



Work from Home Policies and Procedures

Compilation of policies, resources and best practices for working from home during COVID-19.

ARPM
ASSOCIATION FOR RUBBER
PRODUCTS MANUFACTURERS

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About this Compilation

In response to the recent outbreak of COVID-19 across the United States and the globe, ARPM's leadership team worked to generate this compilation of policies, procedures, action plans and resources.

All the documents included in this compilation have been submitted by a member of ARPM, and shares policies and resources used to manage having employees working remotely - many for the first time.

The documents in this compilation have been organized by type. That includes:

- **Company Policies**
- **Outside Resources Shared with Employees**
- **Articles and Best Practices to Manage Remote Teams**

It is important to keep in mind that this is a working document, and the benchmarking team will continue to update and add changes and new policies as they come.

If you have questions, want to add to this document or need assistance, please contact the office directly at 317-863-4072 or email info@arpminc.org.

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Internal Policies



Work from Home Policy 1

Voluntary Temporary Telecommuting Request

Note: These conditions for telecommuting must be agreed to by the employee and supervisor and are subject to President approval.

My Position is: Salary Hourly

My telecommuting arrangements will begin on (effective date): _____ and end on _____ (agreement shall not exceed 30 days).

I will work at the following location(s): _____

I will telecommute _____ days per week.

My specific weekly schedule will be: _____

My telecommuting work hours will be from _____ a.m. to _____ p.m.

Overtime MUST be pre-approved by supervisor.

I will be using COMPANY-owned equipment My own personal equipment, at the work location shown above and understand that I am responsible for said equipment, as stated in the COMPANY Voluntary Temporary Telecommuting Arrangement. If my current equipment is not portable, my supervisor and I will complete the Voluntary Telecommuting Employee Property Inventory form to acquire the necessary equipment to work from home.

I understand and agree to the job assignments or tasks to be completed under my telecommuting arrangement with my supervisor. (Supervisors may attach a specific written statement of job assignments and additional expectations if desired).

Employees are reminded during working hours they must comply with all existing policies as defined in the COMPANY Human Resources Policy Manual including meal/break periods, confidentiality, and electronic communications.

Equipment Policy:

- The employee agrees not to use any COMPANY equipment for private purposes, nor to allow family members or friends access to that equipment.
- The employee shall promptly return all COMPANY owned equipment and data documents when required by the employee's supervisors.
- When using COMPANY equipment or software, the employee agrees to follow all software-licensing provisions agreed to by COMPANY
- COMPANY may pursue recovery from the employee for any COMPANY property deliberately or negligently damaged or destroyed while in employee's care, custody, and control.
- COMPANY is not responsible for private property used, lost, damaged, or destroyed.

- COMPANY will not be responsible for operating costs, home maintenance, or any other incidental costs associated with the use of the employee’s residence for telecommuting location.
- Meetings with clients and/or visitors conducting business with COMPANY will be held at COMPANY facilities.
- The employee agrees to comply with policies regarding electronic communications as defined in the COMPANY policy manual.

Other Conditions:

Employees may, at the discretion of their immediate supervisor, be called to work at their centrally located worksite on their regular telecommute day during their regular work hours to meet workload requirements. This agreement may be terminated at any time.

By signing below, I am indicating I have read the COMPANY Voluntary Temporary Telecommuting Arrangement and agree that the telecommuting work schedule complies with COMPANY policies and procedures, Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), and state regulations. I understand this telecommuting arrangement may be terminated at any time by my employer.

Requested by:

Employee Name: _____

Employee Signature: _____

Date: _____

Approval:

Supervisor Signature: _____

Date: _____

President Signature: _____

Date: _____

Voluntary Temporary Telecommuting Employee Property Inventory Form

Upon notification of an employee who is approved for Voluntary Temporary Telecommuting, it is a requirement that this form be completed by the supervisor, Manager, or Department Head and forwarded to the Human Resources Department.

Employee Full Name: _____
(Include middle initial)

Department: _____ Supervisor: _____ Phone: _____

Start and End Date of Voluntary Temporary Telecommuting _____ to _____

Use of Employee Issued Equipment Department Equipment Borrowed From _____

Information Technology Inventory

Laptop Access Add Software Hours of Access: From: _____ To: _____

Supervisor Signature: _____ Date: _____

Software – All computers are deployed with Microsoft Word, Excel, & PowerPoint; Internet Explorer & Adobe Reader

Adobe Acrobat Net Extender

AVG Anti-virus IQ

Microsoft Office Other

Additional Information:



Work from Home Policy 2

Work from Home Policy

Purpose: During these uncertain times with the Coronavirus pandemic, COMPANY is offering Work from Home (WFH) opportunities for eligible roles within the organization. The policy will be reviewed each Friday and all eligible employees will be notified how COMPANY will handle the upcoming week.

WFH Job Functions: Below are the functional areas identified to WFH if they meet the eligible requirements defined below. All Department Managers will work on-site.

- Customer Service
- Purchasing
- Accounting
- Planning
- NPI and Engineering
- Mold Design
- Sales and Marketing
- IT

Eligibility Requirements:

- Subject to prior authorization employees must have a minimum of six months in their current position.
- Must have home internet connection.
- Zoom will be added to the laptop for video conferencing.
- Personal internet connection is the employee's responsibility and will not be reimbursed by COMPANY.
- COMPANY owned laptops will be configured with VPN connectivity and set-up by the I.T. Department.
- All accessories (keyboards, monitors, mice, printers) are the employee's responsibility.

Work Hours:

- The 8 hours **must** be between 6:00 AM – 5:00 PM. Overtime must be approved in advance by the department manager.

- Managers will schedule a daily ZOOM meeting with their team at the start of each workday.
- **Must** have office phone forwarded to personal cell phone or home phone. (COMPANY is not responsible for the phone charges)
- **Must** punch into Syteline timeclock, which will be installed by I.T. Department.
- If from time to time the position requires hard copy materials to perform duties, employees should reach out to their manager to make appropriate arrangements.
- Circumstances may arise that require your presence on-site, you will be notified of these cases by your manager.
- COMPANY will supply pens, notebooks, staplers and paper but **must** be checked out by HR and returned when normal in office hours resume.

Productivity: If the department manager or senior management does not believe productivity is being met, the employee will lose the WFH opportunity and return to their normal work location.



Work from Home Policy 3

Temporary/Emergency Work-From-Home Policy

In response to the COVID-19/Coronavirus Pandemic the Company is making allowances for certain employee groups to work from home temporarily. If a majority of your job duties can be performed from home with minimal direction/supervision, you may be able to work remotely. All requests to work remotely must be made through Human Resources and will be reviewed with the Coronavirus Committee and your manager. Individual managers do not have the authority to grant requests to work from home under this emergency policy; all requests must be submitted through Human Resources. Because there is a lot of uncertainty and many changing elements to the Pandemic, we will evaluate remote work assignments regularly and make adjustments as needed. Unless unforeseen circumstances arise, this approval will remain in effect for a period of two weeks through March 31, 2020.

If an employee is granted permission to work from home, the following conditions apply:

- The employee will remain accessible and productive during scheduled work hours.
- Hourly employees are not permitted to work more than 40 hours per week while working remotely. Any deviation from this must be PRE-approved by the manager before the hours are worked and justification must be given to HR by the employee's manager before any overtime hours will be processed through payroll. Employees who log more than 40 hours without prior permission will be subject to disciplinary action.
- Hourly employees are required to punch in and out of ADP remotely – IT will provide access
- Employees will report to the employer's work location as necessary upon directive from his or her supervisor. Hourly employees who are asked to come in for a meeting, work assignment, etc. are not eligible for call in/call back pay.
- The employee will communicate regularly with his or her supervisor and may be asked to provide a weekly written report of activities
- The employee will remain available for conference calls as needed
- The employee will comply with all company rules, policies, practices and instructions that would apply if the employee were working at the employer's work location
- The employee will maintain satisfactory performance standards.
- The employee will maintain a safe and secure work environment at all times. The employee will report work-related injuries to his or her manager as soon as practicable.
- The employee will allow the employer to have access to the telecommuting location for purposes of assessing safety and security, upon reasonable notice by the company.
- The employee understands that all tools and resources provided by the company shall remain the property of the company at all times. The employee agrees to protect company tools and resources from theft or damage and to report theft or damage to his or her manager immediately.
- The employee agrees to comply with Company policies and expectations regarding information security. The employee will be expected to ensure the protection of proprietary company and customer information accessible from their home offices.
- The employee understands that all terms and conditions of employment with the company remain unchanged, except those specifically addressed in this agreement.
- The employee understands that management retains the right to modify this agreement on a temporary or permanent basis for any reason at any time.
- The employee agrees to return company equipment, passwords, files and documents within five days of termination of employment.

Employee Signature

Date



Work from Home Policy 4

Work from Home Policy

Purpose

Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, COMPANY is offering Work from Home (WFH) opportunities for eligible roles within the organization. The policy will be reviewed regularly and all employees will be notified when regular in-office hours resume.

WFH Job Functions

Below are the functional areas allowed to work from home if they meet the eligibility requirements as defined below.

- Customer Service
- Purchasing
- Accounting
- Engineering
- Sales and Marketing
- Management

Eligibility Requirements

- Must have a minimum of six months in their current position
- Must have a home internet connection with capable speeds.
 - Personal internet connection is the employee's responsibility and will not be reimbursed by company.
- Conferences and meetings must be held via GoToMeeting.
- Employees working remotely must access their COMPANY computer through Splashtop.
 - Splashtop will be set up by COMPANY Maintenance Dept.
- All COMPANY-provided accessories (keyboards, monitors, mice, printers, etc.) are the employee's responsibility.

Work Hours

- Employee's work hours must remain at 8 hours, and must be between 7:30 am – 4:30 pm. Overtime must be approved by the department manager.
- Employee must answer office phone and/or personal cell phone during work hours.
 - Phone charges will be reimbursed upon management approval
- Employees must email HR each work day to report the time they clocked in and clocked out.
- Employees must fill out and send HR a work log each work day.
 - The work log is provided by HR and will specify the time dedicated to each work task.
- If the position requires hard copies of data to perform duties, the employee will drive to the office to pick up the material.
- Company can supply pens, notebooks, staplers and paper. These items must be checked out by HR and returned when normal in-office hours resume.

Productivity

If the department manager or senior management does not believe productivity is being met, the employee will lose the WFH opportunity and return to work.



Work from Home Policy 5

Work-From-Home Policy and Procedure

Objective

Work-From-Home allows employees to work in their own home, on the road or in a satellite location for all or part of their workweek. Company considers Work-From-Home to be a viable, flexible work option when both the employee and the job are suited to such an arrangement. Work-From-Home may be appropriate for some employees and jobs but not for others. It is not an entitlement, a companywide benefit, and it in no way changes the terms and conditions of employment with COMPANY.

Procedures

Work-From-Home can be informal, such as working from home for a short-term project or on the road during business travel, or a formal, set schedule of working away from the office as described below. Either an employee or a supervisor can suggest Work-From-Home as a possible work arrangement.

Any Work-From-Home arrangement made will be on a case-by-case basis and may be discontinued at will and at any time at the request of either the employee or the organization. There may be instances, however, when no notice is possible.

Eligibility

Before entering into any Work-From-Home agreement, the employee and manager, with the assistance of the human resource department, will evaluate the suitability of such an arrangement, reviewing the following areas:

- Job responsibilities. The employee and manager will discuss the job responsibilities and determine if the job is appropriate for a Work-From-Home arrangement.
- Equipment needs, workspace design considerations and scheduling issues. The employee and manager will review the physical workspace needs and the appropriate location for the telework.
- Tax and other legal implications. The employee must determine any tax or legal implications under IRS, state and local government laws, and/or restrictions of working out of a home-based office. Responsibility for fulfilling all obligations in this area rests solely with the employee.

Equipment

On a case-by-case basis, COMPANY will determine, with information supplied by the employee and the supervisor, the appropriate equipment needs (including hardware, software, modems, phone and data lines and other office equipment) for each Work-From-Home arrangement. Human resource and IT will serve as resources in this matter. Equipment supplied by the organization will be maintained by the organization. Equipment supplied by the employee, if deemed appropriate by the organization, will be maintained by the employee. COMPANY accepts no responsibility for damage or repairs to employee-owned equipment. COMPANY reserves the right to make determinations as to appropriate equipment, subject to change at any time. Equipment supplied by the organization is to be used for business purposes only. The employee must sign an inventory of all COMPANY property received and agree to take

appropriate action to protect the items from damage or theft. Upon termination of employment, all company property will be returned to the company, unless other arrangements have been made.

COMPANY will supply the employee with appropriate office supplies (pens, paper, etc.) as deemed necessary. COMPANY will also reimburse the employee for business-related expenses, such as phone calls and shipping costs that are reasonably incurred in carrying out the employee's job.

The employee will establish an appropriate work environment within his or her home for work purposes. COMPANY will not be responsible for costs associated with the setup of the employee's home office, such as remodeling, furniture or lighting, nor for repairs or modifications to the home office space.

Security

Consistent with the organization's expectations of information security for employees working at the office, Work-From-Home employees will be expected to ensure the protection of proprietary company and customer information accessible from their home office. Steps include the use of locked file cabinets and desks, regular password maintenance, and any other measures appropriate for the job and the environment.

Safety

Employees are expected to maintain their home workspace in a safe manner, free from safety hazards. COMPANY will provide each telecommuter with a safety checklist that must be completed at least twice per year. Injuries sustained by the employee in a home office location and in conjunction with his or her regular work duties are normally covered by the company's workers' compensation policy. Work-From-Home employees are responsible for notifying the employer of such injuries as soon as practicable. The employee is liable for any injuries sustained by visitors to his or her home worksite.

Work-From-Home is not designed to be a replacement for appropriate child care. Although an individual employee's schedule may be modified to accommodate child care needs, the focus of the arrangement must remain on job performance and meeting business demands. Employees need to discuss expectations of Work-From-Home arrangements with family members to ensure to minimize disruptions during the work day.

Time Worked

Work-From-Home employees who are non-exempt from the overtime requirements of the Fair Labor Standards Act will be required to accurately record all hours worked by logging into IQMS to record time. Overtime hours require the advance approval of the employee's supervisor. Failure to comply with this requirement may result in the immediate termination of the Work-From-Home agreement.

Ad Hoc Arrangements

Temporary Work-From-Home arrangements may be approved for circumstances such as inclement weather, special projects, national disasters or business travel. These arrangements are approved on an as-needed basis only, with no expectation of ongoing continuance.

Other informal, short-term arrangements may be made for employees on family or medical leave to the extent practical for the employee and the organization and with the consent of the employee's health care provider, if appropriate.

All informal Work-From-Home arrangements are made on a case-by-case basis, focusing first on the business needs of the organization.

CULTURE ADJUSTMENT

Working from home is an adjustment for those who are at home as well as coworkers who need assistance to complete their responsibilities. Correctly planning for an employee to work from home is very important. Things to consider:

1. Technology – computer, monitor, Software, security
2. Communication needs – Video conferencing, email, phone, internet access
3. Office supplies – pen, paper, flash drive, etc.
4. Expectations – Continue to complete daily work, be available to coworkers, vendors, customers and others who need responses and communication to keep work flowing. Avoid unnecessary interruptions such as social media, laundry, dishes, and all distractions where home-life can interfere with productivity.
5. Encourage communication! The best work-from home program is when the employee is available—responds timely to emails, answers calls, stays engaged in projects, and demonstrates initiative. Communication changes among work-groups and needs to be re-established—this takes effort!

March, 2020

WORKING FROM HOME – Inventory Checklist

COMPANY is supplying me with the following inventory items and has approved my ability to work from home. I acknowledge receipt of these items and understand I am responsible to take care of these items. These items will be returned to the company when I return to working onsite or if I terminate employment for any reason.

Employee (Print Name): _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Inventory Items (List Brand, Type – i.e. ThinkPad Laptop):

I also acknowledge that I have received and read Work-From-Home Policy:

Signature Date

Employment At-Will

It is important to note that neither this document, nor any other written or verbal communication, should be construed as creating a contract for employment or a warranty of benefits for any particular period of COMPANY and any of its employees. This means that employees have the right to terminate the employment relationship with COMPANY at any time, with or without notice, for any reason. COMPANY has the same right to terminate the employment relationship at any time, with or without notice, for any reason not prohibited by law.



Work from Home Policy 6

Remote Working Requirements: (updated 3/23/2020)

Daily:

- Establish work hours with your supervisor
- Your work schedule should not change. Please be available during your regular work hours.
- Connect at least once a day with your supervisor to discuss your work, establish task priorities, and receive an update on activity at XXX (or if at the office the previous day, discuss these priorities with your supervisor before end of day)
- During the course of the day, be available as needed for live chats and/or via cell phone
- At the end of the workday, send a daily activity report to your supervisor (brief list of what you worked on, status of activity, anything else that should be known)
- Keep track of your daily hours

Weekly:

- Email the week's hours worked details to HR at the end of the week for payroll purposes. (Example: 3/23/2020: 8 am – 4:30 pm; 3/24/2020: 8 am – 5:30 pm)

In General

- If you think you need to come to work at XXX for a day in order to complete your work, clear it with your supervisor beforehand. (Our goal is to minimize the number of people at our facility at any given time, while still being productive.)
- If you are unable to work due to illness, contact your supervisor as you usually would.
- Confidentiality of XXX and customer information is to be upheld at all times regardless of where you are physically working.
- All company information must stay on company equipment, and should not be downloaded.

Outside Resources for Employees



Outside Resource 1

Health & Safety Guidelines For Working from Home



Keeping in view the changing job requirements or the environment we live in, we may be expected sometimes to work from home. Working from home obviously has its own benefits and challenges. This infographic will guide you on what might be some of the Health & Safety guidelines that would be applicable even when you are working from a Home Office.

Setting Up a Home Office

Take some time to properly set-up the computer workstation at home to ensure that you have good ergonomic posture while working as incorrect workstation setup can lead to a multitude of discomforts.

6 Steps to the Perfect Ergonomic Workspace

- Chair
- Desk
- Monitor
- Keyboard and Mouse
- Your Surrounding
- Your Lifestyle

18/24 in (45-70 cm)

TAKE BREAKS EVERY 25 MINS

Working Scheduling

Please take regular breaks in between while working at home as prolonged periods of sitting and working on the computer can lead to harmful health effects.

- 1 Change your working position by stretching your fingers, hands, arms, and torso.
- 2 Stand up and walk during prolonged periods of sitting.
- 3 Follow the 20-20-20 rule: Every 20 minutes look at something 20 feet away for 20 seconds to give your eyes a break.

Do these quick stretches regularly to reduce fatigue and avoid injury:

<p>1</p> <p>Repeat 3 times, 5 seconds each.</p> <p>BACK EXTENSION</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Do once for 15 seconds.</p> <p>NECK FORWARD</p>	<p>3</p> <p>Repeat 3 times, 5 seconds each.</p> <p>NECK LEFT & RIGHT</p>
<p>4</p> <p>Repeat 3 times, 5 seconds each, both sides.</p> <p>ELBOW PULLOVER</p>	<p>5</p> <p>Do once for 15 seconds on each side.</p> <p>SHOULDER OVER</p>	<p>6</p> <p>Do once for 15 seconds with each arm.</p> <p>SHOULDER ACROSS</p>
<p>7</p> <p>Do once for 15 seconds each arm.</p> <p>SHOULDER BACK</p>	<p>8</p> <p>Do once for 15 seconds.</p> <p>BRIDGE STRETCH</p>	<p>9</p> <p>Do once for 15 seconds each way, both arms.</p> <p>FOREARM & WRIST</p>
<p>10</p> <p>Do once for 15 seconds each leg.</p> <p>HAMSTRING STRETCH</p>	<p>11</p> <p>Do once for 15 seconds each leg.</p> <p>CALF STRETCH</p>	<p>12</p> <p>Do once for 15 seconds each leg.</p> <p>QUAD & FLEXOR STRETCH</p>

Please check with your doctor before starting any exercise program. If any of the above exercises causes pain, do not continue the activity and seek the advice of a doctor or physical therapist.

Working Alone

Be sure to maintain a contact schedule, like a formal check-in by your Supervisor at least once per day during work hours, even if there are no "work" details to discuss.

There should also be an escalation plan should the check-in be missed.



What if you are Injured While Working at Home?

If you are injured while working at home, the injury may be considered as work related.

Please remember to always report the injury to your Supervisor, so that it is correctly classified and investigated.



Some Useful Links

-



Outside Resource 2

RECOMMENDATIONS WHILE WORKING FROM HOME



1 Follow a routine

-Get ready in the morning – exercise, shower, put some comfortable, clean clothes and have a healthy breakfast. You'll feel more confident and productive!

2 Prepare for the day

-Create a list of to-dos and sort them by relevance
-Structure your day as best as possible – it helps to ensure you stay productive

3 Follow your schedule

-Do your best to stick to your regular schedule
-Use your breaks to stretch
-Have a healthy meal and once you have finished your day, do something that helps you relax

4 Create a workspace

-Create an organized workspace separate from home distractions and use it as much as possible
-Ensure your workstation is set up ergonomically

5 Stay connected

-Use available technology and video chats to connect with your colleagues
-Tell your manager and team what you're working on
-Reply promptly to your emails and messages

6 Increase communication

-Document more than normal
-Collaborate with your team using Go To Meetings
-Share how you are doing





Outside Resource 3

Working Remotely for the First Time? These Seasoned Experts Have Advice for You to Follow

View original article here: <https://www.inc.com/cameron-albert-deitch/remote-work-advice-best-practices.html>

By now, your entire office is probably working remotely because of the coronavirus. And if you've never done this before, it's almost certainly an adjustment--for you, your employees, and your organization at large.

How's it going so far?

In the past few years, I've talked to a \$2 billion company that is entirely remote, collected tips on how to build great remote leadership habits, explored the challenges of maintaining strong data security when you have people working from home, and gathered tips from founders who manage their productivity and sanity by drawing clearer lines between when they're "in" and "out" of the office. Still, there's a difference between talking about remote work and actually doing it.

So earlier this week, I took an informal poll of my Inc. co-workers, now that we've all been working from home for several days. I asked folks with extensive work-from-home experience for their advice, and relative newcomers for their biggest surprises so far. Their responses generally fell into three categories:

Staying productive

Struggles:

"Bewilderingly--even though I have fewer distractions now--it feels like there are fewer hours in the day. It could just be that routine tasks like answering emails are taking a bit longer since all my tools aren't quite as streamlined in my work-from-home setup, and a minute or two per task adds up. I feel like I'm having to be more diligent about writing down and following my daily to-do list, because otherwise I'll fall behind."

"I find myself wanting to make small comments throughout the day about work and what's in the news. Instead, I turn to social media and immediately get sucked into a distracting loop. Before, I could just make the joke, hear a chuckle, and move on. Now, I find myself saying, 'Oh, shoot, how did I just spend 15 minutes checking Twitter?'"

Advice:

"The one thing I do when working from home: I get dressed for work. I'm not one of the pajama people. Getting dressed and going to my desk--as opposed to sitting on a sofa with a laptop--gives me the sense of a workplace, of punching in, if you will."

"Replicate your office experience as closely as you can at home. Structure your day exactly as you would a workday, starting, taking lunch/breaks, and signing off around the same time you normally would. Set up your workspace in a similar fashion, eat the same kinds of snacks, and check your email after hours the same way you would on office days. Also, don't have children."

"No TV, no matter what. You cannot get anything done with CNN on in the background. This goes double for Mad Men on auto-play. Save TV for later."

Maintaining communication and connection

Struggles:

"I miss making small jokes to my co-workers sitting immediately around me to help break up the day, tedious tasks, work anxiety, etc. Slack doesn't have the same feel, unfortunately. I took that casual workplace back-and-forth for granted!"

Advice:

"Take short breaks and call friends who are also stuck at home. They're bored and isolated too, and they'd like to hear from you, even briefly."

"If you take 15 minutes to reply to an email in-office, no one notices. The same delay out-of-office sets off a chain reaction of pings and where-are-you's. Successfully working remotely requires a high level of attentiveness to communication, much more than in a face-to-face environment."

Taking care of yourself

Struggles:

"I didn't expect to have ergonomic issues. I've got my laptop placed at eye-level height atop of a Scrabble collector's edition box."

"I'm surprised by how easy it is to just not wear pants. I'm starting to rethink my wardrobe around the fact that I'm just no longer wearing them."

"At the office, I'm good about having a salad for lunch every day and limiting snacks to fruit, granola, etc. At home, it feels like every day is the weekend and the usual rules don't apply. I've found myself making big sandwiches or going through the cabinets for something unhealthy to munch on. Kind of crazy that it takes just a few days at home for something that's been a habit for years to go out the window."

Advice:

"Do something physical every day, preferably something that also improves your posture, because you're likely sitting a heck of a lot more than you were before."

"Take a real lunch break. Set work aside for a little while to eat food away from your computer. A break is good for your eyes, your sense of how to do is going, and for your sanity. You should also set aside your phone and stop looking at Twitter. This time is called a lunch break for a reason."

"Because you're not commuting, you ought to adjust your working schedule to reflect that you're probably getting more done in less time. This goes back to avoiding burnout. I get online at the same time every morning and log out at the same time every evening."



Outside Resource 4

How to Work from Home: 20 Tips from People Who Do It Successfully

View original article here: <https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/productivity-tips-working-from-home>

Working from home is awesome ... right up until the cat throws up on your computer. And your neighbor, who you can only assume is building a time machine, starts firing up all sorts of power tools and noisy machinery across the street.

For many modern professionals, working from home every once in a while is a luxury that our respective companies afford us. But which environment actually allows us to be more productive: the home office or the office office?

In the office office, your coworkers often pose the greatest threat to keeping you from getting some real, heads-down work done. They drop by your desk, engage you in conversation, and invite you to lunch. The social benefits of a workplace are definitely nice to have, but they can become a challenge if you're easily distracted.

At the home office, however, I find that it's easy for you to become your own worst enemy. Because when you're not surrounded by coworkers, you're free to drop those pesky inhibitions. At the home office, no one's watching. You don't necessarily feel that same peer pressure or communal obligation to get stuff done. (Also: You don't have to wear pants.)

Below, I've compiled a bunch of great work-at-home tips and tricks from some of my awesome coworkers.

How to Work From Home: 20 Tips for Telecommuters

1. Get started early.

When working in an office, your morning commute can help you wake up and feel ready to work by the time you get to your desk. At home, however, the transition from your pillow to your computer can be much more jarring.

Believe it or not, one way to work from home productively is to dive into your to-do list as soon as you wake up. Simply getting a project started first thing in the morning can be the key to making progress on it gradually throughout the day. Otherwise, you'll prolong breakfast and let the morning sluggishness wear away your motivation.

"When I work from home, I wake up, put on a pot of coffee, and start working immediately -- much earlier normal working hours. I only start making breakfast once I've hit a wall or need a break. I'm a morning person and find I can get a ton done in the early morning hours, so this works really well for me." - Lindsay Kolowich

2. Pretend like you are going into the office.

The mental association you make between work and an office can make you more productive, and there's no reason that feeling should be lost when telecommuting.

When working from home, do all the things you'd do to prepare for an office role: Set your alarm, make (or go get) coffee, and wear nice clothes. Internet browsers like Google Chrome even allow you to set up multiple accounts with different toolbars on the top -- for example, a toolbar for home and a separate toolbar for work.

"Get fully ready for the day and pretend you're actually going to work. Otherwise, you might find yourself back in bed." - Anna Faber-Hammond

3. Structure your day like you would in the office.

When working from home, you're your own personal manager. Without things like an in-person meeting schedule to break up your day, you can be quick to lose focus or burn out.

To stay on schedule, segment what you'll do and when over the course of the day. If you have an online calendar, create personal events and reminders that tell you when to shift gears and start on new tasks. Google Calendar makes this easy.

"Are mornings for writing while you're in the office? Use the same schedule at home. While you probably will get tasks done faster at home than at work, this structure will help keep you focused and productive." - Ginny Mineo

4. Choose a dedicated work space.

Just because you're not working at an office doesn't mean you can't, well, have an office. Rather than cooping yourself up in your room or on the couch -- spaces that are associated with leisure time -- dedicate a specific room or surface in your home to work.

"Have a place you go specifically to work. It could be a certain table, chair, local coffee shop -- some place that's consistently your 'work space.' It helps you get into the right frame of mind." - Sam Mallikarjunan

5. Don't stay at home.

Is your home office just not getting it done for you? Take telecommuting a step further and get out of the house. Coffee shops, libraries, public lounges, and similar Wi-Fi-enabled spaces can help you simulate the energy of an office so you can stay productive even when you don't sit in an official workplace.

"I get out of my home to work, and go to a Starbucks, Dunkin' Donuts, or other WiFi enabled establishment with actual tables, chairs, and people. It helps simulate the work environment for me -- white noise, chatter, that kind of thing -- that usually helps me work better than utter silence. It also removes the distractions I typically have at home like the urge to finally actually clean my room, do laundry, or watch TV.

I also refuse to play into the trope of being some jerk sitting at Starbucks not doing any real work, so I feel motivated not to mess around on Facebook all day to show there are still people who actually get stuff done at a coffee shop!" - Corey Wainwright

6. Make it harder for yourself to mess around on social media.

Social media is designed to make it easy for you to open and browse quickly. At work, though, this convenience can be the detriment of your productivity.

To counteract your social networks' ease of use during work hours, remove them from your browser shortcuts and, according to Fast Company, log out of every account. You might even consider working primarily in a private or, if you're using Chrome, an "Incognito" browser window. This ensures you stay signed out of all your accounts and each web search you conduct doesn't autocomplete the word you're typing. It's a guarantee that you won't be tempted into taking too many social breaks during the day.

"I remove all social networks from my toolbar bookmarks. Even if I don't mean to browse them, some uncontrollable impulse subconsciously clicks on them when I experience downtime. You can get sucked in without knowing it (or even intending to), so eliminating the gateway to those networks keeps me on track." - Alec Biedrzycki

7. Commit to doing more.

Projects always take longer than you initially think they will. For that reason, you'll frequently get done less than you set out to do. So, just as you're encouraged to overestimate how much time you'll spend doing one thing, you should also overestimate how many things you'll do during the day. Even if you come up short of your goal, you'll still come out of that day with a solid list of tasks filed under 'complete.'

"Our team has a daily standup meeting each morning where we share what we're working on for the day. On days I'm working from home, I tend to slightly overcommit on what I'll deliver that day. It helps keep me honest, so even if I get the urge to go do something else, I know I've already committed a certain amount of work to my team." - Corey Wainwright

8. Work when you're at your most productive.

Nobody sprints through their work from morning to evening -- your motivation will naturally ebb and flow throughout the day. When you're working from home, however, it's all the more important to know when those ebbs and flows will take place and plan your schedule around it.

To capitalize on your most productive periods, save your harder tasks for when you know you'll be in the right headspace for them. Use slower points of the day to knock out the easier, logistical tasks that are also on your plate. Verily Magazine calls these tasks "small acts of success," and they can help build your momentum for the heavier projects that are waiting for you later on.

"For me, the most productive times of the day are usually early in the morning or late at night. I recognize this and try to plan my day accordingly. Also, music that really pumps me up doesn't hurt."

- Brittany Leaning

9. Save calls for the afternoon.

Sometimes, I'm so tired in the morning, I don't even want to hear my own voice -- let alone talk to others with it. You shouldn't have to give yourself too much time to become productive in the morning, but you can give yourself some extra time before working directly with others.

If you're struggling to come up with a reasonable work schedule for yourself as a telecommuter, start with the solitary tasks in the morning. Save phone calls, meetings, and other collaborative work for when you've officially "woken up."

"Take advantage of morning hours to crank through meaty projects without distractions, and save any calls or virtual meetings for the afternoon." - James Gilbert

10. Focus on one distraction ... like a baby!

There's an expression out there that says, "if you want something done, ask a busy person."

The bizarre but true rule of productivity is that the busier you are, the more you'll actually do. It's like Newton's law of inertia: If you're in motion, you'll stay in motion. If you're at rest, you'll stay at rest. And busy people are in fast-enough motion that they have the momentum to complete anything that comes across their desk.

Unfortunately, it's hard to find things to help you reach that level of busyness when you're at home -- your motivation can just swing so easily. HubSpot's principal marketing manager, Pam Vaughan, suggests focusing in on something that maintains your rhythm (in her case, it's her daughter).

"When I work from home, my 20-month-old daughter is home with me, too. It seems counterintuitive, but because I have to manage taking care of her and keeping her happy and entertained while still getting my work done, the pressure helps to keep me focused. When she's napping or entertaining herself, I go into super-productive work mode.

It's the same idea for why some people work better when they have very busy schedules -- you learn how to manage your time VERY efficiently. The 'distraction' of my daughter (I mean that in the most loving way possible) means I can't possibly succumb to some of the other common distractions of home -- putting in a load of laundry, turning on the TV, doing other household chores -- or else I'd never get any actual work done." - Pamela Vaughan

11. Plan out what you'll be working on ahead of time.

Spending time figuring out what you'll do today can take away from actually doing those things. And, you'll have planned your task list so recently that you can be tempted to change your schedule on the fly.

It's important to let your agenda change if you need it to, but it's equally as important to commit to an agenda that outlines every assignment before you begin. Try solidifying your schedule the day before, making it feel more official when you wake up the next day to get started on it.

"If I'm planning on working from home on a certain day, I'll make sure to get any work done ahead of time that requires me to be in the office -- for example, if I'm working on a task that would be infinitely easier to complete with access to my large monitor screen, or need to schedule meetings with coworkers that are best had in person. Plan out your week in advance to optimize for the environments you'll be in." - Niti Shah

12. Use technology to stay connected.

Working from home might help you focus on your work in the short term, but it can also make you feel cut off the larger operation happening in the office. Instant messaging and videoconferencing tools can make it easy to check in with coworkers and remind you how your work is contributing to the big picture.

"Part of what enables us to work from home so much more often now is the array of apps and tools designed to help remove distance as a barrier between team members. Finding the right tools to keep you and your team connected is important for staying productive at home.

At HubSpot, we use Slack to keep conversations going remotely, Trello to keep us organized around priorities, and Google Hangouts plus Webex to make remote meetings more productive. Getting the right stack of support tools to fit your work style makes a big difference." - Meghan Keaney Anderson

13. Match your music to the task at hand.

During the week, music is the soundtrack to your career (cheesy, but admit it, it's true). And at work, the best playlists are diverse playlists -- you can listen to music that matches the energy of the project you're working on. Video game soundtracks are excellent at this. In the game itself, this lyric-free music is designed to help you focus; it only makes sense that it would help you focus on your work as well.

Want some other genres? Take them from startup marketer, Ginny Mineo, who offers her own work music preferences below.

"When I'm powering through my inbox, I need some intense and catchy rap/R&B (like Nicki Minaj or Miley Cyrus) blasting through my headphones, but when I'm writing, Tom Petty is the trick. Finding what music motivates and focuses me for different tasks (and then sticking to those playlists for those tasks) has completely changed my WFH productivity." - Ginny Mineo

14. Use laundry as a work timer.

You might have heard listening to just two or three songs in the shower can help you save water. And it's true; hearing a few of your favorite songs start and end, one after another, can remind you how long you've been in the bathroom and shorten your wash time.

Why bring this up? Because the same general principle can help you stay on task when working from home. But instead of three songs off your music playlist, run your laundry instead.

Doing your laundry is a built-in timer for your home. So, use the time to start and finish something from your to-do list before changing the load. Committing to one assignment during the wash cycle and another during the dry cycle can train you to work smarter on tasks that you might technically have all day to tinker with.

"It's already been said, but waking up early and getting things done before other people get online works for me. I also usually do laundry when I work from home and I set mini deadlines for myself corresponding to when I have to go downstairs to switch loads. If I'm working on an article, I tell myself I'll get to a certain point before the wash cycle ends. Then I set another goal for the dryer." - Emma Brudner

15. Communicate expectations with anyone who will be home with you.

Of course, you might be working from home but still have "company." Make sure any roommates, siblings, parents, spouses, and dogs (well, maybe not dogs) respect your space during work hours. Just because you're working from home doesn't mean you're home.

"If anyone else is going to be at home when you're working, they just have to be clear that when you're in your 'office' (in my case, my signal to the family is having headphones on), you're working -- even if it looks like and feels like you're hanging out at home. It's easy to get distracted by the many things that have to be done around the house during the day." - Sam Mallikarjunan

16. Take clear breaks.

It can be so easy to get distracted as a telecommuter that you avoid breaks altogether. Don't let the guilt of working in the building you sleep in prevent you from taking five to relax. Rather than just opening YouTube and watching some comfort clips, however, use your breaks to get away from your desk. Go for a walk outside or spend time with others who might also be in the house.

"Breaks, like making and eating lunch, can recharge you to do better work. Don't assume you need to be working 100% of the time while you're home to be more productive." - Ginny Mineo

17. Interact with other humans.

Remember: You're working from home, not the moon. Interacting with other people during the day is allowed, even if they're not your coworkers. In fact, it's a good idea to see another face during the day when most of your work day is solitary.

"Go outside and find a human to interact with -- ordering your coffee, running an errand, whatever. It keeps you sane." - Corey Wainwright

18. Prepare your meals the night before.

When you're in your own home, it can be tempting to spend time preparing a really nice breakfast and lunch for yourself, chopping and cooking included. Don't use precious minutes making your food the day of work -- cook it the night before.

Preparing food ahead of time ensures you can actually use your meal times to eat, and that you aren't performing non-work tasks that spend energy better used at your desk.

"Cooking at home is time you wouldn't have spent meal prepping if you'd been in the office that day, and I find the minutes can really add up in the end. To mitigate that, I try to cook and prep my meals the night before, just like I would for a day at the office." - Lindsay Kolowich

19. Pick a definitive finishing time each day.

You might be under the impression that working from home establishes more work-life balance, but be careful with that assumption. Working from home can also feel like being at a casino -- you can get so caught up in your activity, in a relaxing environment, that you lose complete track of time.

In lieu of coworkers, whose packing up and leaving the office reminds you to do the same, set an alarm at the end of the day to indicate your normal work day is coming to an end. You don't have to stop at exactly that time, but knowing the work day is technically over can help you start the process of saving your work and calling it quits for the evening.

"If you work from home full-time (or on a regular basis), it's really easy to let your work life bleed into your personal life. Maintaining a boundary is important for both halves of the equation." - Tyler Littwin

20. Keep the TV on in the background.

"I spent my first two years out of college working from home as a freelance writer. Of all the tips, tricks, and secrets I've uncovered for being more productive at home, one stands out above the rest: Putting on the History Channel. No joke. Just keep the History Channel running in the background at a low volume, and I swear, you'll get stuff done. (I'm not exactly sure why this trick works, but I can only assume it has something to do with ancient aliens.)" - Me (Erik Devaney)

Originally published Aug 26, 20



Outside Resource 5

Initial behavioural remarks

It is important to recognize that remote work is still work. The better we adapt and focus – the more effective we will be in the future.

While every individual and teams works differently, we created some guidelines to support the organization in this new remote working environment. We have the tools and processes which will help us to navigate the current situation better.

You can use the guidelines below as a reference point to discuss and agree in your own teams clear rules and stick to them. We can continue working efficiently and overcome this crisis together.

Working from home and going digital

Priority # 1: Managing your time effectively

For some employees this is the first time you work from home, for others this is the first time to do remote work for such a long period of time. Some of the changes coming with remote work might make us uncomfortable. The guidelines below will help you manage your remote work effectively,

- Ensure to have a dedicated workspace, make a plan for the day and stick to it.
- While there may be unusual interrupts, you should stick with normal working hours.
- If we have distractions beyond normal work in the regular working time period (due to kids staying at home, or other activities beyond our control) discuss this with your manager. You should take care to keep a healthy work-life balance for yourself and also for your teams.
- Be focused on the tasks – avoid creating unnecessary processes. Favor direct messaging and calls as opposed to sending e-mails.
- Be prompt in your collaboration and response – speed is a deed and sharing information quickly can improve our effectiveness as a company

Priority #2: Install meeting routines with your teams and ensure effectiveness of meetings

As a people manager, project manager or a member of a team, there are different types of meetings you attend. Although you already had a meeting routine in the past, you should review this routine to adapt it to remote working. Be sure to plan more regular meetings than in the past in order to compensate for the less formalized interaction you had in the office.

- **Check-in meetings with your boss:** depending on how important is regular interaction with your boss, together you can decide to have either daily short catch-up meetings to discuss priorities, or less often lengthier meetings where you can dive in small details of your work. Ensure you have clearly defined goals and milestones.
- **Check in meetings with your team members:** the same as above, you can also decide to have daily check-in's or less often interactions with your team members. In any case, ensure to have at least one live (not email) interaction with each team member every 2-3 days.
- **Team meetings:** the regularity of these team meetings depends on how close the team members work and collaborate with each other. The regularity can vary from once or twice a day for those teams that need continuous alignment, to once a week.
- **Project meetings:** The regularity of these meetings depends on the required collaboration between the team members, the phase you are in the project, whether you were used to work virtually or not. It is up to the project manager to discuss

How to have effective remote meetings

In an office environment, meetings mostly happen face to face; you can see each other, read everybody's body language and actions follow up can happen just by passing by someone's desk. To get the most out of the remote meetings we should follow some basic etiquette / rules of engagement.

- Clarify upfront the agenda and objectives of the meeting
- Keep the agenda of recurring calls the same (this helps preparation and creation of action points)
- Share materials in advance, come to the calls prepared and have your questions thought through in advance (this will save your and your colleagues' time)
- Minimize presentation length as meetings should be discussions rather than slides sharing
- Call on individuals to speak in order to get everyone participating
- Define the milestones on deliverables. Make sure that everybody communicates the progress on their deliverables.
- Finally – allow time to voice any concerns and capture real time feedback
- And make sure to follow up on action points from a previous call to showcase the continuity.

Priority #3: Use tools and best practice for problem solving and collaboration

Before you initiate or join a meeting or a recurring meeting, ask yourself what you are trying to achieve, and what type of meeting and communication channel would work best.

- **Choose the right channel** depending on the type of meeting: sometimes it can be a video call where you see the other(s), sometimes can be a conversation where you can't see anyone, sometimes can be a presentation where screen is shared., sometimes just a phone call.
- **Use the phone more actively** than before. With no in-person meetings, people should be more reachable for individual conversations. Homeworking must not be synonym with e-mail. We all know that is much easier to resolve any misunderstandings and argue about different viewpoints through live voice versus e-mail chain.
- **Make sure to share and save all your files on shared drives** in case of government-imposed measures prevent you from work, your tasks can be taken on by other team members (please follow IT guidelines).

Priority #4: Ensure connectivity within the teams and across the company

When working remote a lot of informal information sharing will disappear without conversation over lunch breaks and in coffee corners. Many of us can feel isolated at home, especially when the work does not require much interaction with others.

Keeping the team spirit is important so, besides the formal work-related meetings, you should also have non work-related interactions with your colleagues. Every one of us can contribute in ensuring that not only the formal but also the informal communication stays alive, and that we foster and maintain positive morale.

- We need to **formalise the informal** in this new digital homeworking landscape. Here are some ideas for how you can do this – and we welcome your creativity and ideas here as well.
- - Be deliberate in reaching out and connecting with your co-workers. Think of chat messages as the virtual watercooler and ensure to informally check in with colleagues regularly.
- - Create separate channels on teams; distinguish serious time critical news from the more social exchanges
- - Encourage good spirited communications and communication from home environments
- - Lower the threshold for what should be shared digitally – a picture or a personal story can create good positive working environment
- - Initiate regular Digital coffee corners where people can meet for a chat
- **Share news, stories and successes** both vertically and horizontally
- - Do not just think about your own team but share with your peers and share information that you get from peers with your leaders and team.
- - Make sure you communicate up the line – not just down the line
- **Focus on facts**, do not speculate and get stuck with misery
- - If something is wrong, correct it
- - If you have bad news, share them up the line immediately

Take this crisis seriously, but do not get paralysed – this is a time for action, solutions and leadership.

How to stay healthy during temporary home working?

Equipment

- • Make sure your work equipment is in safe condition. If you see a problem, tell your manager.
- • Make sure you have an effective headset, headphones or loudspeaker.
- • In the event of long-term home working, talk to your manager about getting specific equipment.

Work Area & Workstation

- • Work in a well-lit room and keep it free from clutter on the floor, trailing cables, etc.
- • Choose a table at an appropriate height, and an adjustable chair if you have one.
- • Position yourself – and adjust window blinds, etc - to minimise glare or reflections.
- • As far as possible, adjust your chair & screen so the top of the screen is just below your eye level, your arms rest comfortably on the table, and your feet rest comfortably on the floor in front of you. You may need to experiment a little and perhaps use cushions and a footrest.

Working Habits

- • Try to work in a neutral & relaxed position. Pay attention to the position of your back, shoulders, elbows and wrists.
- • As a minimum, take a 10-minute break every hour. Get up, move around and stretch your muscles. Rehydrate. Give your eyes a break from close-up work and rest your mind. Take a longer break for lunch and try to get outside for at least 30 minutes.
- • When working at home, there might be fewer distractions and therefore fewer “natural breaks”. You may need to set a reminder on your phone to take your breaks.

Wellbeing

- • Try to maintain a regular daily rhythm, going to bed & getting up at the same time each day. This improves sleep quality.
- • Make a distinction between work and home-life. Be careful to prevent work encroaching on your personal and family time.
- • Make time for physical exercise and for mealtimes. Maintain a healthy, balanced diet.
- • Keep in regular contact with your work colleagues. Maintain your social conversations and seek assistance whenever you need it. Use phone or video calls in preference to email or texts.

Feedback

- • Provide your team leader with regular feedback on how things are going, and the challenges you are facing.
- • Listen closely to your body. If you feel the early signs of muscle ache, eye strain, or headache, talk to your manager, and work together to find out what could be wrong.
- • If you have an accident (or experience a near miss) while working at home, tell your manager.

Articles for Managing Remote Teams



Managing Remote Workers 1

A Guide to Managing Your (Newly) Remote Workers

View original article here: <https://hbr.org/2020/03/a-guide-to-managing-your-newly-remote-workers>

In response to the uncertainties presented by Covid-19, many companies and universities have asked their employees to work remotely. While [close to a quarter of the U.S. workforce already works from home](#) at least part of the time, the new policies leave many employees — and their managers — working out of the office and separated from each other for the first time.

Although it is always preferable to establish clear remote-work policies and training in advance, in times of crisis or other rapidly changing circumstances, this level of preparation may not be feasible. Fortunately, there are specific, [research-based steps that managers can take](#) without great effort to improve the engagement and productivity of remote employees, even when there is little time to prepare.

Common Challenges of Remote Work

To start, managers need to understand factors that can make remote work especially demanding. Otherwise high-performing employees may experience declines in job performance and engagement when they begin working remotely, especially in the absence of preparation and training. Challenges inherent in remote work include:

Lack of face-to-face supervision: Both managers and their employees often express concerns about the lack of face-to-face interaction. Supervisors worry that employees will not work as hard or as efficiently (though [research](#) indicates otherwise, at least for some types of jobs). Many employees, on the other hand, struggle with reduced access to managerial support and communication. In some cases, employees [feel that remote managers are out of touch with their needs](#), and thereby are neither supportive nor helpful in getting their work done.

Lack of access to information: Newly remote workers are often surprised by the added time and effort needed to locate information from coworkers. Even getting answers to what seem like simple questions can feel like a large obstacle to a worker based at home.

This phenomenon extends beyond task-related work to [interpersonal challenges](#) that can emerge among remote coworkers. [Research](#) has found that a lack of “mutual knowledge” among remote workers translates to a lower willingness to give coworkers the benefit of the doubt in difficult situations. For example, if you know that your officemate is having a rough day, you will view a brusque email from them as a natural product of their stress. However, if you receive this email from a remote coworker, with no understanding of their current circumstances, you are more likely to take offense, or at a minimum to think poorly of your coworker’s professionalism.

Social isolation: [Loneliness](#) is one of the most common complaints about remote work, with employees missing the informal social interaction of an office setting. It is thought that extraverts [may suffer from isolation more](#) in the short run, particularly if they [do not have opportunities to connect](#) with others in their remote-work environment. However, over a longer period of time, isolation can [cause any employee to feel less “belonging”](#) to their organization, and can even result in [increased intention to leave](#) the company.

Distractions at home: We often see photos representing remote work which portray a parent holding a child and typing on a laptop, often sitting on a sofa or living-room floor. In fact, this is a terrible representation of effective virtual work. Typically, we encourage employers to ensure that their remote workers have both dedicated workspace and adequate childcare before allowing them to work remotely. Yet, in the case of a sudden transition to virtual work, there is a much greater chance that employees will be contending with suboptimal workspaces and (in the case of [school and daycare closures](#)) unexpected parenting responsibilities. Even in normal circumstances family and home demands [can impinge on remote work](#); managers should expect these distractions to be greater during this unplanned work-from-home transition.

How Managers Can Support Remote Employees

As much as remote work can be fraught with challenges, there are also relatively quick and inexpensive things that managers can do to ease the transition. Actions that you can take today include:

Establish structured daily check-ins: Many successful remote managers establish a daily call with their remote employees. This could take the form of a series of one-on-one calls, if your employees work more independently from each other, or a team call, if their work is highly collaborative. The important feature is that the calls are regular and predictable, and that they are a forum in which employees know that they can consult with you, and that their concerns and questions will be heard.

Provide several different communication technology options: Email alone is insufficient. Remote workers benefit from having a “richer” technology, such as video conferencing, that gives participants many of the visual cues that they would have if they were face-to-face. Video conferencing has many advantages, especially for smaller groups: Visual cues allow for increased “mutual knowledge” about coworkers and also help reduce the sense of isolation among teams. Video is also particularly useful for complex or sensitive conversations, as it feels more personal than written or audio-only communication.

There are other circumstances when quick collaboration is more important than visual detail. For these situations, provide mobile-enabled individual messaging functionality (like Slack, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, etc.) which can be used for simpler, less formal conversations, as well as time-sensitive communication.

If your company doesn't have technology tools already in place, there are inexpensive ways to obtain simple versions of these tools for your team, as a short-term fix. Consult with your organization's IT department to ensure there is an appropriate level of [data security](#) before using any of these tools.

And then establish “rules of engagement”: Remote work becomes more efficient and satisfying when managers set expectations for the frequency, means, and ideal timing of communication for their teams. For example, “We use videoconferencing for daily check-in meetings, but we use IM when something is urgent.” Also, if you can, let your employees know the best way and time to reach you during the workday (e.g., “I tend to be more available late in the day for ad hoc phone or video conversations, but if there's an emergency earlier in the day, send me a text.”) Finally, keep an eye on communication among team members (to the extent appropriate), to ensure that they are sharing information as needed.

We recommend that managers establish these “rules of engagement” with employees as soon as possible, ideally during the first online check-in meeting. While some choices about specific expectations may be better than others, the most important factor is that all employees share the same set of expectations for communication.

Provide opportunities for remote social interaction: One of the most essential steps a manager can take is to structure ways for employees to interact socially (that is, have informal conversations about non-work topics) while working remotely. This is true for all remote workers, but particularly so for workers who have been abruptly transitioned out of the office.

The easiest way to establish some basic social interaction is to leave some time at the beginning of team calls just for non-work items (e.g., “We're going to spend the first few minutes just catching up with each other. How was your weekend?”). Other options include virtual pizza parties (in which pizza is delivered to all team members at the time of a videoconference), or virtual office parties (in which party “care packages” can be sent in advance to be opened and enjoyed simultaneously). While these types of events may sound artificial or forced, experienced managers of remote workers (and the workers themselves) report that virtual events help reduce feelings of isolation, promoting a sense of belonging.

Offer encouragement and emotional support: Especially in the context of an abrupt shift to remote work, it is important for managers to acknowledge stress, [listen to employees' anxieties and concerns](#), and empathize with their struggles. If a newly remote employee is clearly struggling but not communicating stress or anxiety, ask them how they're doing. Even a general question such as “How is this remote work situation working out for you so far?” can elicit important information that you might not otherwise hear. Once you ask the question, be sure to listen carefully to the response, and briefly restate it back to the employee, to ensure that you understood correctly. Let the employee's stress or concerns (rather than your own) be the focus of this conversation.

[Research](#) on emotional intelligence and [emotional contagion](#) tells us that [employees look to their managers for cues](#) about how to react to sudden changes or crisis situations. If a

manager communicates stress and helplessness, this will have what Daniel Goleman calls a [“trickle-down” effect](#) on employees. Effective leaders take a two-pronged approach, both acknowledging the stress and anxiety that employees may be feeling in difficult circumstances, but also providing affirmation of their confidence in their teams, using phrases such as “we’ve got this,” or “this is tough, but I know we can handle it,” or “let’s look for ways to use our strengths during this time.” With this support, employees are more likely to take up the challenge with a sense of purpose and focus.

We’ll add our own note of encouragement to managers facing remote work for the first time: you’ve got this. Let us know in the comments your own tips for managing your remote employees.



Managing Remote Workers 2

Top 15 Tips to Effectively Manage Remote Employees

View original article here: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbescoachescouncil/2018/05/30/top-15-tips-to-effectively-manage-remote-employees/#626ec9d1503c>

With 50% of the workforce working in some sort of telecommuting role and 80 to 90% of all employees saying they would like to work remotely at least part of the time, according to [Global Workplace Analytics](#), offering remote opportunities is an attractive way to gain productive workers.

While this is the ultimate work scenario for many employees, it can be difficult for many managers to come to grips with. You may feel like you have no control over the situation or find that gaining a trust level with a remote team can be a bit of a challenge. Yet, it is the way of the future of the workplace, and managers need to adapt to make the situation work for everyone involved.

To give managers some guidance, 15 members of [Forbes Coaches Council](#) provide top tips for companies to both embrace and better manage a remote workforce. Here's what they recommend:

1. Set Clear Expectations

Everyone has a different idea of what doing something "quickly" or "well" means. Whether showing examples of what you expect to be done, calendar sharing, etc., make sure you have clear expectations from those you work with online. The more prepared they are, the better they can serve. - [Ilean Harris](#), [Ilean Harris](#)

2. Treat Remote As Local

Treat your remote people like they are local and treat your local people like they are remote. Give remote people as much access to you as possible. Remember, your local people see you in the halls, eat with you at lunch, stop by your office, etc. The remote people don't have that access and can feel distant. Respond to them as quickly as possible. Make your local people set appointments. - [Wayne Anderson](#), [Leadership Science Institute LLC](#)

3. Engage Regularly

Engage your remote workers on a daily basis through some kind of communication. Use multiple channels to communicate. Then, plan a regularly scheduled face-to-face meeting. This can be weekly, monthly, or annually, and could be combined with a training or coaching program. This constant interaction and engagement will help remote workers feel included in an important aspect of the organization. - [Barbara OMalley](#), [Exec Advance LLC](#)

4. Schedule Video-Based Coaching

I think it's incumbent, especially with virtual employees, to schedule time and look at one another when you're speaking. We use [Zoom](#) to work with our clients and our employees. If we do not schedule time

or talk with one another and hopefully face to face, silence becomes very loud and dangerous, as remote employees might end up wondering how they're doing. - [Tim Hagen, Progress Coaching](#)

5. Trust Your Team

Sometimes, companies are not willing to embrace a remote workforce because there's an uncertainty about whether or not the work will get completed at the same level as if they were in the office. To combat this belief, set up work-from-home guidelines, such as emails must be responded to within 24 hours, use text for urgent matters, and no calls between certain hours to make sure teammates are not working around the clock. - [LaKiesha Tomlin, Thriving Ambition, Inc](#)

6. Make It Feel Inclusive

Too often, it's easy to just relegate remote staff to secondary consideration. This can be overcome with virtual meetings and staff partnerships. Consider assigning remote staff with a local point of contact where communication and connection are valued. Do expect there to be a ramp-up period filled with clear steps, expectations and check-ins to ensure the process is fully embraced. - [Laura DeCarlo, Career Directors International](#)

7. Filter For Mission, Values, Outcomes And Role

Remote workers are often frozen out of regular-office human interaction, so on-target overcommunication is critical. Help them get aligned with mission, the values that truly matter to them, as well as the outcomes they love delivering to others and their natural role in any situation. This will keep them truly motivated and working with you longer and more productively. - [Yuri Kruman, MasterTheTalk.com](#)

8. Have Reliable Tools First

If remote employees can't download files, struggle hearing on a conference call, and consistently receive meeting invitations for times when they are still asleep, you have failed to address the basics. First, invest in reliable tools to make collaboration possible. Then develop clear processes to use such tools. - [Leila Bulling Towne, The Bulling Towne Group, LLC](#)

9. Stay Focused On Goals, Not Activity

It is important to manage expectations and stay focused on goals when embracing a remote workforce. Don't worry as much about what is being done. Instead, concentrate on what is being accomplished. If we are meeting our goals, then great. If not, we need to look into the situation further. It is all about accomplishment, not activity. - [Donald Hatter, Donald Hatter Inc.](#)

10. Be Intentional

Create a remote workforce atmosphere of engagement and genuine connection. Be intentional in preparing and orientating employees for the remote workforce culture. Establish clear expectations. Make each team meeting count with intentional purpose and opportunities to engage and contribute in

a variety of ways. Intentionality is an essential practice, particularly when we cannot readily "see" our people. - [Tonyalynne Wildhaber, The Courage Practice](#)

11. Create A Communication Strategy

Managing a productive team remotely begins with a strategy for communication. First, arrange for the appropriate number of weekly formal "report-ins." Second, set guidelines about daily needs. Some people work better with a shopping list of questions and thoughts while others like a trickle. An understanding of what is urgent will further mitigate inefficiency, allowing ultimate productivity.

- [Deborah Goldstein, DRIVEN Professionals](#)

12. Avoid Multi-Tasking

Figure out how to avoid multi-tasking. Video conferences instead of phone conferences work well. Encourage people to stay in working mode and off email back-and-forth as much as is reasonable. Email trails with extensive "reply all" can be stifling on productivity. This tends to peak on Fridays as people are trying to move work off their plate. Send a note to whoever needs it, but send it early in the day!

- [Matt Norquist, Linkage, Inc.](#)

13. Connect Their Goals With Yours

The world is shifting quickly to a workforce interested in learning and skills advancement rather than stability. Working for 30 years for the same company has gone the way of the dodo. I take a personal interest in my team's learning and life goals, and in our meetings, will often take a moment to connect their interests to the goals of my company. Engagement and performance stay much higher. - [Tina Dietz, StartSomething Creative Business Solutions](#)

14. Use Technology To Build Community

Building community is important to developing an engaged remote workforce. Use technology to create dedicated spaces for celebrating special days (e.g. birthdays), company milestones (e.g., months or years of service), as well as community recognition. Being intentional about creating community helps develop a corporate culture that inspires connection, which can result in increased productivity. - [TC Cooper, UpwardAction® LLC](#)

15. Establish Close Bonds, Help And Support Frequently

Empathize and appreciate their life by discussing family, commonalities and shared beliefs. On the management end, check in frequently (daily) using collaboration tools, shared docs and spreadsheets, phone calls, chat, and video to invest in the relationship. Show you are supportive of their success by using inquiry to help them achieve their goals rather than check on their progress and numbers. - [Louis Carter, BPI](#)



Managing Remote Workers 3

25 Tips to Help You Manage a High-Performing Virtual Team

View original article here: <https://biz30.timedoctor.com/strategies-for-managing-virtual-teams/>

I've been working with hundreds of virtual team members in over 9 different countries in the past 12 years. Managing remote employees sometimes made me want to tear my hair out.

But it's also our greatest competitive strength. We can hire people from any location around the world which makes it a lot easier to hire talented people.

Sometimes I had no idea what my team was doing, or that team members would "flake out"—they'd work effectively for a while and then their quality of work would taper off or they'd quit, or I get frustrated about not being able to communicate with them effectively, or I had many issues finding and hiring great people remotely.

But now I know a lot more about how to make virtual teams work. The strategies I use reflect my years of experience figuring out what works best to keep the teams coherent, productive and motivated.

Top Tips for Managing Remote Teams

- Track hours worked, attendance and other basic measures of productivity
- Organize a system of overlapping times for communicating in different time zones
- Be wary of chat and email overload
- Use tools for quick video and visual communication
- Effective collaboration on documents and spreadsheets
- Create a standard onboarding process
- Meet in person
- More tips below

These strategies on how to manage virtual teams are what we use at Time Doctor, where we have over 50 full-time global team members all working virtually, remotely, to create the best remote management and productivity software for individuals and businesses.

Productivity

Tip 1: Track hours worked, attendance and other basic measures of productivity

If you are paying based on hours worked, then it makes a lot of sense to track how many hours each person works.

In an office environment you can see who is coming in each day even if you are not tracking attendance. In a completely virtual environment it can be difficult to understand exactly what is going on, how long each person worked, and what they are working on.

Some people are extremely disciplined and can get to work on time, stay on task, and avoid all distractions. However, most of us, including me, need some accountability. We need to “clock in” and make sure we avoid distractions like Facebook or YouTube.

Tip 2: Implement systems

Without systems, your business can fall apart. A business run in an office can compensate to some degree for not having systems and processes simply by the fact that people can talk in person and look over each other’s shoulders. In a virtual team, each person can be in their own world. They may develop their own processes and procedures that don’t mesh with the way other team members are working. It’s best to have a documented, standardized way of working that you’re constantly refining.

For example in our business, developers follow a very specific process for suggestions, building, testing and documentation.

Tip 3: Allow a degree of flexible work hours but also keep some consistency

People working from home will rightly want flexibility with their work hours. And it’s important to allow a degree of flexibility when managing remote employees. On the other hand, if things are totally erratic then it will be difficult to get a shared collaboration window when all of your team are online at the same time and able to chat.

Tip 4: Track work output

Whether your team is virtual or not, you need to try to measure their productivity. What are the key indicators of success for each job? Get transparency around this so that you will know quickly (in a couple of weeks and not in 6 months) whether each team member is being productive or not. Tools like SalesHandy are useful for this especially if you want a streamlined communication and analytics for a remote sales team.

Tip 5: Organize a system of overlapping times for communicating in different time zones.

Timezones can kill communication in a remote team. If members of your team work in different time zones, then make sure that you have an overlapping period where everyone is working and organize your virtual meetings during these times.

However this might not be enough. Depending on the type of work you are doing you may want to consider only hiring people in the same timezone or where the time is only 3 hours apart. Especially from within one team. Most teams needs to be constantly collaborating to be effective and a large time zone difference between team members will kill the collaboration.

Tip 6: Do a quarterly review to see how your virtual team members are coping

One of the issues with working from home is that people can feel lonely and isolated. Not everyone copes well with this style of working. Most people do not have this issue and love the freedom that comes with working from home, but it’s important to check in from time to time and make sure everything is working for them.

Communication

Tip 7: Compensate for the fact that you are not bumping into each other

One of the biggest reasons why virtual teams fail is because they don't compensate the fact that team members are not bumping into each other. They kind of forget about the other team members, live in their own world and do not communicate or collaborate as much as they need to.

In a virtual environment, you need to create opportunities for team members to just "chat" both formally and informally. So this means that you need to actually over-communicate and create opportunities such as regular meetings for everyone to chat.

Tip 8: Have a chat room open constantly

In our business we have a chat room open for each team in the business. Team members leave messages for the team that they are a part of. It's essential to keep these chats alive but not distracting. There's enough conversation to be able to discuss important issues and to feel like we're connected as one team, but not so much that it becomes distracting.

We also have a fun company wide chat room open for non business related chat. This creates a bit of a water cooler effect where employees can chat about anything they like. It can be a lonely existence working by yourself at home and this company wide chat helps keep a feeling of social connection.

The three most common options for chat software are: Slack, Skype and HipChat. All of these are great options and worth considering, Skype is possibly better if you want a free option, but it lacks some of the benefits of Slack in terms of integrations and getting your company organized.

Tip 9: Be wary of Chat and Email overload

This is a hard one because on the one hand you need to make sure everyone is communicating enough, but on the other hand it can get distracting and overwhelming. Make sure that team members are not subscribed to too many channels and instead are only receiving the messages that they need to see.

Tip 10: Choose the right communication style

Depending on your needs, choose the type of communication that works best.

- Email – For quick interactions. You can also replace most email communication with other tools such as project management tools or chat programs.
- Chat programs – Skype or Google Hangouts are great for quick instant messages where you need real-time interaction.
- Video chat – Some types of communication should only be handled over with voice. Any kind of emotional issue such as performance problems should be handled over the phone. Video chat would be even better as it gives you more visual cues of what is going on with the other person. It can feel isolating and abnormal to chat only with text and adding video makes your remote company feel more "real".
- VoIP – Virtual phone systems centered on cloud technology that allow for quick and easy calling, messaging, and task management. Also typically come equipped with dozens of call functions to make the calling experience as smooth as possible.
- Project management tools – These keep your communication a lot more organized and so that you are able to reference it and refer to it later on. Or perhaps when people join the company they can see the previous discussion points.

- Creating a short video – It’s very easy to create a video of yourself on YouTube using your webcam, or using a screen capture tool such as Jing.

Tip 11: Use tools for quick video or visual communication

When you’re not in the same room how can you explain something visually on your computer screen? A YouTube video or a screen capture tool like Jing is a great way to do this. Capture desktop screenshots and put arrows, labels and notes using Jing or create quick screen capture videos and share it with other team members via YouTube. You can also create explainer videos using tools like mysimpleshow.

Tip 12: Use screen sharing tools

There are tools that enable you to share your screen so that another person can see exactly what you are doing. Some of these tools even allow people to control another computer remotely. Many of these tools are free-to-use for small teams, including TeamViewer and Join.me. Skype, Slack and Google Hangouts also have screen sharing capability but without any option to control another computer remotely.

Tip 13: Video conferencing technologies

It’s essential that you regularly chat on video within your team. Imagine that you came into a normal office and you put a balaclava over your head and didn’t chat to anyone or show your face. That’s kind of how it’s like if you never chat on video. To connect as a team, video chat is essential.

There are lots of technology options for video chat: Google hangouts, Slack, Skype and Zoom are a few alternatives. In my opinion Zoom is probably the best technology, it has dozens of small optimizations that improve your remote communication.

Tip 14: Set up a meeting rhythm

You need to have a meeting rhythm. This means a regular meeting within each team and an “all hands” meeting for the entire company. The exact frequency depends on the person and type of job, but I would recommend the following minimum meetings:

- A daily meeting within each team (quick, less than 10 minutes just to say hi and feel like you are connecting and to make sure there is nothing blocking each person from achieving their goals).
- A weekly meeting within a team or a weekly one-on-one meeting between a team leader and each person on their team. This weekly meeting is a way to store up issues and minimize the back and forth email that takes place during the week and handle it all in one meeting.
- A weekly all-hands meeting for the entire company. This should be short, usually 10 minutes to feel like your all part of the same team and to get on the same page.

Tip 15: Effective collaboration on documents and spreadsheets

If you have a document that is being edited by many people, Google Drive is the best option. If you have a document that just needs to be shared, and will not be edited simultaneously, then you can place your documents (such as an excel file) in a shared Google Drive or in Dropbox. Many project management tools also have file sharing and collaboration features, so that’s another alternative for collaborating on documents.

Tip 16: Set up a project management system, and actually use it

For smaller teams you might be tempted to wing it and handle everything via email. This is dangerous. Project management systems are helpful in managing virtual teams because they help to organize documents and conversations into projects, making it easier to find them later. They also help with organizing and storing shared files. If you run your business purely with emails it can quickly become an unmanageable, disorganized mess.

Hiring**Tip 17: Test new employees with short-term work before hiring them full time**

You don't need to hire someone full time right off the bat. You can get a taste of working with someone by hiring them for a small project, and then when it's completed if you're happy move on to full time work. It's important that you do move on to full time work because if you have someone on part time or on a temporary project, their attention will be divided. It's quite possible they will no longer be available just when you need them most. My experience is that staff who are working part time eventually drop off and stop working altogether. Full time people are relying on your company for their livelihood and are more likely to stick with you long term.

Tip 18: Pay virtual team members well

There are a lot of people who want to work virtually. Many professionals are willing to take a pay cut for the opportunity to work from home. While it's true that you can find lower-cost team members virtually, if you pay them well, you'll ensure that your team works hard and sticks with you for the long term.

Tip 19: Look for people who are the right fit for virtual work

Take a look at their environment at home. Do they have a quiet place to work? Are they constantly distracted by children in the house? On the other hand are they living at home by themselves and unable to get out and spend time with friends? Both distractions and isolation can be issues and it's important to make sure that your team is happy & productive working from home.

Tip 20: Create a standard on-boarding process for educating new employees about your company

If you're hiring employees remotely then they are not going to get the same kind of "learn by watching over the shoulder" method that can happen in an office. So when you hire someone, make sure that they have a training program (videos can work well) that educates them about your company and the way that you do things. Do as much as you can to get them adjusted to your company and to learn how to perform in their role. You should also have new employees interview customers to better learn how your product helps them.

Culture

Tip 21: Inspire via video

Remote workers can miss the feeling of a company culture. It's difficult to create and maintain culture through written words alone. It's much more powerful to create videos and use video conferencing services such as Google Hangouts. You can record hangouts for future employees as well. Use videos as a way to inspire your team, and to reinforce core concepts in your company culture (such as your company vision and mission).

Tip 22: Meet in person

It's hard to develop true friendships remotely. Meeting in person about 4 times per year or as often as possible is the best way to create stronger bonds within your company. Joining conferences for remote teams greatly help too!

Tip 23: Nurture virtual friendships

Don't forget that your team are human beings wired to connect with others. People can get connected from outside of work but it's great to fill some of this need at work as well, much more in a virtual team. In my experience, this is especially important in jobs that do not involve as much human contact, such as in software development.

Tip 24: Create a true "team" feeling

When working virtually it may take extra effort to keep people feeling committed to their team. They need to know that not only they're contributing true value to the team's common goal; they are also valuable to the team's success in achieving its goal. Some ways to achieve this are:

- Having and maintaining non-work related communication
- Sharing the future vision of the company
- Keeping your team informed about how the company is doing. People like to know what's happening in other parts of the company and how they themselves fit in and are contributing to the bigger picture
- Get everyone in your team involved in important events and projects
- During birthdays and special occasions, send gifts with meaning.
- Anything you can do to create a feeling that they are not just working separately but are truly part of your company and part of a team is worthwhile.

Tip 25: Beware of a mixed office and remote culture

When your entire team is remote you will adjust more easily because you have to and you will be forced to implement strategies that work for a remote team. However when you have half of the team in an office and the other half remote it can cause problems. For example your office team might decide to hold a quick meeting and leave out the remote team members who end up not having their voice heard.

So you need to make sure that ALL of your meetings are remote friendly. This means you all log into Zoom or whatever technology you are using and chat together through your computer. You don't have some people in the room and some remote.