

Advice for New Telecommuters during the COVID-19 Crisis

Working from home has been riding a wave of popularity in recent years, but the onslaught of COVID-19 and social distancing has pushed it to a necessity for many businesses. Working remotely now is critical for an employee's business and personal well-being. Focusing on a few key areas will help transform a portion of your home living space to an efficient telecommuting center.

Develop a Workspace

Whether you live in a sprawling suburban home or share an apartment with roommates, dedicating a work space is critical to success. The best office would be a dedicated room with a door, so as to close off whatever distractions may present themselves in your living area. But at the very least, a desk and comfortable chair are basic requirements. A standing desk or exercise ball are healthy options to encourage movement and limit ergonomic issues. Locating that workspace in close proximity to power, phone lines and internet connections are important, but so is being near natural light, which can serve as an energy boost throughout the day.

Fill Your Tool Kit

Stocking your remote business tool kit is critical to telecommuting success. Think back to everything your office or workplace location offers, most of which has previously been taken for granted. Do you have a laptop with a video camera? Do you have headphones to limit the noise for others who may be working remotely near you? How will you meet with coworkers to discuss business plans?

Several good options exist for maintaining that flow of business contact. [Slack](#) is a good way to replace the ability to chat with that coworker down the hallway, as well as keeping a record of those discussions to refer back on. [Zoom](#) is great for video conferencing, both with internal and external customers, with end-to-end encrypted calls. Zoom is free up to meetings of 40 minutes, but has affordable subscription services for longer requirements. Users may already be familiar with Apple's FaceTime, Facebook's Messenger, Google Hangouts and Skype and will be able to put them to use as a business resource quickly.

If your company doesn't already utilize cloud-based collaboration and productivity programming, [Google Suite](#) and [Zoho](#) offers free options to share documents, calendars and more. Zoho Remotely is a productivity suite of web and mobile apps that the company has announced will be free through July 1, 2020 in response to the COVID-19 crisis.

Manage Your Time

Once the physical characteristics of remote-working have been established, the productive telecommuter must address time management. Beyond the restraints required for team or client meetings at set times, it will be important to be honest with yourself and find time that enables your productivity. The best way to do that is to make a daily schedule to budget your time wisely and monitor your effectiveness. Schedule blocks of time for work but also for chores, exercise and other tasks to maximize your efficiency. It is also important to realize you may have gained extra time through the lack of a commute. That time can now be filled with rest, exercise and family time to maximize your efficiency when it is time to get back to work.

Mental Vitality

Working from home may remove the ability to go out to lunch with coworkers or stroll over to the water cooler, but that doesn't mean there aren't opportunities to recharge mentally. Reach out to those coworkers specifically for non-work-related moments of chit-chat and leisure. Or if a call doesn't require video, take it while on a walk throughout the home or outside, provided you can maintain effectiveness while doing so. And make time to have healthy snacks or lunch easy to access so you can make a quick run to the fridge to recharge your energy levels.

Staying positive

Everyone hopes to return to business-as-usual quickly. But stepping through the guidelines above will not only help you maintain your value to your company while working remotely, but may help you appreciate what your office or worksite provides once that return does occur.

SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

1. Read about the steps employees new to telecommuting can take during the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. A dedicated work space is critical to telecommuting success. Here are some ideas for developing that space.
3. A good remote business tool kit is critical to successful telecommuting. Read here how platforms such as Zoom, Slack and Google Suites can help you.
4. Maintaining mental vitality is just as important to telecommuting success as a dedicated workforce and communication management. Read here what you can do to stay sharp!

SNIPPET (Google Search) - Working remotely during the COVID-19 crisis: Guidance for new telecommuters