



4 Simple Things to Do to Make Working from Home Easier

Working from home is an ideal that many people have longed for, but the reality of it can be disenchanting. It takes some special skills to make it work. In this article we will cover four simple things you can do to make working at home easier on everyone. If you lead a team or you're the owner of a business, you have additional challenges when heading up a remote team during a global pandemic. We have some suggestions to help with that, too.

4 Simple Things for Employees

Create your own space

People are getting really inventive with their home offices. If you're fortunate, you have your own space with a door and a lock. But for many we have to improvise. Try to remove yourself from the hustle and bustle. This may mean turning a walk-in closet or balcony/porch into a home office.

If you don't have any private spaces you can take over, carve out a little section of a public area. Use a screen or piece of furniture to segment it off from traffic flow. Having your own space – even if you have to make it – will help people understand when you're working and keep you out of the fray as much as possible.

Start or continue a ritual

It's likely if you worked outside the home that you had a morning ritual. Maybe it was stopping for coffee every morning; maybe it was getting up and exercising. Whatever your morning ritual was, continue it. Your body and mind get used to these rituals as signifiers that work is about to begin and you will feel more on schedule if you keep them up. The rituals may need to be altered for our current reality, however. For instance, if you always have a cup of coffee on your way to work, make a cup of coffee and take a moment to enjoy it.

If you didn't have a ritual before, now is the perfect time to start one. You have eliminated your commute so you now have extra time to do a few stretches, have a cup of coffee outside on your deck, or spend some time meditating. Again, the value of these rituals is that it sets the tone for the day to begin and provides you with some well-needed *me* time. Treat these rituals like a morning appointment. Do not skip them.

Understand expectations

There are two schools of thought when it comes to working from home. There are employers that expect butts in seats for a certain number of hours. If they try to reach you during those hours and you are unreachable, this will cause a problem.

On the other hand, there are employers who are measuring productivity, not hours. That means they are concerned about what you're accomplishing, not the hours you're working. This is wonderful for parents of small children because it gives them the flexibility of getting the work done on their schedule.

You want to make sure you understand which one of these categories your boss falls into so there are no misunderstandings about expectations. If they don't mention specific hours, ask.

Come with solutions

Most employers are doing this for the first time. We have not faced a pandemic like this in the age of technology, which means there are going to be hiccups. Instead of complaining about the things that aren't working, come to them with suggestions.

4 Simple Things for Employers

If you are the boss, there's a heavy weight on your shoulders. You're likely worried about the future of your company and wondering what that means for your employees. How you manage them at this time of crisis can be a turning point that either improves company culture and morale or leaves people feeling disengaged and not wanting to be a part of your organization in the future.

Good leaders should:

- **Communicate expectations.** Will you have an 8:30 a.m. virtual meeting every morning? Do you have daily deliverables? Let people know up front what you need from them.
- **Socialize.** While not everyone on your team may need the social interaction, some will. Some employees will be struggling with the stress and challenges of the situation on top of the regular workload and the feelings of isolation. Be understanding of this and make time to have some fun virtually with your team, if they want to participate.
- **Be transparent.** You are the leader so you can't be “doom and gloom” and expect to keep up morale. Instead, show them the best in a bad situation. This places you in a difficult spot because you might not always be feeling the things you're saying. Remember, you're a team and you should be able to count on one another. If you're struggling with a concern, consider sharing it with the team and crowdsourcing a solution. When people help find a solution, they generally support it.
- **Evolve.** One of the things that's the most frustrating about this time is that everything needs to remain fluid. There are constant changes with new limitations coming down several times a day from local, state, and federal governments. You must evolve and change your approach based on these things. This means finding new solutions on a regular basis. Advise your team of this early on. Let them know how important their health (both physical and mental) is to you. In light of that, you will be evaluating things on a consistent basis and protocols are subject to change. Invite them to talk to you about them. Whenever possible, explain the why behind your decisions. Right now people are afraid. Fear drives imagination in an unproductive way. But if you fill in those blanks, they won't need to imagine the reasons behind them.

This is a difficult time for everyone. We all need a little more patience and understanding. Consider this a time of reset that may affect the way we do business and educate far into the future. Even after the danger of the virus has passed, there is a good chance that what we are learning about virtual work and schooling will create a much different workforce mentality after the virus than what we had before. We're going to learn a lot about ourselves and our businesses.

Finally, as strange as this is to say, enjoy this time for what it is. As of this writing we're fortunate enough to still have the many luxuries we've grown accustomed to like electricity, running water, and the internet. We can enjoy, while limited, the beauty of the outdoors and the little things. Challenge yourself to find something amazing about each day.