Pro Tips for Remote Workers

Working from home can be a challenge for people who are used to working in an office. Spouses, pets, and children may not respect your workspace and work hours. They may even interfere with phone calls or online meetings. Other difficulties workers experience may include:

- Isolation from co-workers or people in general

- Distractions, i.e. unfinished chores, projects, etc.

- Sitting for too long

- Working later than normal

- Working earlier than normal

- Temptation to log on and finish work projects late at night

I've put together the following tips to help with the adjustment to working from home.

Set clear rules and boundaries for your partner and/or children during work hours. Be firm with them. During work hours you have a job to do, and they need to let you do it without interruption or distraction. Assure them that you will be available for them once the workday is done.

Set clear rules and boundaries for yourself as well. If you don't, you can become overwhelmed, overworked, and frustrated. Your work performance will suffer. You won't be pleasant to be around. Taking care of yourself is important.

Here are some good ground rules:

1. Dress for work. Everyday can be a "casual Friday", but avoid working in your PJs, sweats, t-shirts, or shorts. If you are struggling to be productive, consider changing into business casual clothes to give you the feeling of being at work.

2. Keep your normal work routine. Start and end your workday at the same time you would at the office. Take your lunch at the same time as well.

3. Take breaks. Consider setting alarms on your phone or computer to remind you to get up and move. Take mental breaks too.

4. Sometimes you just need to take a PTO day. If you're struggling to be productive perhaps what you really need is a more significant break.

5. Don't overwork yourself.

    a. It is a lot easier to convince yourself that its time to leave work when you see your co-workers leaving and you start thinking about your commute home. It is harder to stop working when you're in a groove at home with no co-workers and no commute. Try to end your day at a reasonable time.

    b. Try to resist the temptation to jump on your computer when inspiration hits at odd times of day or night. If you do jump on restrict yourself to the one task or idea that you originally wanted to address. Don't start or pick up other tasks.

    c. Make a rule that you will NOT respond to emails outside of work hours unless they are extremely urgent. This sets a bad precedent, encourages people to email you outside work hours more often, and creates an unfair expectation that you are always available.

Reliable internet is a MUST. Everything seems to be in the cloud now. Don't let unreliable internet interfere with your work. Consider upgrading your internet speeds.

Use technology to your advantage. Your home office should include:

- Desktop scanner
- A printer
- A second monitor
    - There are apps you can use to convert a tablet into a second monitor, e.g. Twomon
    - Use your TV

There is a myriad of online resources that may improve your productivity and efficiency. Here is a short list:

- WebEx, Zoom, or GoToMeeting
- Cloud storage – we use Egnyte
- QuickBooks Online – we converted last year
- Office 365
- Google
- Browser extensions – We use Google Chrome:
    - Full Page Screen Capture

- Grammarly for Chrome
- Hootsuite Hootlet
- Imagus
- LastPass
- Malwarebytes Browser Guard
- Canva – for images