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Telecommuting In Action

The National Alliance for Public Charter Schools helped create more than 4,300 schools across the country that educate 1.2 million children. As part of that work, Justin C. Cohen, the Alliance's former director of industry support and development, found himself traveling all over the United States. Still, when Cohen was at home, he was literally at home. Unlike the majority of the Alliance's employees, he rarely went into its Washington, D.C.-based office. Instead, he telecommuted.

Cohen says aside from the fact that he could not simply pop (physically, that is) into someone's office, his life was not much different from how it would have been if he worked in D.C. He was just as accessible - at times even more so.

Technology let him keep in touch with his colleagues. For example, he had a VoIP phone system that allowed him to forward his calls in a single click to wherever he was. Most of the time, those calls were forwarded to his smartphone. This phone also allowed him to send and receive e-mails and instant messages, and check his calendar, which was networked and available to his colleagues, as well. Plus, webinars helped him work with clients.

While Cohen did not worry about keeping in touch, there was one thing he did worry about: wireless security. That was why he avoided sending files via a wireless connection, opting instead to use a Bluetooth application to transmit files from laptop to Treo for e-mailing. And he connected via a wired connection whenever possible. These little inconveniences might be annoying, but they were worth it, says Cohen.