

working smart

Give Your Commute THE BOOT

Get your boss's okay to work from home and save yourself time, gas and stress

BY KIBKABÉ ARAYA

Work is something you do, not something you travel to, according to telecommuters like Kareen Kymberli Scott, 32, of Orange, New Jersey, who happily works from 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. at home sans daily three-hour commutes and gas expenses. She proposed this flexible work arrangement so she would be able to care for her mother, who had suffered a stroke in September 2007.

To get approval, she drew up a proposal. "I began by getting my projects together and determining the feasibility of working from home," says Scott, a compensation analyst at Air Products and Chemicals, Inc., in Allentown, Pennsylvania.

According to WorldatWork, an association of human resources professionals, the number of Americans whose employers allow them to work remotely at least one day a month increased 63 percent, to 12.4 million from 7.6 million, between 2004 and 2006.

But for women, many of whom are head of household, it takes more than the boss's buy-in to make the arrangement work. Here's how to seal the deal and maintain stellar performance:

1 Determine if it's a good fit for you. Ask yourself, *Do I work well independently? Am I self-motivated?* Check out WorldatWork's downloadable self-assessment questionnaire at Workingfromanywhere.org to help you decide.

2 Get your pitch together. Write a proposal highlighting your work ethic, self-discipline and expertise. Explain the benefits, such as increased



Stay hard-working and dependable.

productivity, efficiency and cost-effectiveness. Use the Reason Foundation's study "The Quiet Success: Telecommuting's Impact on Transportation and Beyond" (reason.org) as a reference.

3 Create the right environment. "Having a separate area to 'go to work' is best," says Jill R. Adams, president of the St. Louis-based telecommuting consulting firm SuiteCommute, LLC. Create your own distraction-free space. Your computer, printer, copier, fax machine and other equipment and supplies should be in a clean, noiseless area.

4 Check in often. Virtual-workplace expert, author and speaker Debra A. Dinnocenzo advises, "Stay in touch with your colleagues. Use multiple ways to communicate frequently, such as instant messaging, voice mail and videoconferencing [[try skype.com](http://try.skype.com)], and drop them a personal handwritten note every now and then." Connect with other teleworkers at Telework.gov or Yourata.com.