

## Six Tips for Effective Flexible Working

**London, UK, 1st January 2008.** Contact centre technology specialist Macfarlane Telesystems offers six tips to organisations looking to introduce flexible working for the first time:

1. **Understand the basics:** where staff work, what roles they perform, how individuals and teams within a department interact, how different departments interact, where people live and how they travel, when they need to be in the office, what they need to communicate and when. Understanding what tasks employees need to perform is essential in drawing conclusions about whether flexible working will work in the first place.
2. **Determine the scope of your flexible working project:** i.e. what are you setting out to achieve? Who is involved, how will things change, will homeworking work for specific teams? How will property space be optimised? How will health and safety matters be addressed? What technologies will be deployed – and how will homeworkers be supported? What HR policies will be in place to ensure homeworkers aren't isolated? How will individual and team-based communications work? Multi-site working and homeworking aren't appropriate in every situation so it's important to carefully lay down the scope of projects from day one.
3. **Build the business case for flexible working:** It is important that your organisation has a way of quantifying the benefits of flexible working projects – including cost reductions, productivity gains, service quality improvements, workforce scheduling advantages, employee and customer satisfaction improvements, travel cost reductions etc.
4. **Ensure homeworkers feel they are part of a functional team:** Isolation can be a problem with geographically-dispersed teams. Ensure that communication with remote workers is regular and that homeworkers can

share in team - as well as individual - successes. Setting up functional teams based on skills is also important from a management point of view to ensure calls can be answered by other team members if an individual is unavailable.

5. **Strive for service consistency:** Give remote workers access to the same systems, knowledge bases and other resources as in-house workers and ensure call quality is uniform and that service is not compromised when customers are routed to remote agents. Always attempt to route and manage calls according to a single set of business rules across your entire organisation/ contact centre operations wherever possible
  
6. **Consider business continuity options:** Using modern platforms such as Macfarlane CallPlus IP, organisations can embed their technology resources in the network – providing significant business continuity and disaster recovery advantages. With a single site technology installation, if that site fails (for example in the event of a terrorist act or a power failure), then your technology services will fail too. By using 'hosted' technology services, this problem can be overcome - with the reassurance of guaranteed availability, 24/7.

“Homeworking isn’t just about delivering a better work-life balance for employees” says Paul Skinner, Sales Director, Macfarlane Telesystems. “It can also improve performance, efficiency and productivity, create a broader recruitment pool, reduce absence and attrition, improve customer service, cut wasted travel time, assist Corporate Social Responsibility aims and make more efficient use of office space. Canterbury City Council, for example, has seen a 15% - 20% improvement in staff performance and productivity within its customer service operation following the introduction of homeworking, with a 30% improvement in call handling.”

To download a free copy of Macfarlane’s Homeworking white paper please go to:

[http://www.macfar.co.uk/pdf/Home\\_Working-White\\_Paper.pdf](http://www.macfar.co.uk/pdf/Home_Working-White_Paper.pdf)

### **About Macfarlane**

Founded in 1987, Macfarlane is a UK developer and supplier of communication solutions to service providers, enterprises and public sector organisations. Its CallPlus platform supports a range of applications including multi media contact centre, IVR, management statistics, recording and unified communications. Its

SpeechPlus platform supports Speech Recognition, and other speech-driven applications such as the Macfarlane VoiceDialler. The company delivers cost-effective, market-focused solutions directly and through strategic partnerships with vendors such as Lagan, Capita, Northgate, Steria and Serco.

Macfarlane has established a strong position in the public sector where it assists central and local government reach e-government targets, providing a citizen-centric approach while working within Best Value practices. Existing customers number more than 80 local councils including those within the Government's Partnership programme such as Somerset Direct Partnership, the Warwickshire Direct Partnership, the Lancashire Direct Partnership, and more recently the Staffordshire Connects Partnership. CallPlus has enabled these Partnerships to link their many local councils and create single 'virtual' contact centres that serve citizens on a county-wide basis. More details can be found at <http://www.macfar.co.uk>

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