

WorkAnywhere study: calmer rush hours, more satisfied employees

The WorkAnywhere study conducted jointly by Swisscom and SBB found that flexible working hours and teleworking improve productivity, employee satisfaction and work quality and significantly reduce the load on trains. As part of the field study, 260 employees spent increasing lengths of time working away from the office.

From February to late March, SBB and Swisscom conducted the WorkAnywhere field study together with the University of Applied Sciences Northwestern Switzerland (FHNW). The study sought to determine the extent to which flexible working hours can reduce commuting during peak travel times and what effect this way of working has on performance, the work-life balance, teamwork and leadership. Some 260 employees from the two companies had their performance and mobility tested. As part of this, they tried to avoid travelling during peak traffic times by shifting their travel times or working from home or while travelling.

WorkAnywhere eases peak travel times

The study found that this was very easy to do: 66 per cent of travel to and from work was possible outside the morning and evening rush-hour. Although they worked for the same number of hours, employees spent considerably longer working from home or while travelling. The proportion of hours worked at home rose from 14 to 21 per cent. Nevertheless, other companies would have to join Swisscom and SBB to have a perceptible effect on commuter routes. Even small changes in behaviour could have a significant impact. Based on the findings of the field study, the FHNW estimates that if train commuters were given an opportunity to work more flexibly and if they moved just 20 per cent of their commuting outside peak hours, this would ease the pressure on trains during rush hours by 7 per cent. Bernhard Meier, SBB's Director Public and Regulatory Affairs representative, says, "such changes in behaviour are an important addition to planned expansion as a way of addressing the predicted increase in demand for traffic and transport."

Greater satisfaction, greater productivity

The analysis of the responses shows that flexible working hours increased all satisfaction and productivity factors. Participants said they were happier about their jobs and with their employers. 53 per cent said they were more motivated. A positive effect on productivity was also detected. This was supported by assessments of line managers surveyed separately. Managers said that faith in their employees, a responsible attitude and appropriate, modern IT equipment were the most important factors in the successful implementation of flexible ways of working. "The findings of the study show that flexible work models can increase satisfaction and productivity," says Alexander Senn, Swisscom's head of recruitment and employability. "Thanks to mobile Internet access and integrated communication, employees are no longer tied to a specific place. Indeed, they can communicate and collaborate almost simultaneously over great distances."

A win-win situation for companies and employees

Hartmut Schulze, a professor at the FHNW, is the individual responsible for the study. He sees the findings as positive: "we were able to show that new working practices can significantly reduce travel during rush hours. Although mobile and flexible working present their own challenges in terms of technical equipment, staff responsibility and corporate culture and leadership, they also potentially offer a win-win situation for companies and employees."

Details of the study's findings can be found at the following address:

www.swisscom.ch/workanywhere-study

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