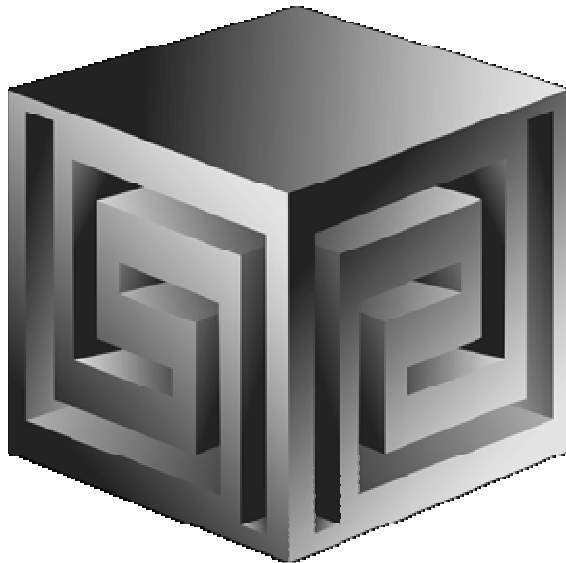# Working on Projects Remotely

COLLABORATE '07
Session # 609

Cathye Pendley

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Vlamis Software Solutions, Inc.

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http://www.vlamis.com

Vlamis Software Solutions, Inc.

- **Founded in 1992 in Kansas City, Missouri**
- **Oracle Partner and reseller since 1995**
- **Specializes in ORACLE-based:**
  - ❑ **Data Warehousing**
  - ❑ **Business Intelligence**
  - ❑ **Data Transformation (ETL)**
  - ❑ **Web development and portals**
  - ❑ **Express-based applications**
- **Delivers**
  - ❑ **Design and integrate BI and DW solutions**
  - ❑ **Training and mentoring**
- **Expert presenter at major Oracle conferences**

Who Am I?

- **Cathye Pendley, Senior Consultant**
  - ❑ **Oracle / Express Consulting 1993 - 2002**
    - ▪ **Implement OLAP projects**
    - ▪ **Manage project teams**
    - ▪ **Manage Dallas Business Intelligence Group**
  - ❑ **Corporate IT Director 2002 - 2004**
  - ❑ **Senior Consultant for Vlamis Software since 2004**

Vlamis Sessions

- **208: Using Oracle BI EE with Oracle OLAP Cubes**

  Monday, April 16, 2007 10:30 AM - 11:30 AM (Surf F)

- **226: Using Warehouse Builder for Business Intelligence**

  Monday, April 16, 2007 3:30 PM - 4:30 PM (Surf E)

- **453: Building Cubes, Analyzing Data in 2 Hrs (Hands-on)**

  Wednesday, April 18, 2007 11:00 AM - 12:45 PM (Palm B)

Agenda

- **Overview and Background**

- **Benefits for Employee / Consultant**

- **Benefits for Companies**

- **Tools and Techniques**

- **Handling Obstacles**

- **Summary**

Background and Overview

- 1993 - Began Consulting Career
    - IRI / Oracle
    - Shell Consulting Services
    - Pinnacle/ Thinkfast Consulting
    - Braun Consulting

- 2002 – Left consulting and became a Corporate IT director for a better work/life balance

- 2004 – Not satisfied with long commute, started looking for something closer to home

Background and Overview

- Vlamis Software offered me a consulting position working remotely.

- Hired on in October of 2004 to work for a client in Philadelphia, Home Office in Kansas City, I live in Dallas.

- 2007 – Still at the same client in Philadelphia with Vlamis Software
  - Been to Philadelphia twice for a total of 5 days
  - Been to Kansas City twice for a total of 6 days
  - Attended conferences and training classes

Background and Overview
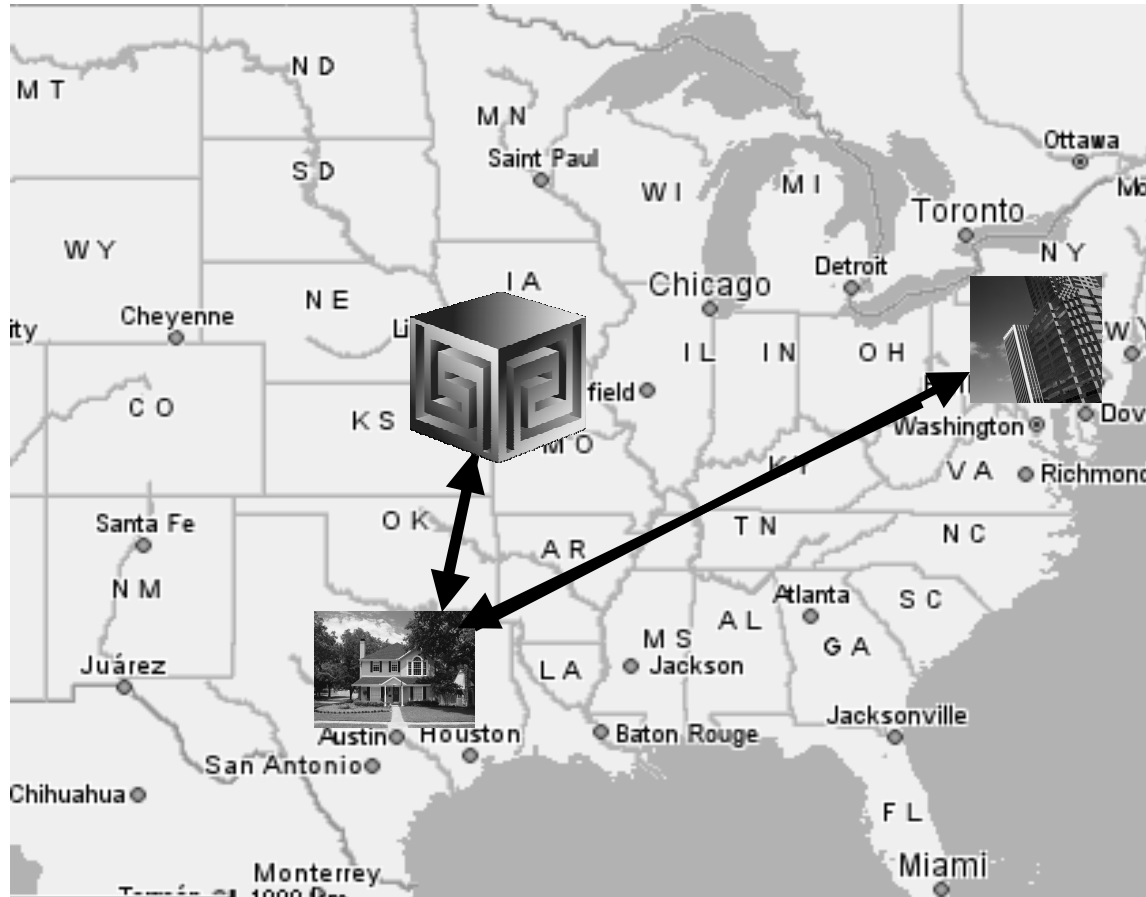
Background and Overview
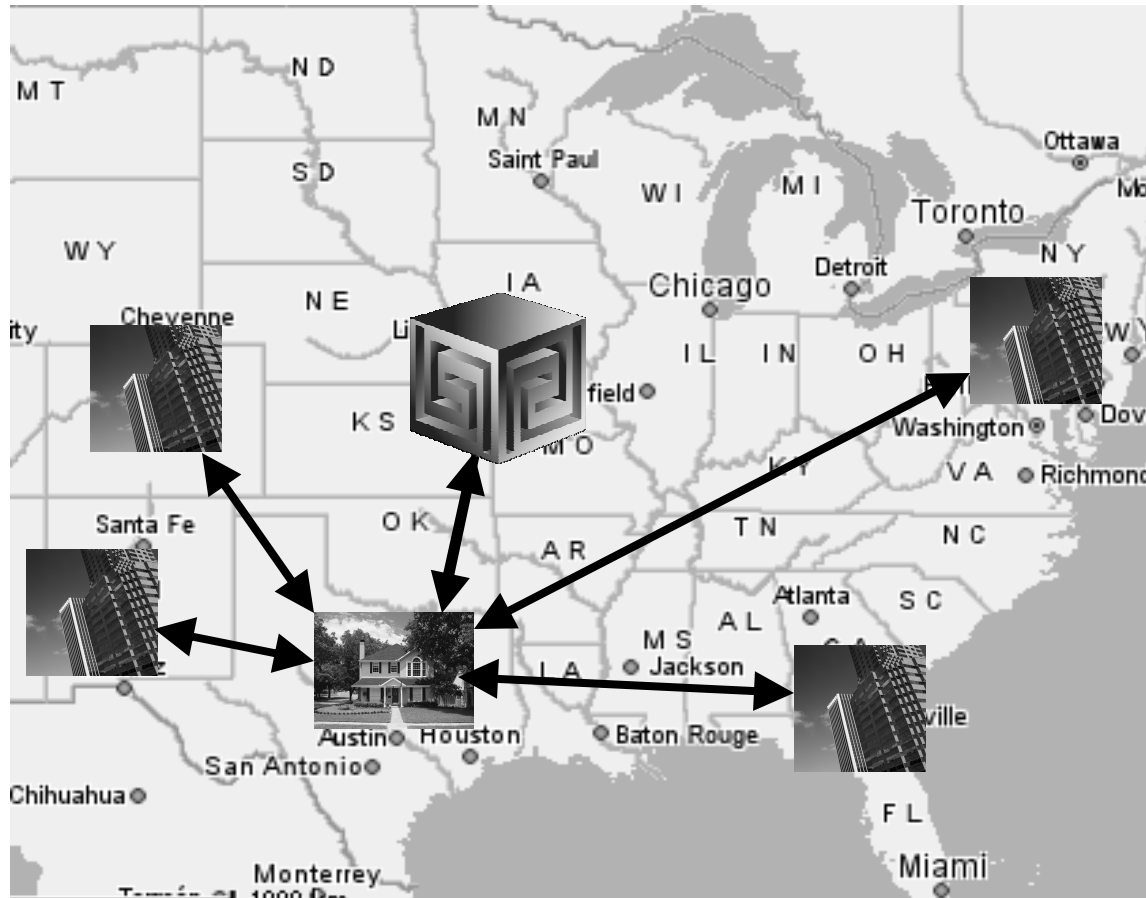
Employee/Consultant Benefits

- $$$ Savings
  - Clothing and Dry Cleaning
  - Childcare
  - Vehicle Expense
  - Dining Out
  - House Cleaning

Employee/Consultant Benefits

Itemized Savings Per Year

Dry Cleaning	$ 900
Childcare	$10,000
Vehicle Expense	$ 3,000
Dining Out	$ 600
House Cleaning	$ 2,500
Total Savings	**$17,000**

Employee/Consultant Benefits

Balance of work/home life
- Time saved from traveling
- Being at home for unplanned events
- Spending more time doing what I enjoy

Relief of stress
- Driving in rush hour traffic
- Quickly handling personal emergencies vs. getting work done
- Needing to be home for deliveries or service negatively impacting work time

Company Benefits

- Cost Savings
  - Travel expenses if consulting
  - Office space
  - Misc. Office Equipment
  - Relocation Expenses

Itemized Cost

Travel (if consulting)	$60,000 per year
Office Expense	$ 6,000 per year
Relocation Expense	$ 40,000 one time

Company Benefits

- Improved Productivity
    - Less time spent traveling or commuting
    - Easier to respond to personal needs therefore getting back to work sooner
    - More convenient to work off hours
    - Employees are more motivated

Company Benefits

- Hiring and retaining Quality Employees
    - Not limited to a particular geographical area
    - Attract candidates that otherwise are not possible.
    - Easier to find persons with specialized skill sets.
    - Happier, loyal employees that can't get this deal elsewhere.

Why would I go anywhere else?

Company Benefits

- Miscellaneous Benefits
  - Employees are all over the country
  - Ears to the ground in different areas
    Dallas and Kansas City
  - Improved responsiveness

Tools and Techniques

Communication
- Phones – Home, Business, VOIP, Cell
- IM

    Trillian allows multiple logins to different IM
    providers
- E-Mail
- Conference Calls

    freeconference.com
- Web-Conferencing

    YUGMA

    Net Meeting
- Video Conferencing
- High-Speed Internet

Tools and Techniques

Software
- VPN
  - Running multiple VPNs can create an issue. Sometimes firewalls will prevent you from accessing internet, IM, and e-mails.
- Remote Desktop
  - Microsoft Remote Desktop
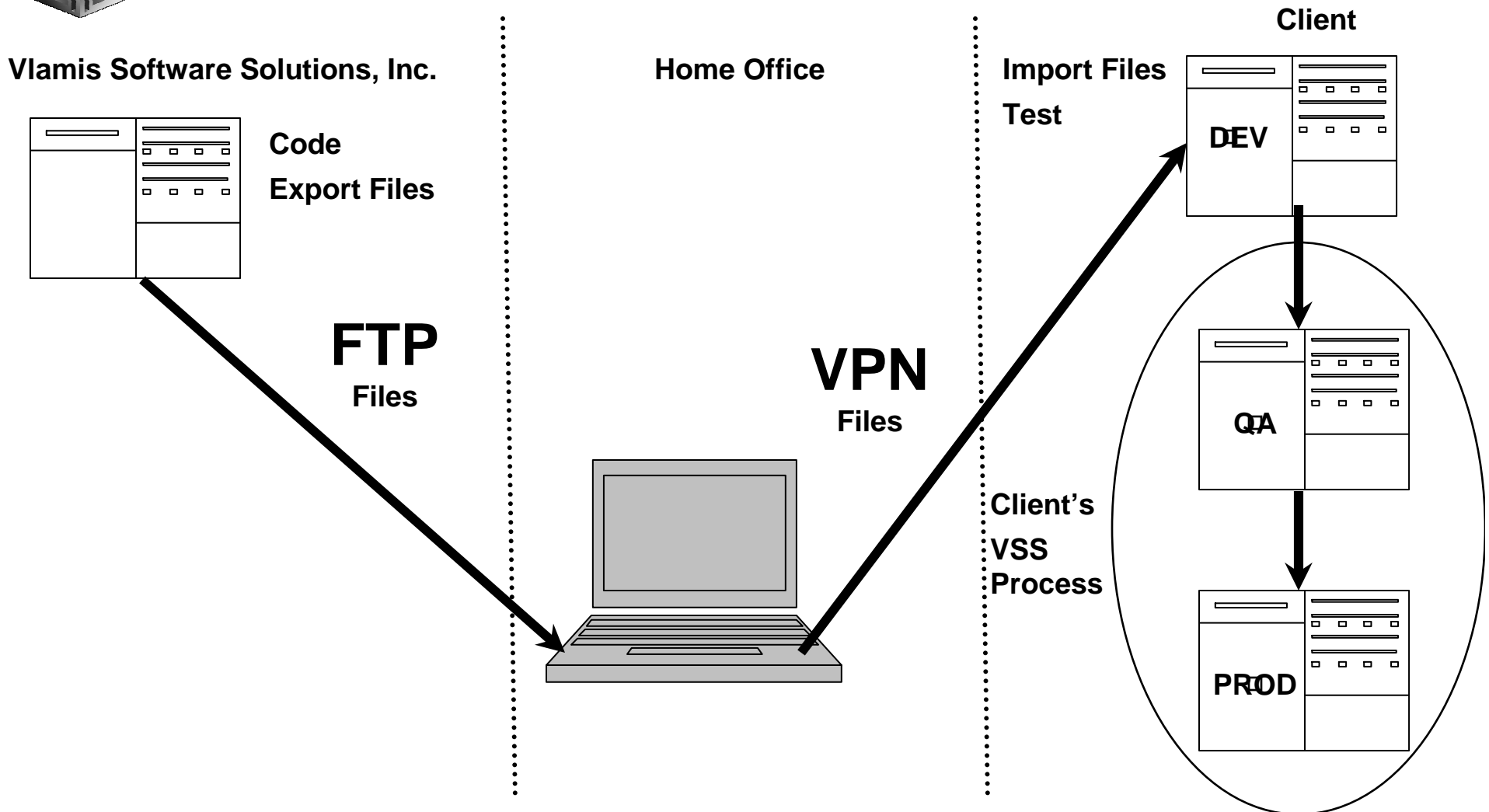 - VNC Remote Desktop
- FTP
  - FileZilla

Tools and Techniques

Processes
- Remote design
  - Design via conference calls and web conferencing
  - Produce mock up designs and e-mail to team for feed back
- Remote development - how to do this in a group environment
- Completing code drops
- Emergency fixes
- Check on the status of builds

Code Drops

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Code

Export Files

FTP

Files

Home Office

VPN

Files

Import Files

Test

Client

DEV

Client's

VSS

Process

QA

PROD

Emergency Fixes

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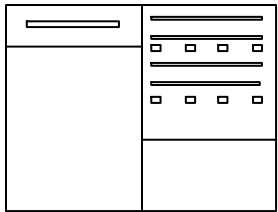
Home Office

Client

DEV

QA

PROD
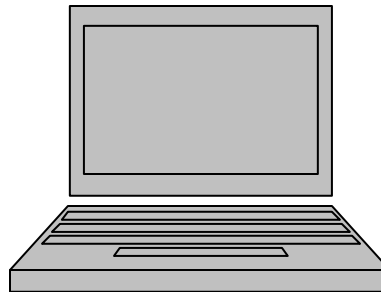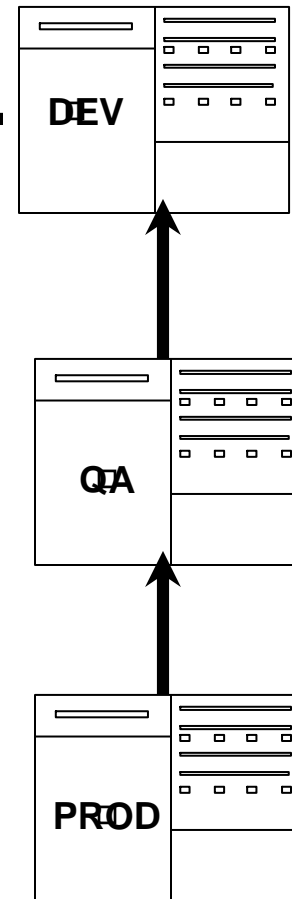
Handling Obstacles

Employee

- How will I keep from feeling disconnected from coworkers and/or clients?

- Will it be difficult to working alone everyday?

- What if I have laptop issues that need to quickly be resolved?

- Will it be difficult to focus on work?

Handling Obstacles

Employee

- Is it difficult to turn your work off at night?

- Is it difficult to keep a professional environment?

Handling Obstacles

How will I keep from feeling disconnected from coworkers and/or clients?
This is a bigger concern for some more than others.
Things to keep in mind:

- Phone Calls – it is o.k. to ask about something other than work

- E-mails – it is o.k. to send something personal every now and then

- Lunches or Happy Hours – if are close to the office or other remote employees make an effort to visit

Handling Obstacles

Will it be difficult to working alone everyday?
It is possible, if so try the following:

- Go out to lunch once – twice a week
    - Co-workers
    - Customers / Potential Customers
    - Family and Friends

- If you have a hobby, spend a lunch hour
        enjoying your hobby.

- Do volunteer work at lunch

Handling Obstacles

What if I have laptop issues that need to quickly be resolved?
IT staff is not as accessible as we would like, but are some suggestions to help with laptop issues:

- Use remote desktop for the support person remotely access your machine.

- Call 800 tech support numbers

- When you go on vacation, take your laptop in to be serviced by a local representative.

Handling Obstacles

Will it be difficult to focus on work?
Some days are better than other but here are some things to help out:

- Have a separate office

- Set standard work hours for yourself

- Set rules up with household members about office work hours and expected behavior

Handling Obstacles

Is it difficult to turn your work off at night?
For me YES! Try the following to help:

- Set standard work hours – working past those hours should be for last minute requirements or emergencies.

- Keep the laptop in the office if it is tempting you to work all hours for no real reason.

- **Don't** feel guilty.

Handling Obstacles

Is it difficult to keep a professional environment?
At times it can be, below are some things to keep in mind:

Outside noises:
- Dogs - keep barking dogs away from office when you using the phone.
- Children – if you have a in-house nanny watching young kids, make sure she understands the working rules. Toddlers can't understand.
- Doorbells – You may want to put a sign up during business hours.

Handling Obstacles

- Keep equipment working properly
  - Phones need to be charged at all times
  - Ensure you have good clear signal when using the cell phone.
  - Speaker phones need to have a clear quality
  - VOIP phones can disconnect randomly.
  - Keep laptop and all internet equipment well maintained

Handling Obstacles

- Company/Client

  - How will we communicate with each other?

  - How do I keep the employees feeling part of our team?

  - Will my client relationship suffer?

  - What happens when the technology fails?

  - How do I know they are working?

Handling Obstacles

How will we communicate with each other?

- E-mails – Usually work great for non-emergencies. Keep in mind that sometimes when using VPN, the person may not be able to access their e-mail.

- IM – Our preferred method of communication for quick questions or to see if someone is available to talk. Some VPN firewalls won't let you access IM, and you must remember to turn it back one when you are out of VPN.

Handling Obstacles

How will we communicate with each other?

- Phone Calls – Good for complex questions, but sometimes it can make a person lose their concentration if they are focusing on project work.

Handling Obstacles

Will my client relationship suffer?
I believe it could in the following areas:

- Missed opportunities - if you are onsite, people might see you in the hall or at your desk and think to ask "Does your company help with …"

This one is tough and there is no way to overcome it 100% but try to make visits to see the client on a regular basis and see first hand what is going on

Handling Obstacles

- Loss of business - Some companies have varying opinions on consulting companies working remotely. If one of the decision makers has a issue with not seeing the consultant in the office every day, then your company will be at risk of losing the business.

To minimize this risk, initially, the consultant may need to spend time on-site with the client. Once the client the trust level is built, working remotely is less of an issue.

Handling Obstacles

• Building a personal relationship – not as easy to talk about non-business related topics that you might do when you are working side by side and going out to lunch.

Take a few minutes every now and then to find something about your client team.

One of my clients enjoys watching the TV show "24" as much as I do. Sometimes we talk about it on Tuesday. If something really shocking happens, we may send each other and e-mail after the show.
Our daughters like American Idol – another great subject.

Handling Obstacles

What happens with technology fails?

It will and there is no way around it, having a back up plan is a must but sometimes that isn't good enough.

- Have multiple ways of communicating

    Web conferencing (> 1 service)

    Conference Calling

    More than one phone (a cell is a must)

- Have more than one way to upload and down load files:

    - Remote Desktop
    - FTP

Handling Obstacles

- Consider options if you have a lose of internet connection:

  Have a secondary place you can work

  Neighbors – I had a single neighbor that worked during the day, and said I was welcome to use the connection at his house anytime

  Share wireless with a neighbor

  Family's workplaces – I borrowed an office at my husband's work when we moved and were without internet access for a week.

  Internet Cafes – Can be loud and unprofessional.

Handling Obstacles

How do I keep the employees feeling part of our team?

- Company conference calls
  - What is the right number?
  - I feel we don't have enough enough
  - Co-worker feels we have too many

- Company meetings
  - How often
  - On-site
  - Off-site

- Encourage remote employees to get together

Handling Obstacles

How do I know remote workers are really "working" ?

- Are they meeting their deadlines?

- Are they normally available with you try to contact them?

- Are you receiving complaints from others concerning the remote worker's responsiveness?

You don't have to visually seem them to know they are working!

Summary

Over the Past 2 ½ I have worked at Vlamis there
has an actual cost savings:

- •Cathye - $42,5000
- •Vlamis - $60,000
- •Client - $150,000

Summary

Non-Tangible benefits:

- Happier more productive employee

- Increase in employee responsiveness
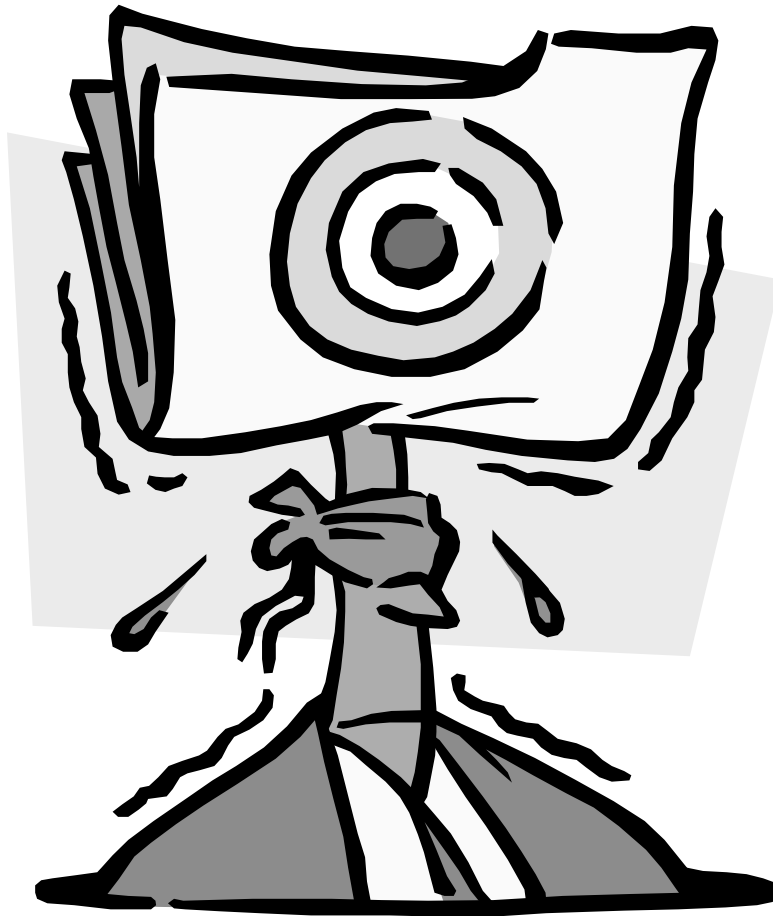
- Retaining quality employees

Summary

When I asked my client to comment on working remotely, he responded that he felt it had been a good experience and provided me with the key reasons below:
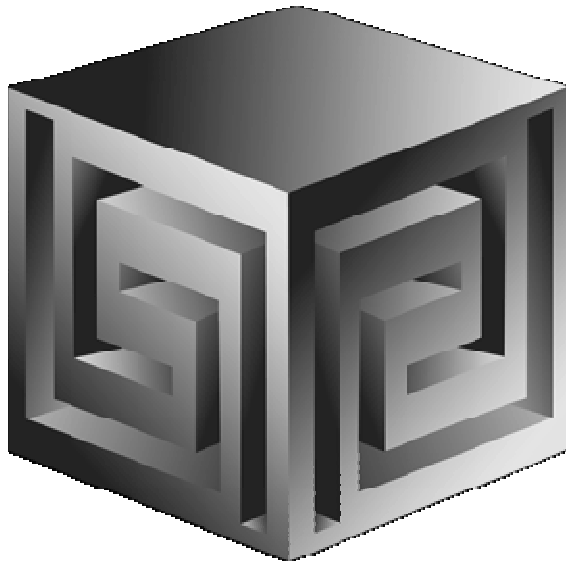
1. "You are very responsive. You get back to us quickly when we have questions or problems."
2. "You are easy to contact and make yourself available. You let us know if you will not be available."
3. "You know our applications well."

Questions?

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