

WORKING MATTERS

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Time for Telecommuting?

Telecommuting.

The very mention of it sends shivers down the spines of some managers. Yet, in a day and age when computers, laptops, high-speed internet, cell phones, Blackberries and personal digital assistants are the norm and where unreasonably high gas prices, traffic congestion and road stress are all also the norm, one would think that telecommuting would slowly replace the office cubby. We obviously have a long way to go.

An article by Kate Lorenz of CareerBuilder.com points out that AT&T, a major U.S. company, has as many as 90 percent of its managers working virtually in some capacity. She quotes AT&T's Telework Director, Joseph Roitz, as saying that the result of the virtual workplace is that AT&T's managers are interrupted less frequently, have improved concentration and are better able to manage their time.

The Society for Resource Management estimates nearly 40 percent of corporations across the country offer some type of virtual work program: IBM, Putnam Investments, Allstate, Cigna Corporations, Texas Instruments, etc. Interestingly enough, progressive employers who have embraced telecommuting are the very same ones who offer such benefits as compressed work schedules, job-sharing and flextime.

So, what gives? Why do some employers embrace telecommuting while others shun the very thought of it? Is the issue of "control" and fear of "managing people you can't see" central to the notion that telecommuting is not a healthy and economically viable work option?

Bizjournals recently conducted an informal Los Angeles business survey, asking if gas prices are prompting telecommuting. Here's how the response broke down:

- Yes: 59 percent
- No: 33 percent
- Other: 6 percent

For those willing to consider offering their employees some sort of telecommuting option, here are some of the benefits:

- Fewer cars on the freeway and on roads means less pollution
- Fewer cars on the freeway and on roads means less congestion.
- Fewer cars means less parking congestion.
- Higher gas prices mean more telecommuting, which could lead to lowered gas prices.
- Employees pay for energy costs for lighting, cooling, computer-use, etc. while working at home.
- Work spaces/cubbies can be shared.
- Work can be extended to last more than the normal eight-hour day.
- Post 9-11 provides both employers and employees with natural-disaster preparedness in that less centralized companies that have a distributed workforce are less likely to be subject to terrorist attacks.
- Companies with a distributed workforce can continue to operate in a disaster.
- Telecommuting has broad appeal and does attract and help keep employees.
- Telecommuting prevents disruptions – planned or otherwise. This means less time off the job for such chores as to wait for a plumber or to take care of a sick child.
- Employees are given a better shot at work-life balance.

When you stop to consider, many Los Angeles City employees do work virtually from many locations throughout the City – mostly in and from their vehicles while stuck in traffic or while commuting from one work site to another (how so very L.A.).

Virtual management, managing people you can't see, life away from the cubby, cubby-sharing, drafting a proposal and teleconferencing in a bathrobe and bunny slippers – what a progressive concept. It all boils down to the bottom line: "Work is what you do, not where you are."

LAABP's New Officers

Black Personnel Association installs new officers, honors Councilman Herb Wesson, other executives.

LAABP — More than 150 people attended the Los Angeles Association of Black Personnel's Recognition Celebration July 13 to honor Councilmember Herb Wesson and eight City executives, and to install new officers for 2006-08.

The event was held at the City Club in downtown Los Angeles.

Program participants were Jeffery Whitmore, outgoing LAABP President, who made welcoming remarks and presented an award to Councilmember Wesson in recognition of his government and community service. Wesson also conducted the installation of the new officers.

The LAABP Board members are:

- Cora Jackson Fossett, President (Public Works);
- Steve King, First Vice President (Transportation);
- Susan Huntley, Second Vice President (Rec and Parks);
- Linda Lanier, Third Vice President (Personnel);
- DeWanna Sharp, Treasurer (Personnel);
- Mignon Washington, Recording Secretary (Housing); and
- Sheila Darling, Corresponding Secretary (LAPD).

The Directors-at-Large are Audrey Atkins (Personnel), Terrence Montgomery (Public Works), Adriene Murphy (Personnel) and DeMarlo Sims (DWP).

Following the installation, past President Whitmore and new President Fossett presented distinctive awards to the newest high-ranking managers in City service. The honorees were:

- Donald Austin, Assistant Chief, Fire Department;
- Richard Benbow, General Manager, Community Development;

- Selwyn Hollins, Assistant General Manager, Transportation;
- Gloria Jeff, General Manager, Transportation;
- Lydia Kennard, Executive Director, Airports;
- Rhonda Sims-Lewis, Commanding Officer, Police Department;
- Earl Paysinger, Assistant Chief, Police Department; and
- DeWitt Roberts, Chief Deputy, Controller.

Among the guests attending the celebration were Laura Chick, City Controller; Alvin Blaine, General Manager, General Services; Cynthia Ruiz, President, and Commissioner Valerie Lynne Shaw, Board of Public Works; Gary Lee Moore, City Engineer; John Reamer, Inspector of Public Works; Rita Robinson, General Manager, Bureau of Sanitation; Carmen Hawkins, President, Black Attorneys Association; Charley Sims, President, L.A. Professional Managers Association; and Molly Campbell, CFO, Harbor.

Also on hand were Varouj Abakan, Asst. General Manager, Bureau of Sanitation; David Paschal, Asst. General Manager, General Services; Deborah Weintraub, Deputy City Engineer; Phillip Hill, Asst. General Manager, Convention Center; Joe Rouzan, LAX Workforce Development Director; Dr. Greg Burke, Community Development Business Services; and Reginald Jones-Sawyer, Vice President, and Adel Hagekhalil, Secretary, L.A. Professional Managers Association. In addition, Rhonda Gaston and Cecil Flournoy attended from the office of Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa.

The LAABP is the official representative for City employees of African American heritage. Incorporated in 1972, the LAABP advocates equal employment within the City's workforce and increased opportunities for people of color to attain management and executive positions. Among the services the organization provides are career development seminars, student scholarship program, mock interview program and networking forum.

The event was co-sponsored by Bob Blake, Associate Managing General Agent of Colonial Supplemental Insurance.

Congratulations



City Executives honored were, from left: Donald Austin, LAFD Asst. Chief; Gloria Jeff, General Manager, Transportation; Lydia Kennard, Executive Director, Airports; Selwyn Hollins, Acting Asst. General Manager, Transportation; Richard Benbow, General Manager, Community Development; Earl Paysinger, LAPD Asst. Chief; incoming LAABP president Cora J. Fossett; and outgoing President Jeffery Whitmore.



NEW LAABP Executive Board includes, from left: Linda Lanier, Third Vice President; Mignon Washington, Recording Secretary; Sheila Darling, Corresponding Secretary; Audrey Atkins, Director; Councilman Herb Wesson, Terrence Montgomery, Director; Cora Jackson-Fossett, President; Adriene Murphy, Director; DeWanna Sharp, Treasurer; DeMarlo Sims, Director; and Steve King, First Vice President. Not pictured is Susan Huntley, Second Vice President.