



White Paper: Work-At-Home Agent Model as a Strategy

In 2006, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce estimated that there were 30 million full and part-time Work-At-Home Agents in the US, a number they expected to grow to between 50 and 100 million by 2012. There are a multitude of initiatives underway in both the private and public sectors to promote the adoption of WAHA MODEL, which can also be referred to as telecommuting or working from home. Most Fortune 1000 companies have stated their intent to adopt a WAHA environment. Both the House and Senate have bills designed to push government agencies to create formal WAHA programs and promote the use of telecommuting; the Obama administration has set more specific goals, targeting 150,000 federal employees to WAHA modelers by 2011, and 500,000 by 2014.

No Time like the Present

The timing could finally be right for WAHA model. Some new technologies and ways of thinking are starting to move the needle, enabling organizations to revisit their strategy and look at ways to reap all the benefits the WAHA model can offer. For instance, over the past couple of years, we have seen the maturity and growing acceptance of cloud services, which enables:

- **New Options for Deployment**—delivering cloud-based networking services that leverage the economies of the cloud to quickly scale to meet the changing needs of the organization
 - **New Networking Business Models**—based on selling networking services versus networking hardware, significantly reducing, and sometimes even eliminating, the capital costs of the distributed network
 - **Simplified, Centralized Management**—giving the organization real-time visibility and control over their network, from anywhere, at any time, to reduce operational complexity and support compliance needs
- New technological options combined with the aforementioned stakes that private and public organizations have started to put in the ground around the WAHA MODEL may accelerate its adoption.

Individual Savings

Organizations aren't the only ones that feel some budgetary relief, the individual commuter can also benefit monetarily. As the price of gas goes up, many see the WAHA MODEL as a way to reduce expenses and relieve some of the stresses in a family's already stretched budgets. The Telework Exchange calculates the average annual cost of commuting five days a week to be \$9,796.*

Other estimates include:

- A report by TIAX LLC, commissioned by the Consumer Electronics Association, found 3.9 million WAHAgents saved 840 million gallons of fuel annually—if fuel costs are approximately \$3 per gallon, that savings represents a cumulative \$2.25 billion, a little over \$575 per commuter.
- The American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research (AEI)** uses statistics from the Bureau of Transportation and the U.S. Department of Education to predict that the average WAHAgent uses 339 fewer gallons of gas over the year, which represents a savings of \$1,017 (if we assume the cost of gas at \$3 a gallon) in commuting costs, and CO2 emissions reductions of 6584 pounds.



* Telework Exchange, Telework Eligibility Profile: Feds Fit the Bill.

** "Should the Government Expand Telework?" by Kenneth P. Green, American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, August 2010,

Enabling Business

While telecommuting can be good for the bottom line and good for the environment, it is also a business enabler. For starters, **businesses can go where the talent is; they can use WAHA MODEL to support employees, partners and customers with the resources they need, regardless of where they are located around the globe.** In an increasingly connected, global economy, the ability to tap into talent and resources wherever they are located can be a huge competitive differentiator, delivering the agility organizations need to leverage local knowledge, uncover trends and preferences, seize market opportunities, and drive gains. As organizations strive to support the career aspirations of their employees to develop and hold onto top talent, the ability to utilize WAHA Agents can be a key enabler. The flexibility provided by the ability to telecommute can reduce stress levels, increase job satisfaction, support employee recruitment and retention objectives. A Sloan Center on Aging study showed that more than 75% of workers felt flexibility contributed to their success as an employee, while 48% of older Gen X'ers thought it greatly improved job success.¹⁰

Increasing Productivity

It makes sense that a workforce that is empowered to contribute to the business from wherever they are, whenever they need to is going to be more productive overall. Estimates from the Center for Urban Transportation Research, ¹¹ place productivity gains that can be achieved through a good telecommuting program at up to 30%. This is a number echoed by the Telework Research Network, ¹² which found a 27% increase in productivity from employees on their WAHA days. Productivity gains can be attributed to a variety of things: decreased absenteeism, time spent working that would have normally been dedicated to commuting, and a happier, more dedicated work force. ¹⁰

¹⁰ "Workplace Flexibility: Findings from the Age and Generations Study," Sloan Center, 2009.

¹¹ <http://www.cutr.usf.edu/index.shtml>

¹² "Workshifting Benefits: The Bottom Line," Telework Research Network, May 2010,

<http://www.workshifting.com/downloads/downloads/Workshifting%20Benefits-The%20Bottom%20Line.pdf>

One report showed that 75 percent of managers believe remote workers are more productive. ¹³ According to a Kelly Global Workforce Index, more than 75 percent of employees feel that mobile technologies (mobile phones, PDAs and laptops) increase their productivity.¹⁴

Attracting and Retaining Top Talent

The general impact telecommuting can have on the workforce should not be underestimated. The ability to work regularly from home can help employees achieve a better work-life balance that can lead to improved overall morale. BLR, a compensation and compliance services vendor, tried to quantify the results, finding that of the companies they interviewed with WAHA programs, 64 percent confirmed they had seen improvements in morale.

A survey by Regus¹⁵ found that a fifth of commuters around the world have considered quitting their jobs because of the time it takes them to travel into the office. According to Phil Montero of The Anywhere Office, 72% of U.S. employees say that flexible work



arrangements would cause them to choose one job over another¹⁶, while a study by The Polling Company found respondents valued the ability to work remotely more than stock options and onsite child care.¹⁷ A survey¹⁸ by World at Work confirmed this value, with more than a third of those with virtual work-compatible jobs saying they would take a pay cut in exchange for the ability to work at home just two days a week.

13 Report commissioned by City & Guilds and the Institute of Leadership & Management (ILM).

14 2009 Index as reported in "IT Management: 10 Myths of Telework: Why You Aren't Working from Home," eWeek Staff, Sept. 17, 2010,

http://www.eweek.com/c/a/IT-Management/10-Myths-of-WAHA_MODEL_model-Why-You-Arent-Working-from-Home-200485/

15 http://www.economist.com/daily/news/displaystory.cfm?story_id=15106202&fsrc=nwl

16 As reported in his recent white paper and post on the [workshifting.com](http://www.workshifting.com) blog, "Work Unchained: The Competitive Edge of the Anywhere

Office." Primary source of data: The Edge Report—Robert Half International Survey, 2008

17 World-at-Work; The Telework Coalition

18 2009, World at Work

Ensuring Business Continuity & Accelerated Disaster Recovery

WAHA MODEL offers an answer to the business and government problem surrounding continuity of operations. It can help organizations operate in times of stress and minimize inevitable disruptions stemming from natural disasters, pandemics, or conflicts (acts of war or terrorism) that can cripple normal operations and cause irreparable damage. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimated H1N1 would affect 16% of the workforce (in addition to normal levels of absenteeism due to other illnesses.); Gartner was a little more aggressive, estimating 40% absenteeism due to H1N1. While the wide variance in these estimations highlights the general difficulty associated with predicting the exact timing, duration, and impact of a pandemic or other event, the significant disruption they represent to the organization's operations is the same. These disruptions can cause millions of dollars in lost productivity. Just take the back-to-back winter storms that paralyzed the east coast last year, the United States Office of Management and Budget estimated that one day during those 2010 snowstorms cost \$70 million in lost productivity. Ongoing adoption of WAHA MODEL ensures organizations are practiced and prepared to work in a more distributed manner, so that when disasters do hit, the impact to operations can be minimized. Some governments have taken the arguments a step further, citing WAHA MODEL modeling as a way to reduce our dependency on oil and hence our dependency on the countries that supply it, which can have political and national security implications. The U.S. federal government is trying to lead by example, mandating a 28% total reduction in carbon emissions from its facilities by 2020—a goal they have said relies on reducing operational costs and decreasing real estate to achieve.* Indirect emissions—such as those caused by employee business travel and commuting to work—must be cut 13%.**

** Executive Order 13514, Oct. 2009 <https://www1.eere.energy.gov/femp/regulations/eo13514.html>*

*** "Growing agencies struggle to shrink carbon footprints", [FederalTimes](http://www.federaltimes.com).*

<http://www.carbonoffsetsdaily.com/newschannels/usa/growing-agencies-struggle-to-shrink-carbon-footprints-42044.htm>

When an illness, childcare or other emergency makes it impossible for an employee to be in the office, telecommuting ensures employees can stay connected and productive, ultimately reducing the number of absences. According to the findings of the 17th annual CCH Unscheduled Absence Survey, the largest employers in the U.S. "estimate that unscheduled absenteeism costs their businesses more than \$760,000 per year in direct payroll costs, and even more when lower productivity, lost revenue and the effects of poor morale are considered." The most effective programs cited for reducing these absences are alternative work arrangements, followed by telecommuting.*

** CCH is a leading provider of human resources and employment law information and services and part of Wolters Kluwer Law & Business (hr.cch.com)*

Part Two

Barriers to WAHA MODEL Adoption

WAHA MODEL offers organizations a way to improve productivity, lower energy and real estate costs, and support business continuity and disaster recovery initiatives. It has also been shown to improve employee morale and retention and reduce carbon emissions; all of which should have organizations rushing to adopt robust telecommuting programs. But after a decade of testing and studying its potential benefits, very few organizations have truly embraced WAHA MODEL. Only a little over 2% of the U.S. employee workforce¹⁹ uses their home as their primary office; only a little over half of the government agencies in the U.S., who are supposed to be integrating the WAHA MODEL into their continuity of operations (COOP) planning, have yet to deploy it.²⁰ Why aren't more organizations leveraging the WAHA MODEL to take advantage of all these benefits? Often it comes down to complexity and budget.

First Comes the Commitment

It's fairly easy for someone to work on occasion from home—these "day extenders" can usually do what they need with a PC, a little software, and Internet connectivity (*See SSL VPNs in the Chapter on Deployment Options*)—but to regularly work at home requires the organization commit to provisioning a secure, home office that will enable them to work seamlessly with all their colleagues. This commitment has budget, technology, policy and process implications; all of which must be considered to ensure an effective WAHA MODEL solution. With a commitment to WAHA MODEL, organizations can maximize all its benefits and strengthen their security stance; without it, the organization can put itself at risk.²¹

19 Telework Research Network, Kate Lister, October 2009

20 Status of Telework in the Federal Government: Report to Congress," United States Office of Personnel Management, August 2009, http://www.Telework.gov/Reports_and_Studies/Annual_Reports/2009TeleworkReport.pdf.

21 The Telework Exchange 2007 Report found that "94 percent of federal information security officers say Teleworkers in an official program are not a data security concern. Concerns include employees working at home on nights/weekends outside an official Telework program, lack of appropriate data security tools and technologies, as well as insufficient data security training for all employees."

Drilling into the Complexity

According to Forrester there are no less than nine services (made up of a set of technologies, services and infrastructure) required for a remote office to truly operate independently of the central office.²³

23 TechRadar™ for IT Infrastructure and Operations Professionals: Branch Office Technologies, Q2 2009," by Chris Silva, with Simon Yates and Ben Echols, Forrester Research, May 26, 2009.

Access to necessary technology and company documents were the top reasons holding staff back from working from home, according to a survey by oneDrum.com.*

** "HR departments fail to bridge the gap between flexible working policy and practice," by David Woods, HR Magazine, Jan. 18, 2010, <http://www.hrmagazine.co.uk/News/MostEmailed/977941/HR-departments-failbridge-gap-flexible-working-policy-practice/> survey of 1,200 small and medium-sized businesses in the U.K*

You must have the ability to maintain control over exactly what can be done at that remote site; security policies must remain in force and protect the organization from risks to combat security threats and comply with industry regulations.

Requirements for an Effective WAHA MODEL implementation



In order to embrace WAHA MODEL and start reaping all its benefits, you need to be able to quickly roll out secure remote users, wherever they may be, around the globe. You need a WAHA MODEL solution that is:

- **Simple to Provision**—Most WAHAgents are not IT savvy professionals, so bringing their virtual workplace up and keeping it running shouldn't require any technical expertise at the location. Rather it should be very easy to deploy and serve to reduce the management overhead and management infrastructure traditionally required to support WAHAgents. We use the Five9 platform that meets this requirement.
- **Easy to Control**—There must be comprehensive visibility into what is going on at the WAHAgent's home office site, such as the performance of all the applications they accessed, with the ability protect access to ensure security is never in question and compliance is never compromised. A single, centralized way to manage every aspect of the distributed network is optimal, from provisioning and access to security policy enforcement and troubleshooting.
- **Cost-Effective**—The business case for WAHA MODEL is compelling. While the many benefits are there, one of the most compelling is little to no up-front capital investments are required to roll out a WAHA MODEL's virtual workplace.
- **Scalable**—Companies must be agile and their WAHA capabilities must adjust accordingly. This means they must be able to rapidly scale up or down or reconfigure Agent populations as their requirements change and deliver a predictable experience, regardless of where in the world the WAHAgent is located.
- **Seamless**—Enabling WAHAgents to have the same or better experience at home that they would in a corporate facility.

One Size Doesn't Fit All—Segmenting the Remote Access Population

Many organizations are starting to rethink the way they classify their remote users to ensure the technology solutions they have in place truly meet the particular needs and expectations of those different users. Often, you can break down the extended user population into:

Day Extenders—employees who log in every once in awhile from home to check on something or do a little extra work at night. They often use their own machines to access the most basic of services (such as email or a job-specific application) to just get something done.

Road Warriors—folks who need to stay connected while they are on the go. These frequent travelers (sales reps, executives, etc.) need access to basic services from wherever they are—airport, café, hotel—relying on mobile devices and whatever connection is available to get/make updates.

WAHAgents—employees who regularly work from home, at least once or twice a week. They anticipate an "office-like" experience at home, with access to all the same services and all the same amenities (such as "four-digit" phone numbers (VoIP), or print services) to ensure maximum productivity.

On-site Teams (an extension of the remote workforce)—employees who are working at a remote location for a period of time (consultants working at a client's site; temporary clinic set up during flu season, etc.). They too need an "office-like" experience, with access to all the same services they would have access to in the office. Each of these remote users has different expectations and requirements, which require potentially different technology solutions to address.



The New Cloud-based Networking Model

Recently, a new option has emerged: Cloud services are something that more and more enterprises are toying with. The extended network is a perfect location because it represents a lot of opportunities for savings, and consists of a wide variety of users in globally dispersed locations that would benefit from the ubiquity, flexibility and scalability of a cloud delivery model. The U.S. National Institute of Standards and Technology outlines cloud attributes as:

- on-demand self service
- elastic scale
- ubiquitous network access
- and resource pooling.
- pay for use

For organizations considering cloud initiatives, cloud-based distributed networking can be a low risk way for enterprises to roll out and test cloud-based services; for those already using cloud-based services, it can be a good way to leverage their investments and extend their cloud based services to their remote users.

How Cloud-based Networking Services Work

A cloud-based networking solution should have a multi-tenant, globally distributed architecture to be able to deliver all the scale, geographic dispersion and capital efficiencies typically associated with cloud computing. This architecture enables organizations to essentially lease (through subscriptions) rather than buy and build the infrastructure needed to effectively support their global workforce. The ubiquity and redundancy of the cloud, ensures the performance of these services is predictable and highly available. Plus, the organization can securely log into the service and manage their extended network from anywhere.

A cloud service gives organizations complete control over the relatively small footprint device deployed at the remote location. It ensures the services required by that user are available and supported in a way that maximizes their effectiveness (including investments an organization may have made in voice or VDI infrastructures). It ensures appropriate policies are in force for the user, updates can be easily managed and applied (patches, security, features), and centralized visibility and control for all network activity.

Part Four

Fostering a WAHA MODEL modeling Culture

Make It Strategic

Develop Good Performance Managers

A results-oriented culture only works if managers can manage to the results. As reported in Federal Computing Week, the biggest barrier to WAHA MODEL adoption may be that managers have to learn how to be good performance managers. Micromanagement will not work in this environment; rather managers will have to learn to lead their agents and get results based on clear and measurable goals. Managers may need to make adjustments, such as:

- Transitioning away from relying on visual cues—to focusing on other indicators (work product, participation in collaborative projects, etc.) to determine an agent's satisfaction, engagement and effectiveness.
- Making no assumptions—ensuring managers are explicit about what they need and, if necessary, how they expect it to get done. Ensuring agents have a sense of purpose and understand the role they play in the overall success of the group, department and business is important to ground them in their objectives. For some time, setting and measuring goals has been espoused as then crux of unlocking an agent's potential. We have seen lots of frameworks—such as Peter Ducker's Management-By-Objectives or Six Sigma—that pay attention to the process of managing the performance of employees. Regardless of which approach you adhere to, some of the foundational managerial traits are the same:



- Good planning
- Focus on communications
- Establish measurable performance objectives

Make the Most of the Opportunity to Work from Anywhere

Those companies that really benefit from the WAHA MODEL see it as an opportunity to open up and change the way a company looks at doing business. It's a way to leverage talent from anywhere, ensure the right resources are being applied to the right problems, accelerate innovation, improve regional knowledge to better address customer preferences, and enhance collaboration. For example, given that the female labor force is outpacing the growth of the male labor force, ²⁸ in some parts of the world (women are the primary or co-breadwinners in two-thirds of American households, ²⁹), business are looking at ways to adapt their work environments to accommodate the unique needs of their evolving workforce. The WAHA MODEL can become the enabling technology that gives women the flexibility they need to achieve a work-life balance. Rather than forcing a choice between family and work, the WAHA MODEL can provide an alternative that enables them to contribute to the success of the company in a manner that is more commiserate with their terms—this goes for any agent that may be struggling with juggling personal obligations and work. To maximize the benefits of the WAHA MODEL, you need to ensure there is some flexibility built into the program to support a department, team or individual's needs. Make sure agents are able do their work whenever and wherever they are. As we have noted earlier (See Drivers), the research shows that WAHAgents are at least, if not more, productive than non-WAHAgents.³⁰ Research,³¹ has shown that virtual workers were able to work 19 hours longer than office-based employees before they felt it interfered with their personal and family life.

28 According to statistics from the U.S. Department of Education on the percentages of college-educated and post-graduate degrees earned by women each year

29 Shriver Report, Oct. 2009, <http://www.shriverreport.com/awn/index.php>

30 <http://www.opm.gov/studies/FINAL-TELEWRK.htm>

31 by Brigham Young University

This brings us to another point—just as important as setting expectations around what you want to see from agents is to set boundaries around that work. Make sure people know when it's okay and how to shut down or “unplug” from work. Diminishing returns can occur when people feel they can never stop working; you want to foster an environment that promotes work-life balance, not a sense you are chained to a desk.³²

The Tools and Processes

Ensure the right mix of tools is available to support your WAHA MODEL policies and maximize the effectiveness of the communications and collaboration amongst geographically distanced employees. In a WAHA MODEL environment, any shortcomings in a business can be exasperated and amplified; as many experts have said, “The WAHA MODEL does NOT create management problems...it simply makes existing problems more apparent.” ³³ Broken processes will become even more obvious in a distributed environment because people can't necessarily walk over and talk to someone to take care of something—so ensuring your processes facilitate the progression of work is critical to a telecommuting environment's success.

32 “Turn It Off: How to Unplug from the Anytime-Anywhere Office Without Disconnecting Your Career,”

33 Gil E. Gordon, Three Rivers Press, 2001. http://fcw.com/Articles/2010/09/13/FEAT-WAHA_MODEL_model-managers-objections.aspx?admgarea=TC_SECCYBERSEC&p=1

For example, ensure:



- It is easy to sign up for teleconferencing capabilities and a Web conferencing account
- Processes are paperless to support digital information flow and access to information by everyone, from wherever they are located
- That there are effective team building and staff development programs in place to support collaboration and smooth interactions between geographically dispersed teams
- Regular communications are scheduled to ensure ongoing touch-points and team cohesiveness
- Mechanisms exist (Instant Messaging/Skype phones) to help employees let others know when they are available or engaged.
- Success can be shared and replicated—give employees a way to tout savings and provide concrete examples of how the business has benefited from WAHA MODEL modeling to build momentum and spur ongoing success (chats/forums/internal articles)
- Training. Starting with the basics, training should be available to ensure employees understand how to use all the tools (smartphone, laptop, wireless network, VoIP, web conferencing, event scheduling tools, social networking applications) available to them to maximize their effectiveness. Training programs should also include curriculum that help managers and individual contributors develop the skills they need to be productive in a remote environment. For example, a leadership course could help managers develop the skills to set measurable objectives or determine the productivity of an employee; or a course on interpersonal relationships could help employees develop skills to manage projects, collaborate or problem solve with a distributed team.

Ensuring users have the skills they need, as well as enough time to work with the tools and feel comfortable with them before they are required to use them to get their job done will take a lot of the anxiety out of the remote work place and ensure everyone can visualize the future workplace and understand how it is going to work.

1NW Contact is committed to the WAHA Model. We have taken the prescriptions in this white paper to heart and have solutions for each: starting with our secure easy to access and robust Cloud Computing platform, Five9, and also including a robust Intranet to promote paperless communication and networking, GoToMeeting facilities and finally a compliance and training solution in the cloud as well where we coach project managers, coaches, agents and other members of our team by assigning tasks and training courses much like an online university is able to grant access and manage completion of custom designed curricula leading to professional certification. We thank the many researchers and publishers for the content and context of this white paper.

About 1NW Contact

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