Adapting to the New Normal

It might be listening to an audiobook on the drive into the office or doing the newspaper crossword on the train into the city. These may seem like mostly inconsequential moments, but they do allow us to make a smooth mental transition from the tranquility of home life into the rigors of work mode. When you are working from home it is important to maintain these daily rituals whenever possible. Set aside time each morning to read the news, listen to a podcast, or jog around your neighborhood. Try to recreate the regular morning routine, albeit on a smaller scale and perhaps in a different location, to get mentally prepared for any upcoming day’s demands.

Creating a Dedicated Workspace

One of the bigger challenges remote workers face is maintaining a distinct separation between their home life and their work responsibilities. Normally, there is a very real physical and temporal barrier that enforces a clear cut separation of “work” and “home.” You leave home and head to the office each morning, where the job and mind are there. At the end of the day you pack up your work and head home, physically and mentally removing yourself from the concerns of the office.

When you are working from home those mental and physical barriers tend to drop away and the lines begin to blur. If you are not careful, it is all too easy for the details of work and home to get mashed together, which can feel quite overwhelming.

If you have never worked remotely before, you will need to stake out a designated area of your home and make it your de facto office for the duration of your work-from-home orders. Ideally, it should be a separate room that can be made into a dedicated workspace. But even if you are working from an apartment, efficiency or flat you simply must make sure they know and respect your work schedule. When appropriate, they should behave as if you were at the office or doing the newspaper crossword on the train into the city. They may see the differences between work and personal time — differences that are harder to find within a traditional office in the daily mix.

Keep in Touch with Co-workers

A large part of the traditional office experience is found through the camaraderie we share with our fellow employees. Vital personal connections can be lost when we all work in isolation, so it is important to take deliberate steps to keep those lines of communication open and active.

DURING your daily work sessions remember to connect with work associates as often as possible — perhaps even a little more often than you normally would. If you are thinking of texting or emailing a question to a fellow employee, you might call them directly, instead. Use Zoom, Skype and other common office tools to stay in touch, virtually. Take advantage of meetings, both scheduled and pop-up, and use them to interact in real-time with co-workers and others.

Your willingness to connect and specify your availability should also extend beyond your daily work schedule. Set aside time to virtually socialize with your friends, loved ones, relatives AND your fellow employees.

Under the current circumstances, worry is a common feature everyone’s day. Simply reaching out to friends and co-workers and staying in close contact is a very good way to improve mental health and share progress in an abnormal and often stressful situation.

IT’S FAIR TO SAY THAT THE Coronavirus pandemic has changed all of our lives. Social distancing directives and safer-at-home orders have disrupted daily routines in ways that would have been unimaginable just a few short months ago.

Over the past few months most of us have found ourselves at home, turning into teachers, chefs, DIY experts... and in more restless moments, we are even makeshift entertainers. A healthy portion of us are also currently, or very soon going to become remote workers, trying to adapt to a unique and deceptively familiar workplace environment.

At first, working from home might seem like a small and fairly simple transition to make. It might even feel like a vacation. Sorts of. After all, you get to stay at home all day. No more morning commute, no dress codes, and plenty of time for breaks. You get to snack at your desk, chat on the phone, the boss won’t be hovering around your personal space all day:

Micromanaging your workload. What could possibly go wrong? The truth is, even under “normal” circumstances, working from home can present some real challenges. Remote workers have to master a unique learning curve, and first-timers often find it more difficult than they originally suspected. The convenience and benefits of working from home can be deceptive. Without the structure and mandates of a traditional workplace environment, it can become difficult to manage your workday efficiently. Productivity can suffer, and tensions can build with fellow employees, family members and/or roommates.

If your office has been wholly or partially closed and you now find yourself working from home more often, we’ve put together some simple tips to help make the transition from office dwellers to remote worker much easier and more successful for you.

Flex for Work

The first casualty of remote working is personal appearance. It is all too tempting to simply roll out of bed, pour a cup of coffee, and spend the entire workday in your pajamas. But that is a temptation that you have to resist... it almost always results in a slow start to things and causes a precipitous drop in personal productivity.

Work Operation

A large part of the traditional office experience is found through the camaraderie we share with our fellow employees. Vital personal connections can be lost when we all work in isolation. It is important to take deliberate steps to keep those lines of communication open and active.

During your daily work sessions remember to connect with work associates as often as possible - perhaps even a little more often than you normally would. If you are thinking of texting or emailing a question to a fellow employee, you might call them directly, instead. Use Zoom, Skype and other common office tools to stay in touch, virtually. Take advantage of meetings, both scheduled and pop-up, and use them to interact in real-time with co-workers and others.

However, you may also find that it is easier to stay focused and productive throughout the day. At the end of the day, you can effectively leave the ‘office’ knowing that work will continue when you return to the office. This can make it easier to remain focused and productive throughout the day.

Making the transition to a new way of working is like starting a new job. You have to adjust your work routine, schedule, and daily habits to accommodate the changes. It might be listening to an audiobook on the drive into the office or doing the newspaper crossword on the train into the city. These may seem like mostly inconsequential moments, but they do allow us to make a smooth mental transition from the tranquility of home life into the rigors of work mode.

When you are working from home it is important to maintain these daily rituals whenever possible. Set aside time each morning to read the news, listen to a podcast, or jog around your neighborhood. Try to recreate the regular morning routine, albeit on a smaller scale and perhaps in a different location, to get mentally prepared for any upcoming day’s demands.

You can do the same for what was once the evening commute. Look for ways to maintain or recreate your end-of-workday routine so that you can make a clear break from office mode and return to the rhythm of your home life.

Maintaining a healthy home working environment requires respecting the routines employed by the family members and roommates. It is important to keep the work signals the start of the day, and the family den, basement or rec room is always important to dress for the office - even if that office is the family den, basement or rec room.

The ultimate goal is to be able to clearly define a ‘work zone’ and a ‘home zone’ so that you can effectively leave the ‘office’ when the day’s work is done.

CREATE AND MAINTAIN A DEDICATED WORKSPACE

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With a clear-cut separation of “work” and “home,” you can effectively leave the ‘office’ knowing that work will continue when you return to the office. This makes it easier to remain focused and productive throughout the day.

Finding Ways to Transition in and Out of Work Mode

Most of us develop daily routines that help us mentally prepare for the workday ahead.

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