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Home working 'not about the kids'

Small firms value greater flexibility and less commuting

Ian Williams, vnunet.com 14 Mar 2008

Suggestions that many people work from home as it allows them to spend more time with the children may not be entirely accurate, according to research by UK Online.

The ISP investigated how small businesses and sole traders in the UK are using the internet.

The results point to greater flexibility and less commuting as the major driving factors, rather than family commitments.

Only six per cent of people rated seeing the children as the most appealing aspect of home working, compared with more than 60 per cent who placed greater flexibility at the top of their list.

More than 80 per cent of small business owners use the internet for home working, suggesting that the practice is becoming increasingly common among this sector.

"Traditionally flexible working has really been for parents and carers wanting to spend more time at home, but the internet offers many more opportunities to work away from the office," said Chris Stening, managing director of UK Online.

"These findings show a definite shift in perception. Remote working is becoming the norm and working from home no longer means sitting at your static desktop PC."

The survey also looked at some of the major challenges of working online. Almost half of respondents cited too many irrelevant emails as the biggest frustration with the internet.

"Email remains one of the key uses for the internet, and the management and hosting of email has never been as critical as it is for the growing numbers of remote workers," explained Stening.

The blurring of boundaries between work and home life was also cited as a major problem with working from home. Many respondents said that they had to create

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a strict structure in order to maintain a good work/life balance.

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