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**Article Submission**

All materials submitted to *The Federal Manager* should pertain to public service managers. Copy should be double-spaced and no longer than 10 pages. High resolution 300 dpi, color images in JPG or TIF format, as well as charts, or illustrations in EPS vector format, should be included if possible. Text should be submitted by email or on compact disc. Please also include a biography of the author.



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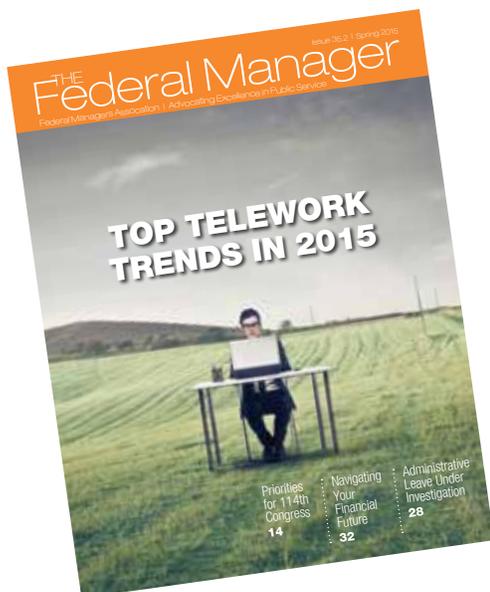
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# NEW AND IMPROVED THE FEDERAL MANAGER



For over 100 years, the Federal Managers Association (FMA) has strived to make our members more informed and efficient managers by offering insight into the extensive world of federal management. *The Federal Manager* magazine, now in its 35th year of publication, covers everything from administrative and legislative updates to accounts of departments and agencies that are implementing innovative methods of management. We endeavor to ensure our publications not only provide relevant and practical information, but also reflect our staff and members' dedication to facilitating communication with the nation's leaders.

Big things are happening in the

FMA National Office. Along with a new membership database and FMA-written legislation working its way through Congress, we've redesigned our magazine to better serve you. "Members in Action," for example, better represents the hard work of our members and highlights their local accomplishments. We also know that first impressions are everything: this clean, modern look will help us put our best foot forward for years to come.

We hope that this magazine's facelift will inspire you to share your own stories with the National Office. It is our ultimate goal to celebrate all the magnificent achievements and community outreach our members are accomplishing across the country, one day at a time. ●



## Show Your FMA Pride!

Be the first to get  
these NEW items:

- 8GB Thumb Drive
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Get yours today before they're gone!

For a complete list of FMA Merchandise check out [www.fedmanagers.org/products](http://www.fedmanagers.org/products) or contact Latorea Wilson at [Lwilson@fedmanagers.org](mailto:Lwilson@fedmanagers.org).



From Our President...

## FMA AND YOU – FACING CHALLENGES TOGETHER

As I write this column, our National Office Staff and Executive Board are busy getting ready for FMA's 2015 National Convention. I've just reviewed the outstanding training agenda created by Mika Cross from the Office of Personnel Management, including a session with Dexter Brooks, Associate Director at the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Our theme is, *Federal Managers – Building the Government of Tomorrow*. It's shaping up to be a great convention and I'm hoping for a good turnout. Due to the untimely passing of former National Secretary Pat Spade, we'll have an election for three national offices this year: Secretary (for a one-year interim term), as well as Vice President and Treasurer.

The federal workforce shrank for the third straight year in 2014. Some of the losses were due to retirement, but many were the result of sequestration and its impact on the workforce, including hiring freezes/restrictions in many agencies. Attrition accounted for most of the reductions and, unsurprisingly, sequestration made public service less attractive to new employees. In 2014, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projected the federal workforce would shrink 13 percent by 2022.

Most senior leaders have recognized that doing more with less is no longer possible. What we need to be focusing on is doing less with less. That means taking a hard look at not only what we're doing but how we're doing it. As managers and supervisors, it will be up to us to make many of those tough calls.

FMA will continue to support you through this painful process. We're gearing our training toward this reality and we're looking at webinars and other forms of ongoing training and support for managers facing these challenges. As a fellow manager, I know it's not easy. My own office has been cut in half over the past few years without a significant reduction in workload. I realize that some of our workload may be self-induced because we're "fixers and helpers" by nature; otherwise, we wouldn't be in public service. There are some things that managers will have to let go of and let the customer, whomever that may be, work things out for themselves. As a long-time HR person, that is a particularly hard concept for me to accept and I'm being told by fellow managers that I'm not alone in that.

While committee assignments are still being firmed up in Congress, there are already bills being introduced that will impact federal managers, if the legislation is enacted. The FMA Issue Briefs that our delegates will use while advocating during *Day on the Hill* are just as useful for visits to the local offices of your Members of Congress. Issue Briefs can be downloaded from [www.fedmanagers.org](http://www.fedmanagers.org) or you may request copies from the National Office. Developing relationships with the Staffers in local offices is very important and can have unexpected results. One example of that was given by Congressman Garamendi in his presentation at the FMA Region 4 Meeting in October. He told us that he only took a look at our Wounded Warriors Leave Bill because his local Staffer had told him it was something the FMA chapters from Travis AFB and Beale AFB (two of the largest employers in his district) were supporting. Your Representatives are currently scheduled to be in their home State or District on the dates provided on page 18. Please take time (off duty, of course!) to call their local offices and make an appointment to discuss issues affecting your work.

I also want to remind you that Public Service Recognition Week (PSRW) is coming up soon. This year, we will celebrate public servants May 3 - 9. Once again, FMA will lead the way on fundraising for the Federal Employee Education and Assistance Fund (FEEA) through the Public Service 5K Run/Walk in Washington, D.C. on May 10 – a perfect start to Mother's Day. Is there an event you could plan in your area? It doesn't have to be a run/walk – maybe a luncheon with guest speakers or a media blitz with letters to the editor and contacts with local radio and TV stations. Please take time to think about it; visit [www.psrw.org](http://www.psrw.org) for more information.

As always, we are here to serve you – our members. Please don't hesitate to contact me or any board or staff member if we can help you or if you have ideas to make FMA even better. ●

# TOP TELEWORK TRENDS IN 2015

A Conversation with Mika J. Cross  
and Dr. Rebecca Ayers,  
Office of Personnel Management



The Telework Enhancement Act (Public Law 111-292) marked a significant milestone in the history of federal telework when it was signed into law on December 9, 2010. As we approach the five-year mark of its enactment, FMA spoke with two federal experts in the realm of mobility, work/life and performance management: Mika J. Cross and Dr. Rebecca Ayers of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) at the time this article was written. Mika has since moved to another agency. We aimed to gather best practices, success stories and ongoing challenges the federal government has with implementing the mandates of the legislation.

“One way for us to honor your efforts is to make sure you have the flexibilities you need to help balance your life at work and at home.”

— Director Archuleta

This Act is a key factor in the federal government’s ability to achieve greater flexibility in managing its workforce through the use of telework. Well-established and implemented telework programs provide agencies a valuable tool to meet mission objectives while helping employees enhance work/life effectiveness. Specifically, telework:

1. is a useful strategy to improve Continuity of Operations to help ensure that essential federal functions continue during emergency situations;
2. promotes management effectiveness when telework is used to target reductions in management costs and environmental impact and transit costs; and,
3. enhances work-life balance because telework allows employees to better manage their work and family obligations, retaining a more resilient federal workforce able to better meet agency goals.

Why the shift for organizations to start empowering managers to adopt a new way of working for employees?

**RA:** Given the nature of today’s work and technology, many

employees can work anywhere at any time. Managing a mobile workforce can be tricky, but the best way to accomplish this is through having a solid performance management program in place. Focus on the results of your employees and express performance expectations to them.

**MC:** In 2015, leaders who are committed to increasing employee engagement and focusing on results will embrace the flexible workplace practices that can inspire their employees to have a choice in how, where and when their best work can be done — while holding them accountable for results, quality and impact.

What are you seeing in the work you do/organizations you reside in as far as trends, best practices, etc.?

**RA:** When I work with agencies to adopt better ways of implementing telework programs, I ensure that we first establish norms that facilitate successful communication processes, continuous improvement, commitment to assigned goals, and methods for streamlining how to best monitor performance and provide ongoing, routine feedback. As a manager, it’s best to openly discuss with your team how traditional office rules and government rules change with telework and how your team will establish norms to abide within the rules in the new environment.

**MC:** Organizations that are serious in attracting, retaining, engaging and empowering a productive and talented workforce understand that enabling a work environment supportive of employees’ priorities and responsibilities outside of work allows them to give their best while on the job.



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## TELEWORK STRAIGHT TALK IN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

*Telework today*

**1,020,034** Federal employees are eligible to telework... **yet only 267,227** have telework agreements in place.



**12%**  
of Federal employees have NOT been notified of their telework eligibility.

**32%**  
of teleworkers participate in telework 3 or more days a week.

**24%**  
of Federal agencies DO NOT have a telework policy in place to meet the Telework Enhancement Act.

*What might surprise you*

NON-TELEWORKERS	V.S.	TELEWORKERS
58%	IMPROVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES	71%
81%	PERCEIVED ACCOUNTABILITY	87%
41%	PERSONAL EMPOWERMENT	50%
65%	JOB SATISFACTION	73%
73%	WORK/LIFE BALANCE	85%
63%	RECOMMEND THEIR AGENCY	72%

### YOU'RE MISSING OUT ON THE BENEFITS OF TELEWORK:

- ENERGY SAVINGS
- DECREASED COMMUTE EMISSIONS
- REDUCED LEASING COSTS
- LOWER OVERHEAD
- HAPPY EMPLOYEES
- CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS

And to be clear, there is a difference between engagement and “happiness” or morale; but there also is a definite correlation between the two. What we’ve seen with regard to the annual FEVS scores is that agencies that rank higher often have a higher adoption of flexible work options, including telework.<sup>1</sup>

How do you see leaders being equipped to effectively manage performance in the modern workplace?

**RA:** Some of the best management

practices start with setting the stage for successful teleworking through the following measures:

1. Discuss with your employee their telework schedule: Which days are necessary to be in the office/alternate work site? How will you allow for telework substitution days? What is the approval process for requesting a substitution and how should your employees notify you if they need to request a change? Are the hours flexible? How do you combine telework with requested sick or annual leave? Supervisors need to clarify with their employees how to respond/ behave in these various situations.
2. Discuss with your employee eligibility for telework and consequences

for not adhering to telework eligibility requirements.

3. Walk through the telework policy with your employee; ensure they understand their role and responsibilities as a teleworker.

One of the most important factors for success is to ensure solid performance management protocols are in place:

- Create results-oriented performance plans
- Create work plans to supplement a competency-based plan
- Understand the difference between conduct and performance (when to reassess the telework agreement)
- Clarify performance expectations: what does “fully successful” look like?

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Office of Personnel Management. 2013 Status of Telework in the Federal Government, 47. Retrieved from [http://www.telework.gov/Reports\\_and\\_Studies/Annual\\_Reports/2013teleworkreport.pdf](http://www.telework.gov/Reports_and_Studies/Annual_Reports/2013teleworkreport.pdf).

- Provide frequent feedback (e.g., biweekly one-on-one meetings)

Performance management in the virtual environment shouldn't be all that different from how it is properly conducted in a traditional in-office setting. Focus on measurable results, communicate expectations to employees, and conduct regular feedback sessions to provide timely input about employees' performance.

**MC:** As the largest employer of American workers, the federal government must consistently evolve, adapt and change to be able to respond to and reflect the needs of our great nation. To do this well, organizations must be able to effectively attract, hire, retain and develop a diverse and inclusive workforce – reflective of the American people – with the right skill sets to perform the work of government. Telework enables organizations to overcome the socio-economic barriers that traditionally would or could limit the talent pools of qualified candidates by bringing the jobs to where the skills are; this becomes especially important when looking at succession planning for critical occupations.

In addition, telework can assist in driving enhanced performance, productivity and continuity of government operations during times when unplanned events, inclement weather or other threats may interrupt work being done from the traditional office. It focuses on new skills that are necessary to drive enhanced efficiencies that help focus on results and impact of performance rather than simply counting seats in chairs as a productive day at work. From a performance and accountability standpoint, telework also helps tighten the reins with how work performed is being counted.

What are some tools and best practices you've seen in organizations that are successfully embracing new ways of working?

**RA:** Build trust. Gaining trust can be accomplished in a variety of ways; two effective methods are open communication and providing autonomy. Having an "open door" policy with your employees helps to put them at ease. They believe what you are telling them and that you aren't keeping secrets. It also makes them feel comfortable approaching you with issues they may be experiencing. In the virtual environment, this can be accomplished by regular communication. Providing your virtual employees with work autonomy shows you trust them. To the employees, it signifies their manager has faith in them to

complete their work without being over-managed all the time. Showing trust in them opens the door for them to trust you as well.

Leadership buy-in is necessary to increase telework across the agency. Leadership is able to:

- lead by example by allowing direct reports to telework;
- bring the political will to see the development of a strong telework program;
- hold managers accountable for allowing telework (i.e., via performance standards); and,
- ensure the necessary tools are funded (e.g., technology budgets).

.....

**Telework enables [the federal government] to overcome the socio-economic barriers that traditionally would or could limit the talent pools of qualified candidates by bringing the jobs to where the skills are; this becomes especially important when looking at succession planning for critical occupations."**

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**MC:** Change is hard. We're asking people to think about work in a totally different way. Most people in leadership positions grew up their whole lives watching the people around them get up and GO to work. Now work is and can be done from literally anywhere thanks to mobile devices, remote technology and collaborative telework tools.

Managers often feel that without line of sight, there could be lack of control, and to be honest, without the right kinds

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of customized training that equip both employees and managers to demonstrate success, it could in fact fail. Effective telework implementation requires a new set of skills that enable our managers and leaders to lead their teams effectively in a modern work environment that embraces all sorts of flexible and supportive workplace programs – not solely telework. It also requires organizations to implement specific goals and objectives that are tied into performance and operational strategic plans, along with metrics and measurement, to make it all work and to demonstrate the value, impact and return on investment for this “new” way of working.

## How are organizations dealing with overcoming cultural barriers to adopting a modern workplace, one that embraces all types of flexibilities?

**RA:** Some techniques that help overcome cultural barriers include:

- Create and stick to a communication strategy: communication from program office to the rest of the agency and communication between supervisors and employees
- Provide solid training on the telework program and how to manage performance
- Instruct managers and employees on the telework program, its parameters, policies, and how telework works in your agency
- Ease managers’ concerns of managing a remote workforce
- Incorporate various technologies for communication (IM, video conference, share point technology, shared files

and drives)

- Occasionally facilitate in-person meetings for virtual teams, so they can build camaraderie that usually happens in the office
- Enforce your telework rules with everyone; know that every exception you make sets a precedent. Discuss all potential scenarios for exceptions up front (substitution days, switching telework days, additional telework days)
- Provide frequent amounts of feedback (e.g., biweekly one-on-one meetings)

## Effective telework implementation requires a new set of skills that enable our managers to lead their teams effectively in a modern work environment.

- Ensure that your telework policies directly address issues; work hours, equipment, internet access, and so on should all be explicitly outlined in the telework policy and telework agreement.

**MC:** The number one cultural challenge that exists with regard to telework adoption is management resistance, hands down. The good news is that federal agencies can work to leverage best practices and lessons learned that can

address this as an opportunity to drive increased employee engagement.

Overall, the most perceived challenges to adoption of telework and workplace flexibilities include:

- Insufficient or outdated technology
- Security
- Office coverage
- Nature of position
- Face time

As agencies adapt their workplace policies to accommodate more flexible work arrangements, including telework, there is an ongoing opportunity to work collaboratively with labor partners, the Enterprise Security Teams, Human Resources, facilities operations and employee resource/special emphasis groups to strengthen how organizations understand and mitigate perceived risks. Agencies should continuously review the policies that enable this new way of working; it just makes sense that as we learn from what we have implemented previously, there will be new ways to do things better.

## How do we equip leaders with the right sets of skills to lead a multi-generational workforce?

**RA:** Build trust through shared team identity and values. Creating a document of shared values helps employees to trust their co-workers hold to the same ideals as they do. Actively working towards those values builds team cohesion.

Overcome isolation through virtual water cooler talk. Actively work towards open communication among your employees. Hold regular staff meetings where everyone’s input is requested and considered. Encourage employees to reach out to their co-workers for

advice or assistance. Avoid miscommunication by developing communication strategies.

**MC:** As mobility spreads and telework as well as workplace flexibility policies are leveraged more as a strategic management tool throughout the government, it is increasingly important for agencies to focus on comprehensive training that covers areas such as time and attendance, hours of duty, performance management, pay and leave, work schedules, and security measures. Clear guidance for both managers and employees about the rules and responsibilities (especially for safeguarding mobile devices such as laptops, mobile phones, PDAs, storage devices, and even paper files and records) is essential for a safe, secure and successful telework program.

As the way each organization functions transforms into a more flexible, agile, and mobile workplace which embraces all forms of flexible work arrangements, it is essential to update and review local policies and customized training in order to keep pace with the rate of change.

From a cultural perspective, effective training and program management is a quick and easy option to make telework more secure overall. By focusing on specific manager security responsibilities, and reinforcing the roles and responsibilities of participating teleworkers, agencies can ensure that the workforce is educated, aware and in compliance with the latest policies to safeguard information in a mobile environment.

## What are some of the top issues managers must address to get it right?

**RA:** Telework = teletrust. If your employees are eligible for telework, give them autonomy unless they prove they can't meet your conduct or performance standards while teleworking.

Track results. If your employees aren't meeting your expectations or achieving results, then you can and should communicate how you might change the terms of their telework privileges.

Manage your teleworkers the same as your employees in the office. Think about it: when your employee is in the office, how often are you checking up on them? How do you know they're not surfing the internet the whole time?

**MC:** First and foremost, focus on training, education and awareness across all levels of the organization. Develop a strong outreach campaign that fosters universal awareness about the many benefits that telework can offer, if implemented correctly, and educate your leaders on how to effectively manage teleworkers (establishing expectations, frequent communication,

norms in the telework environment, and managing performance based on results).

Even more important is to take it outside of the "HR box" – tie it to strategic objectives in many other areas of business across the organization and work to collaborate with key leaders and stakeholders that own other functional areas throughout the organization. Some ways to accomplish this are by:

- Strengthening your Continuity of Operations planning;
- Reducing overhead costs associated with leased office space, utilities and transit subsidies;
- Demonstrating the IT and mobility infrastructure and how telework can enable meeting the requirements of the Digital Government Strategy; or,
- Working with your Performance Improvement Officer to fold in telework goals and objectives that can strengthen the performance of your mission.

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**As agencies adapt their workplace policies to accommodate more flexible work arrangements, there is an ongoing opportunity to work collaboratively... to strengthen how [we] mitigate perceived risks. Agencies should continuously review the policies that enable this new way of working.**

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It is imperative to think about telework as a strategic management tool rather than simply a nice-to-have benefit that makes employees happy — it is so much more than that if implemented effectively.

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## Finally, what's the employees' part in all of this? What are their responsibilities?

**RA:** Employees should understand the workplace flexibilities and ask questions if they do not. Employees should be responsible for their work and performance. If your manager isn't keen on mobile work, go out of your way to demonstrate that it works. Show them that your performance does not suffer.

Employees should not assume because someone in the office is teleworking that they are not available for meetings and phone calls.

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**It is imperative to think about telework as a strategic management tool rather than simply a nice to have benefit that makes employees happy—it is so much more than that if implemented effectively.**

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**MC:** It is a shared responsibility between both the manager and employee to make telework and other workplace flexibilities a success. Some of the best practices I communicate to employees are to:

- Complete required information systems security and general telework training and ensure you have the technical proficiency to implement the requirements. If not, work with your supervisor to update your Individual Development Plan with training and development that helps you acquire those skills.
- Take personal responsibility for safeguarding any sensitive or private information accessed while teleworking or while transported between locations; comply with agency policies and with any additional requirements spelled out in the telework agreement.
- Always demonstrate the same (or better) level of responsiveness, accessibility and availability you have when you are working from the traditional office. This

will help offset any concern about you not being accountable for your time or work while teleworking — no matter where from.

- Communicate with your supervisor, customers and team members if you have a change in your regular schedule/hours of duty. Remember that all workplace policies still remain in place, no matter where you are working from, so changes in start times/end times or extended breaks should always be requested and approved before you take the liberty of changing them.

For more information and guidance on telework, visit: [www.telework.gov](http://www.telework.gov). ●

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*Mika J. Cross is a seasoned Work/Life Policy & Workplace Transformation Strategist specializing in flexible workplace and wellness initiatives, culture change, and employee engagement. Her 17-year career includes military & civilian personnel and human capital strategy throughout the Department of Defense, United States Intelligence Community and across the federal government. She is a veteran of the U.S. Army, serving as both an enlisted soldier and commissioned officer. Mika is highly regarded as a thought leader for flexible and transformational workplace practices across both public and private sectors and in 2014 was selected as a President's Management Council (PMC) Interagency Fellow at the Office of Personnel Management (OPM.) She currently serves as a Work/Life Policy and Program Strategist for the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.*

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*Dr. Rebecca Ayers serves as the Manager for Performance Management Solutions (PMS) in the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM). PMS provides reimbursable solutions to federal agencies to address individual and organizational performance matters necessary to properly create and sustain a healthy and effective results-oriented culture. Rebecca is also the Program Manager for USA Performance, OPM's automated performance management system.*

*Article content comes from the following, previously approved content:*

- *Human Capital Management Government Conference talking points. December 2, 2014.*
- *TMGov "Creating the Government of Tomorrow — Managing the Modern, Mobile, Flexible Workplace" talking points. Cleared and Delivered on September 25, 2014.*
- *FCW Interview Q&A "Agencies Might Need to Rethink Telework Security" — November 21, 2014.*
- *OPM Briefing Memo — Media Inquiry w/Tom Temin and Emily Kopp, Federal News Radio - Live Interview recorded on July 23, 2014.*
- *FCW Article "What to Make of USPTO's Telework Troubles", by Steven Shih and Mika Cross, cleared for publication August 25, 2014.*