

Alternative workplace strategies: flexible, remote and paperless

AVK provides training for sustainable solutions for offices, for SMEs, large companies as well as governments. AVK also puts these sustainable operations into practice in its own activities.



Description of the case study:

AVK provides training and consultancy with regard to 'Het Nieuwe Werken', which is the Dutch term for alternative workplace strategies. Two basic aspects of these alternative workplace strategies include flexible or remote working, and the paperless office.

Flexible working

The alternative workplace strategies encompass an integral approach, that aim to make optimal use of the possibilities of 'the digital revolution'. Flexible or remote working means that employees won't always have to be physically present at the office. Better and smarter electronic communications can lead to more efficient processes, costs savings, as well as reduction of traveling.

Paperless working

Also 'the paperless office' makes office processes more efficient, and it saves paper and ink. Often, incoming letters are scanned so the original can be recycled. Real benefits can be achieved if letters are received digitally instead of on paper.

The transition to a paperless office and flexible working is often accompanied by a move to a new office, or a new office layout. Many things are changed, including the creation of flexible workstations. Instead of a printer in every room, there will be only a single centrally-located printer in the building, providing a disincentive for printing. Also, employees will no longer have the space to save paper documents in desk trays or binders.

AVK's own processes

In addition to the training provided on alternative workplace strategies, AVK integrates sustainability into its own activities as well. AVK is already a paperless organisation for more than 10 years, uses recycled furniture and a sustainable car fleet. As AVK has implemented these green concepts in its business management, the company now aims to 'green' the primary process: the training sessions.

AVK has the ambitions to provide more training sessions remotely. Currently, the trainers of AVK drive across the

country. Four out of the 180 available training modules are suitable to be provided through e-learning. The ambition is that by 2020, 50% of the training modules are suitable for this. Through this, AVK tries to green its training sessions, but in the end the clients will decide if the training session can be provided remotely, or has to be provided at location. However, it is clear that a growing number of clients prefers e-learning (virtual training sessions).

Investment costs

It requires an investment to make training modules suitable for virtual sessions, particularly to ensure that the e-learning session is of high quality and remains interesting, even though attendants are at their own computers. Once a module is made suitable, several groups could follow the same training on the same day. It is important to recognise that clients expect to pay a lower price for e-learning than for physical sessions.

Savings

Using alternative workplace strategies, employees can work everywhere and at every moment. As a result, the employees do not need to be on the road during rush hours.

AVK helps companies and government organisations to organise paperless meetings, using tablet computers. Especially for organisations with frequent meetings, this saves money as well as CO₂ emissions (considering that the carbon footprint of the tablets is smaller than of the use of paper). Often, the investment of the tablet computers can be earned back within one and a half years.

For AVK, the first question is always: "How can we avoid having to arrange a meeting?" If issues can be coordinated bilaterally, it is not needed to organise a meeting. If it is needed, then preferably through a video conference. If it is decided that physical meeting is really needed, Youpsa.nl is a clever tool to calculate which location is best for the meeting: the location requiring the least travel kilometres for each of the meeting participants. All of these measures lead to travelling less kilometres, and therefore savings.

Remote training sessions (e-learning) will also reduce the number of kilometres travelled by AVK employees. Because AVK's trainers are spread over the country, travel distances can already be reduced, but virtual learning will of course reinforce this.

What was the type of green solution? Please select the type of solution.:

Organisational methods and (green) business plans [1]

What does the featured solution contribute to?:

Resource efficiency

Which technology area(s) does the case study belong to?:

Resource efficiency [2], Other resource efficiency [3]

Technical and capacity requirements?:

The office manager has a crucial role in transitions to alternative workplace strategies. The office manager should give responsibility to staff members, give them trust, and encourage them to join in the shift of the office culture, and give a good example therein themselves.

En important aspect of alternative workplace strategies is trust in employees. Instead of monitoring by the supervisor if everyone is present in the office, work takes place on the basis of performance agreements. The employees can organise their own working pattern, according to a schedule and at a location that fits them best.

Regulatory framework prerequisites and constraints?:

To make training modules suitable for e-learning, it has to be taken into account that the attention span of people in front of a computer screen is much shorter than in physical sessions. The training material should be offered in short portions of 10 to 15 minutes, and there must be the possibility to stop or pause at any time. Through peer-assisted learning (PAL), interaction with other course participants can take place, for example once a week through a video conference.

Partners:

Company name

- AVK B.V. (Adviesgroep voor Kantoorinnovatie) [4]

Relationship type:

Company that supplied or installed the green solution

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Links

- [1] <http://greeneconet.eu/type-green-solution/organisational-methods-and-green-business-plans>
- [2] <http://greeneconet.eu/technology-area/resource-efficiency>
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