

VIRTUAL WORKER SURVEY RESULTS EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Methodology

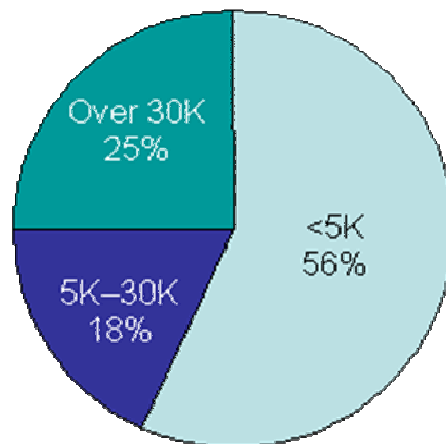
Bridge Consulting has just completed a survey with over 60 organizations world-wide to learn more about the challenges people are facing and the best practices they are using to engage virtual workers as a highly productive and committed part of an organization. Our objectives in conducting the survey were to:

- Understand the primary challenges related to employing virtual employees
- Learn about tools organizations are using to address these challenges
- Identify organizations that were willing to share stories about how they address the challenges and support virtual employees

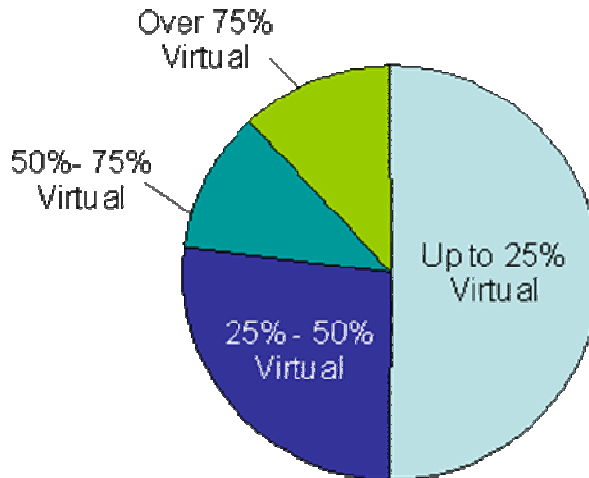
The survey was administered to communications professionals via email, with 63 organizations responding and 18 agreeing to an interview to share more detailed information.

Size of Organization and Number of Virtual Workers

The size of the respondent organizations ranged from less than 25 to over 30,000 employees, with 65% of organizations with over 1,000 employees and 25% of respondents with organizations over 30,000 employees.



Half of the organizations surveyed classified at least 25% of their workforce as virtual employees, while over a quarter had up to 50% of their population made up of virtual workers.



Top Challenges with Virtual Workforces

The survey asked participants to select the top challenges they face when employees work virtually. The top three challenges selected were:

- Ensuring that virtual workers feel part of the team
- Communicating effectively and frequently
- Sustaining high levels of engagement

The following table outlines the challenges in rank order of number of responses for each:

Challenge	Number of responses
Ensuring they feel part of the team	51
Communicating effectively and frequently	42
Sustaining high levels of engagement	40
Support and trust from their manager	29
Including them in team meetings and other formal communication	28
Acceptance of the situation by their co-workers	28
Methods for establishing accountability	20
Scheduling and/or conducting meetings	19
Establishment of policies and processes	17
Standardization and support of equipment	12
Confidentiality of information	12
Other*	10

*Other challenges include:

- Creating and maintaining personal bonds that create a more efficient work environment
- Providing feedback and appreciation for the work they complete
- Cultural expectations of organization
- Time zone differences
- Finding a communications solution that doesn't make them feel they're missing out on more engaging face-to-face interactions (large field sales team)

Supporting Virtual Workers

Slightly over half (35) of the participants indicated that there are tools, policies and/or training in place to support virtual workers. As illustrated below, of those participants, the most frequently indicated means of support were policies and websites, followed by training, workbooks and guidebooks, and the “buddy system.”

Method of support	Number of responses
Policies	26
Website	24
Training	13
Workbooks/guidebooks	8
Buddy system	6
Other	5

The following provides more detail that participants offered for each of the methods of support indicated:

- **Policies**—The policies that organizations found helpful included addressing flex time, criteria for working from home or telecommunicating, clear expectations for remote workers and what they in turn should expect from management, and outlines of technology support available to remote workers.
- **Websites**—The content of these sites are targeted to remote workers to help make them feel more included on the team. They also include tools and documents that can be housed in a “virtual library” on a common portal.
- **Training**—Some examples include courses for managers on managing a virtual team and teams outside their home countries, technical and communication training for remote workers, and classes that apply to all employees that are administered through interactive modules or web meetings.
- **Workbooks/guidebooks**—These include remote worker policies, HR policies, and guidelines for remote workers.
- **Buddy system**—Companies often use online communities to support virtual workers.

Other means of support include emails, instant messaging and best practice learnings of line managers who manage virtual teams.

Engage Virtual Workers by Establishing Trust

When you look at the issues and solutions, it really comes down to building TRUST with virtual workers, their peers and leadership.

- **T** – Team Make-up and Guidelines
- **R** – Resources and Policies
- **U** – User-friendly Work Environment
- **S** – Strategy for Employee Engagement
- **T** – Technology and Communication

To find out more about how you can build TRUST with your virtual workers, contact Chris gay at Bridge Consulting at chris.gay@bridgecnslt.com or 614.775.9706.