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Useful Tips for Working from Home

Working from can be very rewarding but there some adjustments you may need to make to help the transition from Office to Home Office.

I have worked from home for over 6 years now and have successfully started my own business during this time period. There have been ups and downs and I still miss the hustle and bustle of a vibrant working environment. I have deployed a multitude of strategies to help me replicate the face to face social and professional interactions that form part of the fabric of a rewarding working environment.

Covid-19 has presented new challenges for me because my frequent face to face meetings with customers and associates has now stopped, this can heighten a sense of lone working which can be quite destabilising. Fortunately, the array of technology that is available goes a long way in replacing this face to face interactions.

To Begin.

1. I would recommend as much as possible that you keep your routine in terms of when you wake, shower & eat. It is important to maintain a schedule that fits in with your work commitments and that enables you to start work at the right time and in the right frame of mind.
2. Have a Macro and Micro plan for your week – I find a book with notes works well for me but of course there are many digital options for this as well. I use a book because it provides time away from my Laptop, PC, Tablet and Phone. I can also jot notes down and adapt as the week progresses. I tend to use simple bulleted points for my Macro planning and Spider Diagrams for items that require more detailed planning and analysis. I get a good feeling when I am crossing off items from my plan.
3. Lap Top Fever – You are allowed to be away from your laptop or other comms devices. Sitting at your desk wating for emails is not productive or good for your concentration. Try have a work area that is big enough for you to be able to work without electronic tools and don't feel guilty if you are not staring at your laptop for 8 hours. Remember how many casual, social and professional interactions you have in the workplace, they create important mind breaks during the day. I use WhatsApp groups with like-minded associates to help me try and recreate that social element to my day.
4. Stop working for your tea and lunch breaks. Make the effort to move away from your desk and make a brew and something to eat. If the current Covid-19 restrictions allow get some fresh air and go for a walk. You need to make the effort, it is easy to



fall into the trap where you are sat at a desk for 8-9 hours, this is not good for your physical or mental health.

5. Background noise – depending on your circumstances this can be very distracting, especially at present with the schools and colleges being closed. When I first started, I struggled a little when my kids were off school, I was paranoid they would be heard in the background. When they were heard it never caused a customer or associate a problem, the problem was my over sensitivity to it. I no longer work in the house, I have a glorified shed in the garden, but I have successfully worked in every room in the house, anything is possible if you organise yourself and your family. Set some expectations with yourself and your family.
6. The opposite of Point 5 is working in silence, this can be as distracting and makes you very aware that you are alone. Depending on the type of work I am doing (creative or task driven) I will use different techniques. If I need to really concentrate, I use an App called Coffitivity which creates a background noise like a Café. IF I am being more creative, I will put on the Radio and listen to 5Live, World Service or Talk Sport. For me I find music is a distraction and makes me reach for my battered acoustic guitar.
7. Non pressured phone calls are also a good way to refresh mentally, in your non work times during the day call a friend or an associate, someone who will not demand anything from you. It helps refresh your mental capability and aids concentration and personal well-being. If you don't have time for a phone call use a friends WhatsApp group where you can share jokes and frustration. We are all in the same boat so need to support each other.
8. I think drift is almost inevitable the longer you work from home. My day starts when I wake up, the first thing I do is check my emails, I am also checking emails during the evening and at the weekend. Now, I do this willingly because it helps me stay on top of things and can free up time in the week for other things like medical appointments. If this is demanded of you it may change your attitude towards it, the choice is yours.
9. Accept that it will be different, embrace communication tools that enhance the working from home experience, the market is flooded with Web based tools, phone apps and social media groups. All can play a positive part if managed and interacted with in a positive fashion. My view with WebEx tools is that it is very difficult to recreate an around the table meeting in the virtual. Time delays can make multi person conversations very difficult and people are constantly and non-intentionally interrupting each other. Always best to have an agenda and allocated speaking slots, especially if the meeting involves 3 or more people.



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10. Finally, find a way to switch off, working at home and home life can often drift into each other, you need a mental break to be at your best the following day. Turn off your laptop and if necessary, put your phone on silent mode.



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