

The Case for Smarter Commuting

November 2009

A Citrix GoToMyPC report



Introduction

Congested roads, packed buses, delayed trains; the thought can send shivers down the spine of even the cheeriest soul as they contemplate their daily journey to work. With the clocks going back at the end of October and the nights getting colder and darker, the commute will only become that bit harder.

But does it really have to be like this? Does the traditional 9-to-5 working day still need to dictate our modern working lives and condemn British workers to the frustrations of rush hour traffic and crowded public transport?

To coincide with the third annual National Commute Smart Week, Citrix® GoToMyPC® set out to uncover the real picture of British commuting and pose the question: **is there a 'smarter' way to commute?**

We commissioned research to discover how much time British people spend travelling to and from work, their biggest frustrations and the impact commuting has on their lives. The research also investigates the ways in which their journeys could be improved and the key barriers that are stopping British workers from altering their commuting habits.

This report presents a complete overview of the research findings, provides evidence of the benefits of smarter commuting and offers tips and guidelines for businesses and employees alike who may be considering smarter, more flexible working approaches.

Andrew Millard

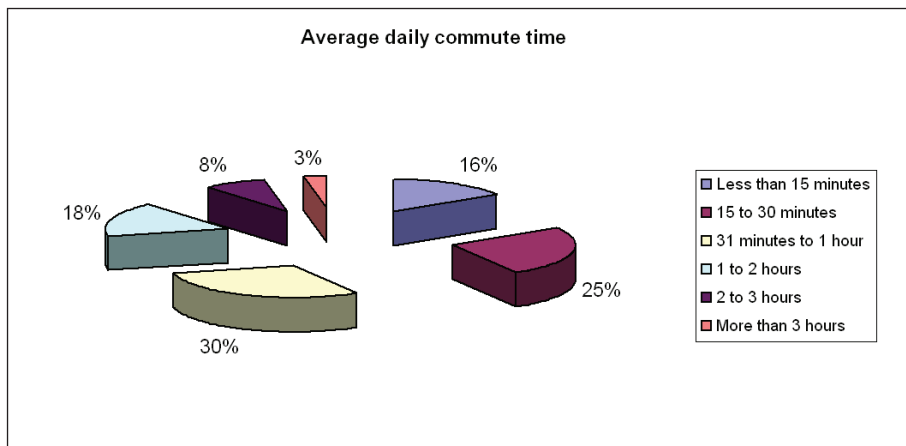
Director of eCommerce, EMEA at Citrix GoToMyPC

Commute Smart Research 2009

Citrix Online commissioned YouGov to poll 1,970 individuals to discover how much time they spend commuting and their key frustrations with their journeys. The research also provides an insight into the ways British workers think their journeys could be improved or reduced and the barriers to achieving those reforms.

Commuting habits

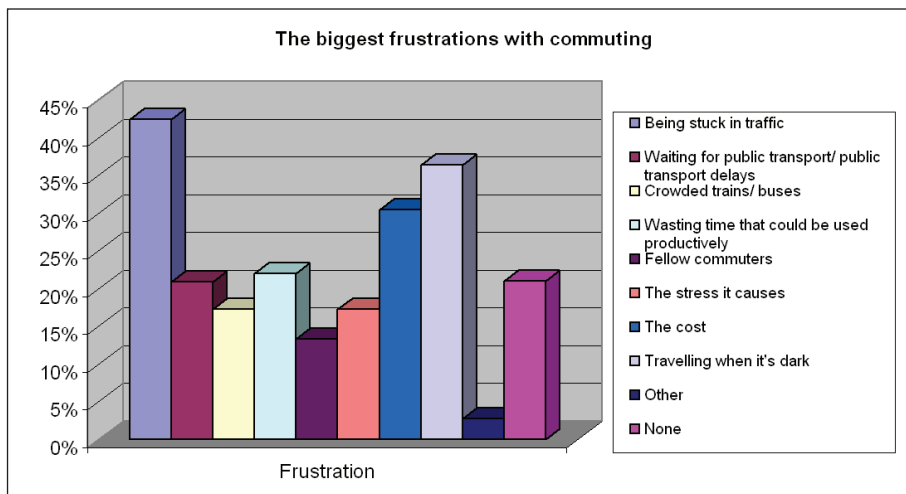
The survey discovered that workers spend approximately 26 million hours every single day commuting to and from the workplace. This works out at an average of 49 minutes per person, but one in ten Brits are obliged to commute at least two hours every day.



The most popular form of transport for commuting remains a car for 68% of British workers, followed by foot (26%), bus (18%) and train (11%).

Biggest frustrations

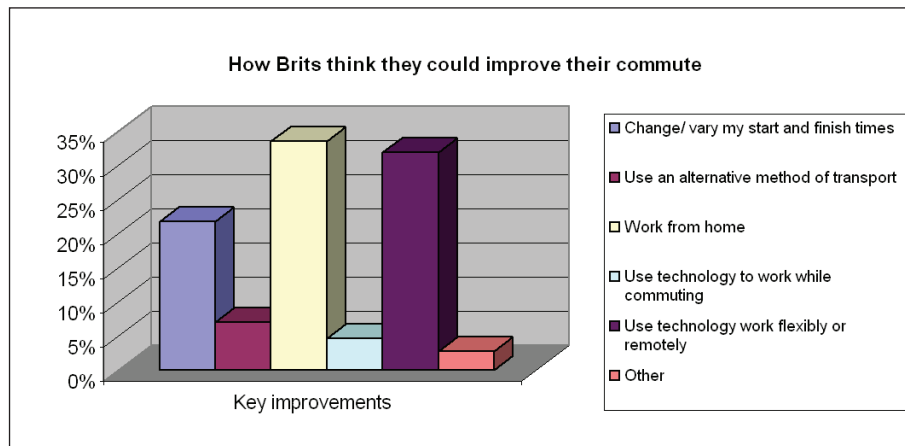
The survey respondents were very clear that commuting is a highly frustrating experience, with 62% saying that if they could, they would reduce the time they spent commuting to and from work.



Unsurprisingly, given the number of workers that travel by car, being stuck in traffic topped the list of biggest frustrations, being cited by 42% of British commuters. Travelling in the darker winter months and the expense of commuting were also issues. Approximately one in five (22%) expressed annoyance over wasting time that could be spent more productively.

The case for smart commuting

It was clear from the research that British workers believe they can substantially improve their journey to work and collectively reduce their commuting time by up to 4.6 million hours every day.



Many identified 'smarter commuting' approaches as viable solutions, mentioning home working or working flexible hours so they could alter their commuting schedule. The importance of technology as an enabler of smarter commuting was featured prominently too, with 32% saying that using IT would be a key enabler.



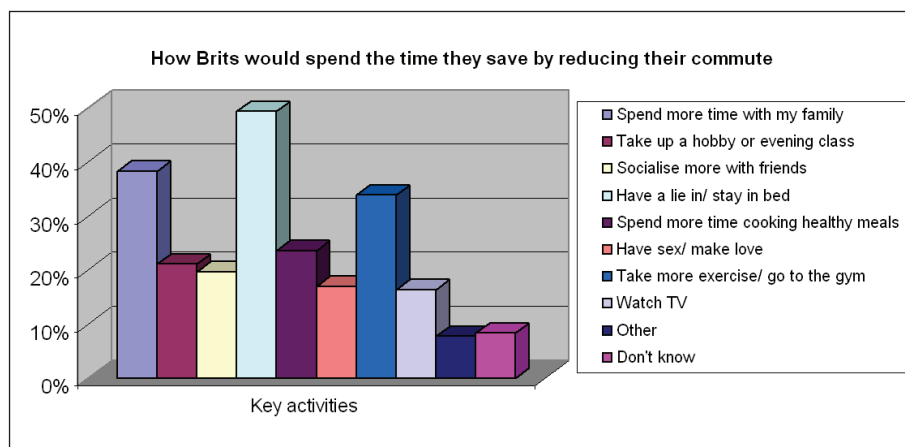
"I was incredibly lucky to find an employer that was willing to give me the flexibility to work from anywhere. Using web-based remote access and meeting technology, I can still take part in weekly staff meetings and I think I'm more productive working from home than I ever was working in an office."

Richard Ward, a Multimedia Designer at Oxford-based BOCC, is using Citrix Online's GoToMeeting® remote collaboration tool to benefit from his company's approach to smarter commuting; allowing him to work from his Northumberland home instead of travelling to the office every day.



Benefits of smarter commuting

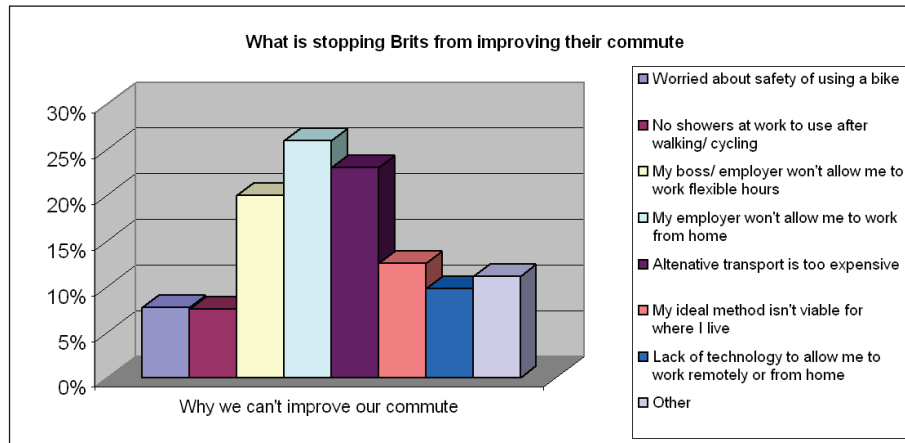
When questioned, British commuters had plenty of ideas about how they could use the potential 4.6 million saved hours to improve their work-life balance.



Catching up on more sleep or rest, unsurprisingly, was key for 49% of commuters. Other popular ways use the extra time they saved included spending more time with family (38%), taking more exercise (34%) and cooking healthy meals (24%).

Barriers to smarter commuting

Despite a clear desire to improve their commute and save time, British workers identified a number of issues that are preventing smarter commuting from being practised more widely.



The most cited barrier is a lack of support and buy-in from bosses, with 46% of respondents revealing that their employers wouldn't allow them to work flexible hours or work from home. One in ten also said they didn't have the right technology to enable them to work remotely.

“

“Bosses who insist that people all go to work at the same time and stick to a set routine are actually weakening their business. That's because people generally don't like being told how to run their life; they feel their boss is controlling them and therefore are actually less motivated. Using the Internet, for instance, to gain increased flexibility means that motivation levels in office staff could rise as people feel more in control of their own destiny.”

Graham Jones, Internet Psychologist

”

Conclusion

This research demonstrates that British workers are frustrated by many aspects of their commute and there exists a real desire to improve their travel to and from work. The commuters surveyed were clear about the benefits of smart commuting, particularly in achieving a greater work-life balance, and identified several ways in which this approach could be put into practice.

However, a number of stumbling blocks are still making the transition to smarter commuting difficult for many and the research suggests it is business owners that are the key barrier to the introduction of more flexible work arrangements. It is not surprising that employers are reluctant to embrace new working models, particularly when a productive, engaged and visible workforce can be seen as key in a competitive, and challenging, economic climate.

Overcoming any fears and considering smarter working practices, however, could be critical for businesses who are looking to acquire and retain the very best talent, improve staff morale and loyalty, and maximise productivity of their workforce.

By working together, employers and employees can better understand the frustrations and issues faced by both parties and encourage an atmosphere of trust and collaboration that will help to transform the British workplace into a highly positive, productive environment.

“

“National Commute Smart Week is all about looking at ways that UK workers can improve their work-life balance by reducing the strain and stress caused by commuting. The Citrix GoToMyPC survey reveals there is a lot of frustration amongst British workers that could easily be reduced if more businesses adopted and embraced smarter working practices.”

Phil Flaxton, CEO at WorkWise UK

”

Top tips for commuters

1. Speak to your employer

If you think smart commuting could work for you then approach your line manager to discuss the options. Taking a more flexible approach can work well for employers as well as their staff. Parents and carers possess a legal right for flexible working to be considered.

2. Make your commute more productive

Travelling at different times or abandoning the commute altogether isn't always viable. If that's the case, we suggest doing your best to use your time constructively. If you use public transport, grab a book or catch up on your emails to get a head start when you arrive at the office. If you're in the car then audio books as a great way to entertain yourself or even learn a new language.

3. Consider public transport

The majority of Brits use the car to commute, yet their biggest frustration is being stuck in traffic. Look into the possibility of using public transport instead; it could be more cost effective, allow you to be more productive with your time, and there are potential environmental benefits too.

4. Work from home

Working from home, even if it's only for one day a week, can cut commuting time by allowing you to escape the journey to work altogether. Using remote access technology, you can connect with your office computer and be just as productive as if you were sitting at your desk.

5. Get on your bike

If you live reasonably close to your place of work, then why not consider cycling? It's green, healthy and cheap – plus, you'll be able to whizz past all the cars that are stuck in a jam.

6. Use your extra time wisely

If you embrace smart commuting, make the most of the additional time you get as a result. Why not take up a new hobby, do more exercise or spend more time with friends or family?

7. Travel at different times to avoid the rush

No matter what mode of transport you use, certain periods in the day are busier than others. Altering your start and finish times to avoid rush hours could make a big difference to the amount of time you spend commuting every day.

8. Be transparent with colleagues and clients

If you're working flexible hours or from outside the office, make sure those you work with know when you are working and how to get in touch.

9. Use internet tools to stay in touch with your team

Working away from the office doesn't mean you need to feel distanced from the rest of the workforce. Technologies like IM, Twitter and online meetings can facilitate interactions that allow you to stay in touch from any location – even while you're stuck on public transport!

10. Consider all the options

There are many options if you're thinking of changing your working pattern or the way you travel to the office. Make sure you evaluate them all carefully and test them out if you can.

Top tips to help businesses embrace smart commuting

1. Put in place a smarter working policy

Clearly set out your company's general policy on smart commuting and flexible working to ensure existing employees – and new recruits – know what to expect.

2. Ask employees for their input

Take a collaborative approach to any flexible working policy and ask for feedback and input from your employees. They may well have additional, viable ideas that will benefit your business.

3. Be as flexible as possible

Putting in place a policy or strategy is important, but make sure there is sufficient flexibility built in to accommodate a variety of scenarios as every employee's situation is different.

4. Adopt technology that aids flexible or remote working

If you're willing to allow your employees to be smarter about their commute, change their location or work from home, it's important to offer the tools that will allow them to continue to work productively.

5. Hold online meetings rather than travelling

How many of your face-to-face meetings could just as effectively be held online? The reduction in travel time could give your employees valuable minutes in the office (or at home!).

6. Run trials

While employees may be crying out for flexi-time, you need to make sure it's a viable approach for your business. Before jumping in, try testing out a few different options with one or two staff to see which is the best 'fit' for your business.

7. Use your smart commuting policy as a recruitment vehicle

At a time when recruiting the best talent is critical for many businesses, an attractive and flexible working policy could really put you well ahead of the competition, so make sure you shout about it!

8. Manage expectations

Sometimes it takes time to roll out a strategy and there might be occasions when not everyone in the company will be able to benefit. Be honest and upfront with all your employees to avoid disappointment.

9. Reduce risks by putting in place management and review processes

Having staff working away from the office or working at different times can ring alarm bells for many employers who worry about productivity. Put in place structured review processes to assess the effectiveness of your strategy for each employee and make changes as necessary.

10. Lead by example

If you are willing to embrace a smart commuting strategy, then roll this out throughout the entire organisation – from the top down. This will inspire confidence, trust and increased satisfaction for all your employees.

About Citrix Online

Citrix Online provides secure, easy-to-use online solutions that enable people to work from anywhere with anyone.

Whether using GoToMyPC® to access and work on a remote PC, GoToAssist® to support customers, GoToMeeting® to hold online meetings or GoToWebinar® for large online events, Citrix Online customers are increasing productivity, decreasing travel costs and improving sales, training and service on a global basis.

More than 35,000 small and medium-sized businesses are using Citrix Online's products, and hundreds of thousands of individual professionals as customers.

For more information, visit www.citrixonline.com or to find more practical advice about changing your work-life balance, check out www.workshifting.com

Citrix Online is offering UK commuters a unique **60-day free trial** for GoToMyPC, which enables fast, easy and secure access to a desktop from any remote location: **www.gotomypc.com/free**; and a **60-day trial** for GoToMeeting, hosting easy online meetings anywhere, anytime: **www.gotomeeting.com/now**.