advances in technology and communications, most jobs today can be done remotely part or full-time and don't require workers to be physically present in an office every single day of the week. Take advantage of this, and start a Mobile Work program at your company that allows employees to work from home. It is one of the most effective ways to reduce your travel footprint. Plus, it can provide your company great real-estate savings, because you won't need to pay as much to office employees. Don't let employees start working from home without proper training! Both managers and employees need to learn what to expect and how to make mobile work arrangements succeed before heading home.

*Does your company need help creating an alternative commute plan or starting a work from home program? Thrival School can help. Contact us to schedule a **free** alternative commute plan consultation or telework training lunch-and-learn for your staff and receive free templates to get your company going today. Email kate@thrivalschool.com.*

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7 Steps to Have Your Organization's Work From Home Program Thrive

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Why start a work from home program at your company? The reasons are limitless. Work from home programs can mean improved quality of life for employees, greater employee productivity, lower real-estate and operating expenses, a lighter environmental footprint, and so much more. Yet the million dollar question isn't why, but how? As a manager, what steps can you take to create a work from home program that thrives? Try these proven methods for a successful telework program.

1. Make it official.

Show managers and employees you are serious about supporting mobile work by establishing a formal work from home policy and building it into your corporate culture. You'll show everyone on your team is supported, regardless of where they work. Formalizing the program will also help you evaluate its success over time and simplify the process of making changes if any are needed down the line.

2. Ask, is it a good fit?

Working from home isn't for everybody. Before you send an employee home, be sure to ask questions to help you determine whether it's a good fit. Evaluate whether the job itself is compatible with working from home. Considering the employee's work style and past performance is equally important. Studies have shown that employees who do well in the office typically will do well at home.

3. Set clear expectations , procedures, and goals.

Many challenges associated with mobile work can be avoided with a little advanced planning. Sit down with the employee and identify any potential problems that could arise and the things you can both do to help prevent the issues from happening. Before the employee starts teleworking, establish an agreement about how they will keep in contact with you, the team, and external customers. Ensure connectivity no matter where the employee works, and make sure you always identify clear deliverables.

4. Give feedback. Have face time.

You can help your work from home employees stay connected with the team by scheduling regularly occurring onsite individual and team meetings. Whether positive or negative feedback, don't wait for major problems to arise before you bring it up. Personal interactions boost morale, collaboration, and respect between colleagues working at home and those in the office.

5. Leverage technology.

Advanced technologies make working from home easier and more affordable than ever. Video calls, instant messaging, desktop sharing, online meeting applications, file sharing sites, and social media allow workers to collaborate easily, regardless of their location. Encourage your teleworking employees to stay connected with their team mates by offering training on applications, devices, and online tools that can help them communicate remotely.

6. Be flexible.

Moving from a corporate office to a home office is a big change for both the manager and employee, so you can expect a period of adjustment. Allow 60 to 90 days for the two of you to acclimate to the new arrangement and work through any challenges. But once you've gotten the ball rolling, don't feel chained to the structure of a mobile work arrangement. Every organization puts their own unique twist on their program to ensure success and has clear criteria to revoke the privilege if it does not work out.

7. Provide ongoing support.

Once an employee starts working from home, make sure they do not fall 'off the radar'. Keep workers informed and provide resources that will enable them to do well in their jobs at home. Support could come from a dedicated program manager or mobile work consultant, through regular training sessions, annual meetings, routine check-in points and/or monthly newsletters. Stay abreast of new tools and issues too. Subscribe to news from the twitter account @mobilityworker.

Sign up for a free training on mobile work. Learn how to do it affordably and get templates to use to start your program. Email kate@thrivalschool.com.



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