

The History of Remote Work

1560

Florence's Uffizi Gallery is constructed. The central administrative building of the Medici mercantile empire, it is a predecessor to the first-ever corporate office.

1760 – 1840

The Industrial Revolution creates strong social momentum towards working outside the home.



Early 1900s

The first iterations of the modern office begin to appear in America, birthed in large part by innovations such as the telephone, telegraph, typewriter, and public electricity.



1926

Ford Motor Companies adopts a five-day, 40-hour workweek.

1968

Robert Probst designs the cubicle.



1970

The clean air movement, without identifying remote work explicitly, lays significant groundwork for remote work by identifying one of its greatest benefits: zero commute time. The term "gridlock" is coined within the decade.



1973

The Telecommunications-Transportation Tradeoff is published by physicist Jack Nilles who worked remotely on a NASA communication system. Nilles is now regarded as the father of remote work.

1975

The first personal computers hit the scene.



1979

The OPEC oil embargo is in its sixth year. *The Washington Post* publishes an article titled "Working at Home Can Save Gasoline." General skepticism remains concerning remote work.

1979

IBM allows five of its employees to work from home as an experiment. By 1983, roughly 2,000 IBM employees work remotely.



1983

The internet is born.

Mid-1980s

J. C. Penney allows call-center employees to work from home.

1987

The number of telecommuting Americans reaches 1.5 million.¹

1991

Wifi is invented.



1995

Congress approves permanent funding for "flexiplace" work-related equipment in the homes of federal employees.

1995

C-base, one of the first hackerspaces in the world, is founded in Berlin. Hackerspaces were some of the earliest models of coworking spaces.



2000

The DOT Appropriations Act is enacted, requiring all executive agencies to establish telecommuting policies. By 2004, all federal employees can telecommute, provided they do so "without diminished employee performance."

2005

The first official coworking space is created in San Francisco by software engineer Brad Neuberg: the San Francisco Coworking Space.



2008

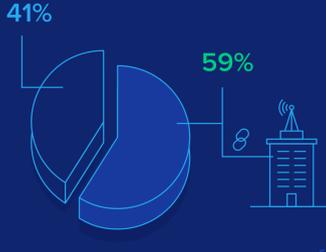
Enterprise social networking tool Yammer launches (and is later acquired by Microsoft in 2012 for \$1.2 billion).

41%

59%

2010

Over 59% of remote workers now work for private companies rather than simply freelancing.²



2010

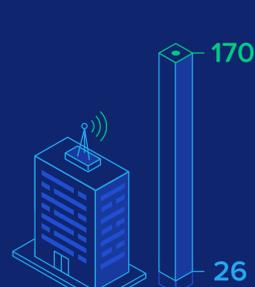
President Barack Obama signs the Telework Enhancement Act, requiring all federal agencies to create policies for eligible employees to work remotely.

2016

Team collaboration tool Slack grows from 0 in 2013 to 4 million daily active users.

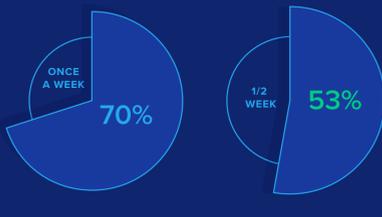
2018

The number of fully-remote US companies jumps from 26 in 2014 to 170 in 2018.³



2018

70% of the world's population work remotely at least once a week—53% for at least half the week.⁴



2019

Video collaboration software Zoom reports 50,800 customers with more than 10 employees, a 5x increase from 2017.



2019 (and beyond)

99% of remote workers say they would like to work remotely at least some of the time for the rest of their careers.⁵



¹Christian Science Monitor, 1987

²U.S. Census Bureau, 2013

³FlexJobs, 2018

⁴IWG, 2018

⁵Buffer, 2019