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VIRTUAL WORKING

1 *Telework or telecommuting* is when employees do their work from home with a computer connected to their employer's network. Read the article about a survey on companies' attitudes to telework and decide if the statements below are true or false.

- a** The survey only included large corporations and multinationals.
- b** Nearly half of the companies are thinking of closing down their offices to save money.
- c** Many companies believe that all their meetings could be held online.
- d** A quarter of the companies in the survey allow some of their employees to work from home.
- e** Over half of the companies believe that telework can help them to survive in difficult times.
- f** The survey was carried out by a web conferencing company.

UK BUSINESSES GO VIRTUAL TO BEAT THE CRUNCH

A recent independent survey has found that 43% of small to medium-sized businesses in the UK are considering leaving their office space and working entirely online as a 'virtual company'. They believe the move would help them to beat the credit crunch.

In an effort to cut costs, 29% of UK businesses already hold virtual meetings, and 40% believe that up to half of their meetings could be conducted remotely. 24% are also offering staff more flexible working options including hot desking and working from home. 54% believe that allowing employees to work from home will help them to survive the recession better than traditional businesses.

The survey was conducted by independent survey company OnePoll, and was commissioned by Yuuguu, a web conferencing and remote working technology company.



2 Read these factors of teleworking. Mark them A (advantage of telework), or D (disadvantage).

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|---|-------|--|-------|
| a Less stress. | _____ | k IT and communication problems. | _____ |
| b More work satisfaction. | _____ | l Danger of working too many hours. | _____ |
| c Jealousy of colleagues who can't telework. | _____ | m Helps balance work and family life. | _____ |
| d Fewer unnecessary meetings. | _____ | n More comfortable. | _____ |
| e Social and professional isolation. | _____ | o Possibility that work could take over home and family life. | _____ |
| f Saves money on transport. | _____ | p Fewer career and promotional opportunities. | _____ |
| g More opportunities for disabled workers. | _____ | q Less time off sick. | _____ |
| h Less 'office politics' and gossip. | _____ | r More difficult to monitor performance. | _____ |
| i Less time commuting. | _____ | s More distractions and interruptions. | _____ |
| j Fewer traffic accidents. | _____ | | |

3 Your company is based in a city centre office where space is a problem. The company wants to try teleworking, with a selected employee working from home as a pilot project. There are four employees on the shortlist. All four are good employees. Today you have a meeting to choose one of the four for the experiment. Read the information about each candidate and put them in order of priority, with number one as your first choice.

Ed Stanton lives a five-minute walk away from the office. He is single and has no children. He is a Buddhist and needs time to meditate every day. This is best for him in the morning. He wants the option to telework because of the flexibility. He can do most of his work at a laptop and doesn't have many face-to-face meetings.



Dorothy Lovell is a single mother with a small child. She commutes in to work by bus and train. The journey takes an hour. She lives with her mother who helps with child care but who now has health problems. She wants to telework to reduce travelling and be able to take her child to school. She works in human resources and face-to-face communication is essential in her job.

Bob Summers is married and lives in the country with his family – he has three children. He wants to telework to avoid commuting as much as possible. He drives in to work and it's expensive and there are often traffic jams. He works in a team where contact with other members of staff is important. He says he can do this by videoconference.



Sue Bishop is the 'life and soul' of the office. She is a great organizer and makes sure that everything runs smoothly. She does most of her work over the phone and because of this wants to try working from home. Her husband complains about the long hours she works.