5 BEST PRACTICES

FOR WORKING FROM HOME

INTRODUCTION

In the blink of an eye, the world has had to adapt to the new normal during these challenging times. In light of social distancing recommendations to slow the spread of the Coronavirus (Covid-19), many employees across the country are being mandated to work remotely to ensure the health and safety of our communities. As we settle into our work-from-home environments, people are discovering the benefits and frustrations of remote work. These suggestions and guidelines offer some direction on where to start, however, there is no one-size-fits-all approach and you should consider what may work for you as we learn new ways to connect, collaborate, and make progress.

Image: SolStock

Working from home will take time to establish new rhythms and practices. It sounds simple enough, and even desirable, but when you've been working alone and social distancing for days or weeks at a time, it can feel isolating and be difficult to stay connected with your colleagues and engaged in your work. When you create a healthy routine, an effective place to work, and use technology to get work done and also maintain relationships, you'll be more productive and feel good while doing it.

STOP! COLLABORATE & LISTEN

Social-distancing has left many of us feeling disconnected and worried that the transition to working remotely will impact connectivity as well as productivity. Featured below is a list of software that allows employees to work remotely while still being able to communicate and collaborate on projects and documents.

- Adobe Connect
- Asana
- Google Hangouts
- Office 365
- Skype
- Slack
- Trello
- WebEx
- Zoom
- And many others...

BEST PRACTICES

PUT ROUTINES IN PLACE

1

Get dressed. It might be tempting to stay in your pajamas, but by changing into your favorite work-from-home (WFH) clothes, you signal your brain that you're getting ready for a day at the "office."

Take breaks. Oddly enough, it seems even harder to pull yourself away from the screen when working from home, but it is essential to avoid WFH fatigue.Be sure to take your 15 minute breaks and block out time for lunch.

Move your body. When WFH, be mindful of the need to move. Consider starting the day with a workout, set alerts to stretch your legs, and budget time for a daily walk.

DESIGNATE A WORK AREA

2

Make a space. Just like getting dressed, it's important to designate an "office" in your home. It tells your brain that you have a purpose and its time to focus. Resist working in bed or on the couch. Use a desk or table with an appropriately sized monitor to protect your arms, neck, and shoulders. Choose a good headset for video conferences to cancel unwanted noise - and be sure to keep them in the same place when not in use so you know where to find them. Finally, look into whether or not you need to upgrade your internet connection to work from home.

Get collaboration tools. Collaboration tools make it easy to stay productive and connected from home. You can hold virtual meetings with Zoom, Adobe Connect, or Google Hangouts, and send messages to colleagues through Slack.

CREATE BOUNDARIES

3

Be realistic. Our children see us as parents first. When everyone is home, they will demand a lot of time. We can use best practices to be as effective as we can, but it's not going to be the same as if we did not have children to attend to and care for. This is perhaps the ultimate test of work-life balance.

Create visual boundaries. Setting boundaries about when you are working is an essential step. Create a visual sign that lets others know that you are working. For instance, you could use a white board that says "Stop! I'm in a meeting." Some parents have used the traffic light model with colored paper to indicate stop, proceed with caution, and come in. Discuss protocol with members of your household to signal when you're "at work".

Supervisors: Communicate with your staff on what the priorities are and keep in mind that for many parents who have children at home, there will be extra demands on them. Please do your best to be flexible during this stressful time.

COMMUNICATE

4

Check in with your colleagues. Dedicate a few minutes at the beginning of virtual meetings to "check-in". Ask colleagues: How are you doing? What does your day look like working from home? This gives people permission to be honest and convey feelings of anxiety and stressors that may be bothering them. WFH can be lonely for some, try scheduling virtual "coffee chats" to catch up.

Schedule a virtual face-to-face. Video makes a significant difference in maintaining connections and minimizing miscommunications because you can see people's faces, read their body language, and hear their voice. Having the majority of scheduled meetings via video is a great way to keep in touch with teams or one-on-one check-ins.

TIME MANAGEMENT

5

Use the 1-3-5 rule. Create an achievable to do list by using the 1-3-5 rule. For this method, you will break up the tasks by accomplishing:

- **1 Large Task**
- **3 Medium Tasks**
- **5 Small Tasks**

Break it up. Instead of thinking of your workday as an uninterrupted 8-hour chunk, break in into 90 minute sections and develop your goals with that in mind.

REFERENCES

- 8 Best Practices When Working from Home. (2020, March 17). Retrieved April 14, 2020, from https://koyapartners.com/blog/work-from-home/

- Austin, P. L. (2020, March 12). 5 Tips for Staying Productive While You're Working From Home. Retrieved April 14, 2020, from https://time.com/5801725/work-from-home-remote-tips/

- Barrett, B. (2020, March 03). How to Work From Home Without Losing Your Mind. Retrieved April 13, 2020, from https://www.wired.com/story/how-to-work-from-home-without-losing-your-mind/

- Bown, J. (2020, March 10). Tricks and tools for better working from home. Retrieved April 14, 2020, from https://www.bbc.com/news/business-51804354

- Dowling, D., Knight, R., Axtell, P., & Bukholtz, A. (2018, February 12). How to Work from Home When You Have Kids. Retrieved April 15, 2020, from https://hbr.org/2017/09/how-to-work-from-home-when-you-have-kids

- Noguchi, Y. (2020, March 15). 8 Tips To Make Working From Home Work For You. Retrieved April 15, 2020, from https://www.npr.org/2020/03/15/815549926/8-tips-to-make-working-from-home-work-for-you

- Working at Cornell. (n.d.). Retrieved April 15, 2020, from https://hr.cornell.edu/covid-19-workplace-guidance/remote-work/covid-19-remote-work-guidelines-employees

- Working from Home? Managing a Remote Team? Maintain Your Productivity with These Best Practices. (2020, March 23). Retrieved April 14, 2020, from https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdle/news/working-home-managing-remote-team-maintain-your-productivity-these-best-practices