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Telecommuting-- substituting the computer for the trip to the job ---- has been hailed as a solution to all kinds of problems related to office work. For workers it promises freedom from the office, less time wasted in traffic, and help with child-care conflicts. For management, telecommuting helps keep high performers on board, minimizes tardiness and absenteeism by eliminating commutes, allows periods of solitude for high-concentration tasks, and provides scheduling flexibility. In some areas, such as Southern California and Seattle, Washington, local governments are encouraging companies to start telecommuting programs in order to reduce rush-hour congestion and improve air quality. But these benefits do not come easily. Making a telecommuting program work requires careful planning and an understanding of the differences between telecommuting realities and popular images. Many workers are seduced by rosy illusions of life as a telecommuter. A computer programmer from New York City moves to the tranquil Adirondack Mountains and stays in contact with her office via computer. A manager comes in to his office three days a week and works at home the other two. An accountant stays home to care for her sick child. she hooks up her telephone modern connections and does office work between calls to the doctor. These are powerful images, but they are a limited reflection of reality. Telecommuting workers soon

learn that it is almost impossible to concentrate on work and care for a young child at the same time. Before a certain age, young children cannot recognize, much less respect, the necessary boundaries between work and family. Additional child support is necessary if the parent is to get any work done. Management too must separate the myth from the reality. Although the media has paid a great deal of attention to telecommuting in most cases it is the employee ' s situation, not the availability of technology that precipitates a telecommuting arrangement. That is partly why, despite the widespread press coverage, the number of companies with work-at-home programs or policy guidelines remains small. 100Test
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