

A World Of Virtual Opportunities: The Trend Toward Work-at-Home Reservation Agents

How many times have you wished that there was a work at home opportunity for an entry-level office job applicant? Do you daydream about the time you would save each day if you didn't have to make that commute to work? Do you wish you didn't have to dress up to attend that lame morning "pep talk" during your first cup of coffee?

You're in luck – the times are changing. Many men and women across the country have changed career paths – and their lives, by cashing in on the latest trend in the travel and tourism industry – homeshoring. For reservation agents that work-at-home, the commute is simply moving from one room to another to start their day. It's happening on a regular basis in the time (and sometimes cash) strapped travel and tourism industry, and most of these companies provide local training before their employees take their virtual jobs home.

Companies that hire homeshoring workers in these industries provide a full course of paid training. If you're looking for a work-at-home opportunity, and have a home office complete with computer, Internet connection, and a second phone line, then you may be able to find employment as a reservation agent with airlines such as Jet Blue, American Airlines, Continental Airlines, or hotel chains such as Outrigger Hotels, Marriot Global Reservations, or Fairmont Hotels and Resorts.

JetBlue's virtual opportunities set the homeshoring trend.

Jet Blue, who started their work-at-home program during the company's infancy, quickly saw a 25% increase in productivity once employees were allowed to work from home. It is for this reason the company continues to hire work-at-home reservation agents today and why so many other companies are following their example.

In an effort to control the costs of operating traditional call centers, many US-based companies have created programs that allow employees to work-at-home instead. As a result, fewer jobs are being outsourced to countries like India and Mexico. Because most US customers would rather speak to someone whose native language is English, these companies feel they are providing better customer service in addition to providing jobs to those in the US. It's also easier for them to schedule people during peak hours when the weather's bad – an essential component for an industry whose reputation is at stake during the holiday season.

Currently, there are about 112,000 people working from home as customer service representatives (reservation agents, telesales, insurance agents, etc.). By 2010, this number is expected to increase to about 330,000.

Jet Blue Airlines is a success story because the company has always relied on work-at-home employees to help Jet Blue customers book reservations and answer their questions or complaints about flights and airline policies. Based in Salt Lake City, Utah, Jet Blue Airlines employs over 1,200 reservation agents who work locally.

In fact, many of the companies who hire people to work from home expect them to work locally so they can be contacted quickly to work extra shifts or to cover shift changes. Some companies even provide additional space in their home offices for employees to complete their shift if employees are having technical difficulties with home office equipment.

Looking for an opportunity as a virtual reservation agent?

To become a virtual agent, you may need to have prior customer service experience or you may receive on-the-job training in a nearby facility. Depending on the company, you may have the option to work part-time or full-time, you may have to work weekends and holidays, and you may be asked to cover additional shifts when necessary.

When researching possible virtual opportunities, finding companies that are within driving distance is important because many companies require that you be able to commute for on-site training. Paid training is usually provided. Keep in mind that you may be responsible for finding your own health benefits, however, as some companies do not provide health coverage for those who work from home.

Job duties vary based on the services provided by the company, but for many virtual reservation agent opportunities, you should be able to research flights, hotel room availability, make recommendations to customers about travel, quote accurate prices, input reservation data, send verifications, and answer most questions or address complaints that customers have.

The income level you can earn for most of these virtual opportunities will vary based on company criteria. Most jobs start between \$7.50-\$10.00 with

salary differentials given on weekends and holidays. All paid employees reap the benefits of the travel industry, such as free and discounted travel, as well as qualify for standard benefits after a certain probationary period.

Although salaries tend to be on the lower end of the spectrum, home based reservations agents save, on average, up to \$4000.00 on their commuting expenses alone. Not sure you can take a salary cut? Add up the cost savings of wardrobe, daycare, and eating out for lunch – and you'll see there's a lot more take home pay in the home-based reservation agent model. And don't forget that you can often write off your job-related expenses in your taxes.

In the end, most employees find working from home, especially in a job that can be stressful at times, allows them to remain focused, relaxed, and gives them more time to spend with family or to pursue other interests.

About the Author

Want to learn more about virtual opportunities? [The Little White eBook of Homeshoring Jobs](#) profiles 180+ companies that regular hire home-based workers for inbound and outbound callers, customer care, and tech support – complete with salary information, typical schedules, and the tools you'll need to get the virtual job you want. All of our readers get free updates for life.

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