EMPLOYEE'S WORK FROM HOME GUIDE

Telecommuting Best Practices & Guidelines

Contents

OVERVIEW

HRinDemand offers a work from home guide to help employers and employees figure out how to telecommute. In an age when more and more positions require duties to be carried out almost exclusively on computers, and where the internet can instantly connect anyone anywhere, many employers, including HRinDemand, offer the option of telecommuting. Telecommuting allows employees to work from home or another alternate location and communicate with their employers electronically.

In addition to housing all your company's policies and guidelines regarding telecommuting, this Employee's Work from Home Guide provides you with tips and self-evaluation methods to help you remain engaged and stay on track with your work.

For any questions regarding your companies telecommuting policy, please contact HRinDemand.

STEP 1 - SET A DESIGNATED WORK AREA

Though this may seem trivial, choosing a spot in your home that is designated for working from home is an important step you can take to set yourself up for success. Choose a spot that you can work from every day that you are working from home. This could be spare bedroom that you've turned into a home office, a desk located in the corner of the living room or even the dining room table. However, you should try to stay away from working in your bed or on the couch, as these areas are associated with relaxation in your brain, which could negatively impact your productivity.

Make sure your workspace functions efficiently for you and your work style. To further improve your productivity, make sure your office is ergonomically friendly.

Treat your home work area as you would an office cubicle. Make your workspace a place you enjoy going to each day, an area where you can focus and do your best work.

STEP 2 - PLAN AND TEST COMMUNICATIONS

To ensure that you aren't left out of the loop, make sure to schedule regular meetings and communications with your team, supervisors and managers. It can be easy to feel disconnected with what's going on in the office, so remaining engaged with your co-workers is key.

Communications can include the following:

| VIRTUAL MEETINGS | PHONE CALLS | INSTANT MESSAGING | REGULAR EMAILS |

Of course, make sure that your communication method of choice functions properly before you consistently telecommute. Once your set up to communicate, make sure to be direct and to the point.

RECOMMENDED PROGRAMS AND SOFTWARE

- Virtual Meetings – Zoom video conferencing app with screen sharing features. The free version allows 40 min meetings with up to three participants.

- Phone Calls – Separate work and personal calls using apps like Grasshopper. Grasshopper allows two numbers on the same phone. Users can get all the features of a business phone system on an existing cell phone.

- Instant Messaging – Slack is collaboration software that can replace email and improve productivity between teams. It also integrates with integrates with thousands of software options, including Google Drive and Office 365..

- Email – Use exchange accounts or updated IMAP settings so inbox and sent folders sync across all devices. Consider using encryption and archiving services for security and compliance.

- Security Software – Webroot delivers multi-vector protection including antivirus software, endpoint and network security. It's lightweight, affordable and easy to install and maintain.

- Remote into Work PC's – Remote PC allows 24/7 access to your work pc from anywhere. Works with multiple systems including PC/Mac/Linux, Iphone/Ipad or Android Devices. It's secure and easy to use and install.

STEP 3 – MAKE SURE YOUR NETWORK AND WORK PROGRAMS ARE PROTECTED

Telecommuting introduces potential cyber security risks. Strategies for mitigating this risk including using anti-virus software and/or a VPN. For more information on cyber security strategies, speak to your company's IT department. Make sure you speak with your manager about cyber security and strategies you can use for mitigating the risk of a cyber-attack while you are working from your home.
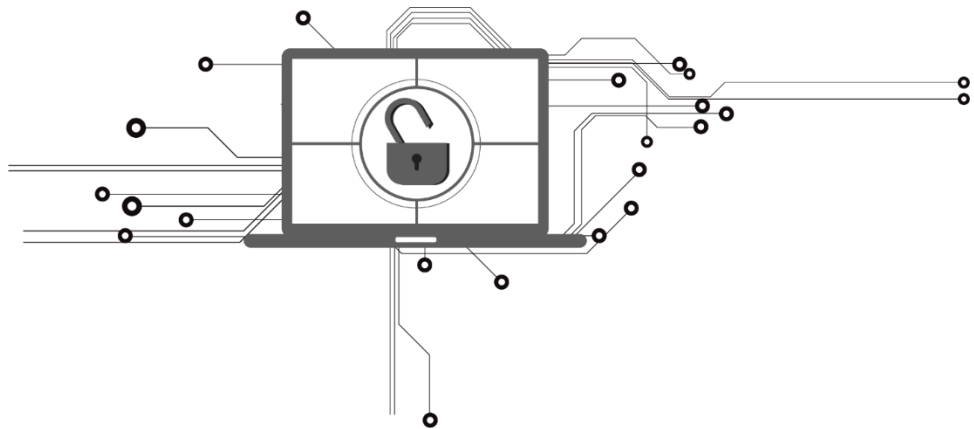
STEP 4 – ATTIRE, DRESS LIKE YOU'RE GOING TO WORK IN THE OFFICE

The way you dress has been proven to affect you psychologically. This means that although it may sound like a great idea to work from home in your pajamas, it isn't. While you do not need to dress up in business formal attire if you are working from home, you should take the time to shower, brush your teeth and get ready for the day. Aim to dress in casual—not sloppy—attire.

STEP 5 – AVOID DISTRACTIONS AND STAY ON TASK

One big challenge of telecommuting is accountability. Schedules and typical work days may start to shift. It's important to keep a schedule and keep your manager updated on it. Without co-workers or managers nearby, it's easy to become distracted and fall behind on work. Remember that working from home is a privilege, and that it will become apparent if you are not putting in the same effort into your work at home as you did in the office. Stay focused on work throughout the day to maintain consistent productivity. Avoid online distractions as well. If you find yourself distracted, make sure to clock out. Limit the time spent on email and websites unrelated to work. Set a timer on your phone or computer if necessary.

STEP 6 – SELF ASSESMENT, EVALUATE YOURSELF PERIODICALLY

To ensure that telecommuting is working for you, be sure to conduct self-assessments periodically. Things to include in your assessment could include the following:

- What is working as far as your hours?

- What are you accomplishing in the office versus out of the office?

- Are you meeting all your deadlines?

- Are you feeling connected with your co-workers?

STEP 7 – REMEMBER TO TAKE BREAKS

Just like you are encouraged to take breaks while you're in the office, remember to allow yourself time throughout the day for quick breaks. If you need a short break to gather your thoughts, try walking around the house or down the street, stretching, or making a snack or meal.

If you need to take a longer break or socialize, plan time in your schedule for this. A major advantage of working from home is having flexibility. Before you take an hour or two out of your day, though, make sure to communicate and check with your manager so that you remain compliant with company policies.
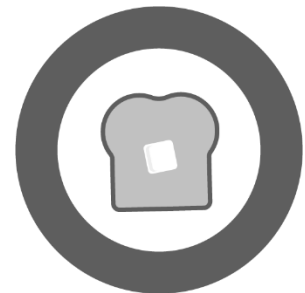
STEP 8 – PRACTICALITY OF WORKING FROM HOME

Telecommuting is not a viable option for everyone. If you find that working from home is negatively impacting your productivity or making you feel disconnected from your team and your work, speak to your manager.

In many cases, the practicality of working from home may not add up. If you don't have a quiet space, the tools needed or the ability to work without interruptions, it's most likely not a viable option.

STEP 9 – REMOTE ETIQUETTE TIPS

Working from home doesn't make everyone immune from office etiquette. While we are no longer face to face, know that all the same rules apply with some additional ones too.

- Choose communication methods wisely. If it's after typical work hours, don't use chat or text. Even if you don't expect a response, sending the message after hours may put undo pressure on someone else.

- Don't email and expect an immediate response. Just because you're working doesn't mean everyone else is. Be respectful of schedules and ask the same of them.

- Let people know when you're in, when you're away, and when you need to hear back from them.

- Minimize interruptions. Turn off desktop notifications. With the amount of emails we are all receiving, a buzz notification can be very distracting. Also don't go crazy on instant messenger. Each message is an interruption to the other person so make sure they are thoughtful, short and clear. If your text or instant message is more than a sentence or two, consider putting it in an email or calling.

- Long emails are hard to get through. If your email is more than three paragraphs or includes multiple questions, set up a phone call instead.

- Resist the urge to 'cc everyone. It's tempting to 'cc everyone in the office so they know you are working but really, it causes a lot of over communication that isn't necessary.

- Remember that your words matter. When communication is mostly done in writing, remember that tone is very important. Also, consistency. Begin and end emails in a

friendly manner. Nothing is worse than getting an email that ends abruptly with no thank you or goodbye. It may lead others to think that you are angry when you're not.

- When video conferencing, mute yourself when you're not talking. You may be quiet but sometimes mics pick up papers rustling, reverb and other loud noises that are very distracting to participants.

- Clean up your space before video conferencing. Everyone will notice what's in your background so make sure it's clean and free of distractions.

Melissa Marsh, SPHR, SHRM-SCP, is a human resources consultant and founder of **HRinDemand**, *a human resources company in Reno, NV, offering expert guidance and easy-to-use tools to help small businesses with employment regulations, compliance, employee relations, and company growth.* *Subscribe to HR Tips* *for more human resources news and information. Contact:* (775) - 400 – 1322 / info@hrindemand.com