

Work-From-Home Best Practices in the Midst of COVID-19



As countries across the globe grapple with COVID-19, many people in the U.S. are dealing with a new reality – telecommuting. Working from home may be completely new for some, while others may have some experience occasionally working remotely, such as during inclement weather. No matter your history, working from home may be the new norm for many employees.

MAKE YOUR SPACE WORK FOR YOU

Identifying the best place to work from home can go a long way toward being productive. Find an area that is quiet, free from interruptions and has good lighting. Make sure your work area has temperature controls and is free of tripping hazards. You will also want to make sure you are set up well ergonomically, which means designing a safe and efficient job environment to work in, wherever that environment might be. For example, your chair, monitor and keyboard should be arranged so that you can keep your body in a neutral position. Make sure you are not sitting or standing for prolonged periods of time. Relieve stress on your body by taking frequent breaks, varying your tasks and stretching regularly. And, just as with onsite work, you should follow your organization's procedures for safe lifting and personal protective equipment, as well as outlined precautions for electricity and hazardous materials.

CONNECT WITH COLLEAGUES

Working from home means less in-person interaction with your colleagues, but it does not mean you can't connect with them in other ways. Scheduling video chats or meetings is a fantastic way to keep interaction with your coworkers going. If you don't have video capabilities, regular phone calls can also help keep you connected. In addition, you can plan or participate in fun activities with your remote colleagues, such as virtual coffee breaks, group walking challenges or sharing photos of your unique home work spaces. While it is important to avoid distractions during your work day, taking time to interact with fellow employees can help you avoid feelings of isolation and make your day feel more "normal."



BE PREPARED FOR AN EMERGENCY

Employees working from home should make sure they are prepared if an emergency arises. They should have easy access to first aid supplies. They should also have an emergency preparedness plan in place specific to their home. The plan should include what alert mechanisms are available to them, such as fire alarms and weather radios. It should also include the locations of the closest hospitals and shelters. Keeping clean water, food and generators on hand is also recommended.

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SECURE NEEDED EQUIPMENT AND TOOLS

A crucial element to ensure work-from-home success is making sure you have the equipment and tools you need to do your job. This includes laptops, monitors, keyboards and other computer-related devices. A strong internet connection is also recommended. Remote workers will want to consider having their work phone forwarded to their cell or house phone. In addition, utilizing video conferencing tools is a great way to make sure important meetings are not missed, and embracing instant messaging tools can help with short, quick communications between you and your colleagues. Employees will also need to evaluate whether they need network access, passcodes and instructions for remote login.

UNDERSTAND EXPECTATIONS

Working from home may mean a shift in how you work and interact with your coworkers and supervisor. Connect with your manager to understand remote work policy and expectations. Is working your normal schedule required? Are you able to adjust your hours based on needs at home? Does your employer expect you to be on call 24-7? Getting answers to these questions up front will help alleviate issues and uncertainty down the road.

