7 best practices for working remotely

Follow these simple guidelines to ensure your remote working situation is as productive as possible.

1. Stick to your schedule. Work consistent hours and establish a daily routine that will enable you to get the most work done with as few interruptions as possible. Make your schedule known and clear to colleagues, family and friends. Use your calendar and task lists to plan your day, leaving time for the unexpected. If you're a morning person, tackle focus-intense work then.

2. Communicate frequently. Touch base regularly with your manager and team. Make sure you're available via email, phone, text, instant messages and video calls. Let your manager know if/when you will be unavailable during the day. Use collaboration tools to outline ideas and align on next steps. Speak up about what's going well and what's not. There's no such thing as overcommunicating when working remotely.

3. Establish a dedicated work space. It helps your mindset if you have space devoted to work. Even if you don't have a home office space, carve out an area, preferably not near a bed or a TV, that you can set up to emulate an office environment. Keep in mind video calls are often a regular form of communication for remote workers. Establishing a dedicated work space is one way to help keep life and work separate.

4. Make sure you have the right tools. Technology is what enables remote work, so ensure you have a reliable infrastructure in place. Make sure your internet connection is robust enough to keep up with your needs. If your bandwidth is low, try shutting down other programs to lighten the load on your connection. If you're using a laptop, make sure you have the charger. Other tools you may need include: headset, printer, scanner, software applications for video conferencing, remote meetings and collaboration. Know what you need, what you can do without, and how to get technical support.

5. Get organized. Getting organized will help you stay focused and improve productivity. Create filing systems, schedules and task lists. Keep supplies within reach and have snacks available to help maximize time and prevent distractions.

6. Take breaks. Take time away from your work area to recharge. Stepping away to stretch, take lunch or walk outside will help you return to work focused and more productive. Try to stay away from home tasks, like laundry or cleaning up, and use your breaks to turn your mind off and relax.

7. Safeguard confidential information. Avoid public Wi-Fi. Keep work data on work computers only. And keep data with you, and secure, at all times. When in public, block computer screens and be careful what you say on calls. Lock your computer when you step away from it. Don't print sensitive information at home, if possible. And if you need to destroy infromation, use secure shredding options.