

# Beyond Telecommuting

How to provide a flexible work environment when telecommuting won't work

**WHEN CUTTING COSTS** is a necessity, companies get flexible. According to a recent study by the Families and Work Institute ([familiesandwork.org](http://familiesandwork.org)), 94 percent of employers are maintaining or increasing their workplace flexibility programs. In fact, a quarter of the surveyed employers (26 percent) specifically used flexible workplace strategies to minimize the need for layoffs. When an employee can do the job at home, for instance, the employer saves money on office space.

While telecommuting doesn't work for some employees, there are plenty of other options. Employers should look for ways to be flexible in three areas: "How, when and

where the work is done," says Cali Yost, CEO of Work+Life Fit Inc. ([worklifefit.com](http://worklifefit.com)) "The type of flexibility that will work will depend on the job, the person and the company."

For instance, at San Antonio-based CareNet ([callcarenet.net](http://callcarenet.net)), which provides nurse-on-call services for medical facilities, many of the company's 200 employees are nurses who answer calls from home. For administrative workers who must come into the office, the company offers flexible scheduling. "One woman wants to work out every morning, so she comes in at 9 or 9:30," says John Erwin, CareNet president. "Another comes in early so she can leave in

time to pick up her kids from school."

While more companies are embracing flexibility to help them survive the recession, it's a natural tendency for many small businesses. "People all know each other in small companies, so you're just more likely to figure it out, whether you have a policy or not," says Ellen Galinsky, president of the New York-based Families and Work Institute. "It's really just about how you treat people."

BY NANCY MANN JACKSON

## Flexibility Times Three

Consider these flexible work arrangements to foster happier, more productive employees:

### 1. Job sharing.

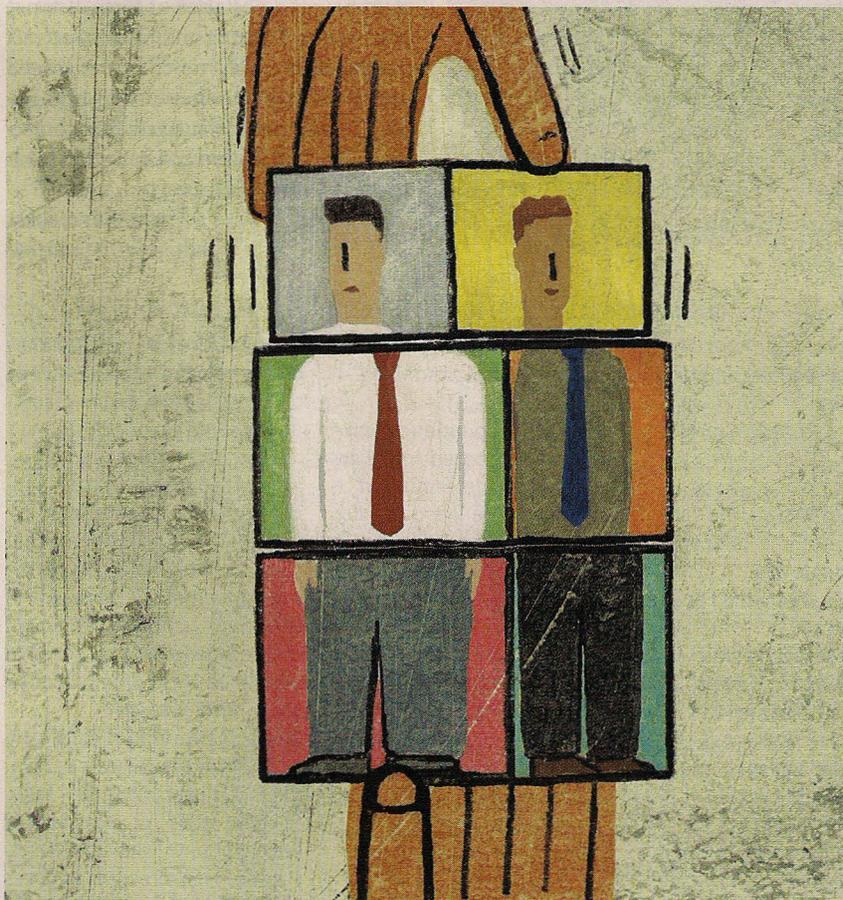
Often used by new mothers who may want to transition slowly back into full-time work, some companies allow two part-time workers to share the duties of one full-time position. In other cases, an employer may allow an employee who's overworked or dealing with a personal crisis to hire a contract worker to help complete a pressing project.

### 2. Compressed workweeks.

Rather than fighting rush-hour traffic, workers on a compressed workweek come in early, stay late—and don't come in at all one or two days per week. This allows them more time to fulfill family or other obligations.

### 3. Phased retirement.

To help workers ease the transition into retirement, this option allows them to slowly move from full-time work into part-time work and eventually into retirement. Not only does it help the worker manage the transition, but it also allows the company to prepare for the personnel loss, since the worker is around to help train his or her replacement.



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