

# Telework and the New Workplace of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

The American workplace is changing. Today millions of workers telework, conducting their business from a home office, or at least an office nearer home, communicating to the corporate network via e-mail, telephone, fax and Internet. Even as we embrace these changes, telework is changing the relationship between worker and employer, even between worker and the nature of work.

Because of this, I convened an academic symposium at my alma mater, Xavier University in New Orleans, to examine the impact of telework on the American workplace and to advance a national dialogue on this subject. The significance of this seminar, “Telework and the New Workplace of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century,” is evident in the papers that were presented and that are published in this volume.

These papers raise important questions about our work environment; the relationship between worker and employer; the flexibility of the workplace and the responsibilities of government, businesses, unions, and individual workers in the face of a new work environment. The papers also address behavioral and social issues: the implications for corporate culture and work-family balance; access to the working world for people with disabilities; the widening of the digital divide; and crucial redirection of management techniques.

The issues raised are large and far reaching. And we know that technology should be used to strengthen and expand our economic prosperity, extending its reach to all Americans. So we must incorporate telework in a way that helps workers balance work and family. It must be used responsibly to improve access to work but also quality of our work lives.

I am grateful to all who participated in the Xavier symposium. Their efforts are helping to keep us on the right technological path. I encourage you to continue to be an active participant in an ongoing national dialogue exploring the potential of telework. Our combined efforts will ensure that the promise of America is the practice of America.

Alexis M. Herman