

Tips & Best Practices for Working Remotely

Your computer is set up. You can log in to your email and remotely access your files. You may even be impressing your colleagues with your Zoom conferencing skills. However, how do you make this actually *work for you* in real time for several days or, perhaps, weeks? Below are some of the top tips and best practices we've recently gleaned for settling into and managing a successful remote working routine.

- **Have a designated work area.** Set yourself up for success each morning by having your computer, notes, etc. together in one spot so you don't have to re-create your desk each day. If you can't have work materials preset, store them in an organized manner for quick and easy setup.
- **Establish a daily start and time.** Set a daily schedule, including start and stop times and stick to it. Research suggests remote workers end up working more hours than onsite workers do. Setting a routine will help protect your time. Be sure to communicate your work hours to your team and others who need to connect with you.
- **Get dressed. In real clothes!** Keep to your usual morning routine – get up on time, shower, get dressed, have your coffee as usual. Routines and daily rituals are comforting, and you will feel more prepared for work if you're not sitting around in sweats.
- **Get up and move.** Try not to sit all day or for too many hours in a row. Do you remember how often you used to run to the copier, stop by a colleague's desk, or grab a quick coffee? Try to mimic that if you can. A good rule of thumb is to work in 90-minute blocks and take breaks in between.
- **Set boundaries for your roommates (whoever they are!).** Make sure others living with you know when it's okay to interrupt and when it's not. Before logging on to an important Zoom meeting, make sure your kids can entertain themselves for a while on their own. Establish a location for self-serve snacks and let them know when you'll be done. Know, too, that if you are working while also watching and homeschooling children, your colleagues understand and fully support you in this endeavor!
- **Use your video on Zoom.** Really. Body language and facial expression comprise more than 55% of communication. Moreover, we all need that human connection. (Tip! You can add a virtual background in Zoom to the delight of your meeting attendees and so no one has to see what's really behind your workspace.) Keep in mind it's also important to be present in meetings. That means holding off on responding to text and email messages or excusing yourself when responding to something pressing, muting audio and video when doing so.
- **Managers – have regular, frequent check ins.** Schedule regular check-ins with your staff. Try daily huddles for 15-30 minutes along with weekly one-on-ones and set available drop-in hours. The key is consistency. At times like this, priorities can shift dramatically and quickly. Keep your team up to speed with what is happening so they can shift with you.
- **Video chat your colleague – for no reason whatsoever.** Once in a while, try video-chatting a colleague using Google Hangouts. Working remotely can be lonely. Find reasons to connect and maintain community. You will treasure it once we're all back together!