20 Practical Tips to Sustain Working Remotely

As countries manage this growing pandemic, much remains uncertain. But maintaining the health and safety of those around the globe is paramount.

For many businesses, remote work has rapidly become a "new normal" and critical resource in the coming weeks. And for many employees, this means daily working away from the business for the very first time.

This can be intimidating for companies and workers alike. Fortunately, we belong to a strong community of global and national remote workers at Inspirit Growth and Predictive Index that we have come to rely on with great confidence. To make the continuing transition less daunting for you, several team members collaborated to share their telecommuting tips with you.

Here are 20 essential tips for working remotely:

On your work environment/setup:

1. Dedicated Workspace – maintain a dedicated workspace that's clean and free of distractions each day. Try to separate this space from the idea of "home" as much as possible. That way, when working, you're not preoccupied thinking about that sink of dirty dishes or pile of dirty laundry.

2. Wi-Fi - make sure you have strong Wi-Fi to support your work. Since many of us are now in frequent telecommuting meetings, we need an internet connection that'll support latency-free audio and video calls. Consider ordering and adding a Wi-Fi booster in your home.

3. Right Equipment - this will differ by person and by job. If you normally use a headset and keyboard, you should use a headset and keyboard when remote. If you use multiple monitors at the office, you should have a dock and multiple screens at home. If you have never tried these, now is a good time.

4. Posture - be comfortable, but not too comfortable. It may sound nice to work from a sofa or move around from place to place. But hunching over a laptop for long hours isn't great for posture. Instead, as noted above find that suitable "home office" space for yourself. You may not have a desk at home you can work at—and that's fine. Even sitting at a regular table and chair can help you stay focused.

On staying productive:

5. Prioritize - at the beginning of each day, prioritize the tasks that are _essential_, then _important_, and what seems to be _urgent_. Know the difference to control the "tyranny of the urgent." Then budget your time rigorously as remote teams are measured by performance results achieved vs. time spent.

6. Email Notifications – it will be easy to be open to distractions working by yourself. But given remote work is measured by what gets done daily, mute frequent email notifications and check them with set time intervals so you can stay focused. Resist internet scanning as others are relying on your efficiency.

7. Office Rituals - go through similar rituals you had in your business location. Make it a point to start on time and dress the same. Eat your lunch at your usual time. Now is a good time to start walking and get

your Fitbit steps in. The more your remote working days feel like your office ones, the more comfortable—and focused—you'll be.

On meetings:

8. Video Conferencing – make every effort to include a video conferencing link in every telecommuting meeting invite. When looking to accommodate an occasional group of remote employees, this is typical etiquette today and easy to do. But when looking to successfully manage a daily remote team, it's essential. This will allow you to make the most of your communication and meeting time together.

9. Start on Time. End on Time. – this is especially important when doing meetings remotely. Set alarms so you show up on time. Meeting at 10:00am? Set an alarm for 9:55 AM to remind you to jump on Zoom or an equivalent service you use. Working remotely can't be like the office where you might schedule a 9:00 to 10:00 and then a 10:00 to 11:00. Remote meetings require more energy. Give yourself 15 minutes gaps.

10. Mute Yourself - once in a meeting, always be aware to mute yourself when not talking. This helps to reduce background noise and keep distractions to a minimum.

On your physical and mental health:

11. Make Sure You Eat - it's easy to get preoccupied with work, but don't forget a proper breakfast, coffee (or whatever wakes you up), lunch, and healthy snacks. Otherwise, you're bound to sabotage your energy.

12. Take Regular Breaks - use an app like Time Out to remind you to periodically take a breather. Working from home, you spend pretty much your whole day looking at a computer screen. It is more intense. Get away from it from time to time and move your body around...shoulders, neck, arms. Consider ordering shaded computer glasses as you have fewer reasons or opportunities to leave the screen.

13. Set/Respect Daily Boundaries - set boundaries for when you start and end your day. Some people close their laptop at the end of the day. Many of us might get messages in the evening more than before. If we choose to answer them more than we did in the business, we may set the precedent we are available. For some of us this is a necessary part of our job. But in all cases, and especially now, we must commit to and work at a proper work-life balance. Set limits for yourself—determine when it's work time and when it's not. If you decide to close your laptop at 6pm, avoid opening it again until the next day from a business standpoint. Respect other people's boundaries as well. We are all in new territory now.

On interacting with your colleagues:

14. Maintain Conversations - first thing in the morning, connect with a teammate over Slack/video conferencing for five to 10 minutes. Ask them how they're doing, learn about their daily routine and home life. Keep it non-business related. Consider creating your company's own morning #coffee-buddies channel to pair employees up for morning chats. Plenty of new ideas flourishing today!

15. Preferred Communication Style - ask your colleagues about what this is for them and how they prefer to connect when there's a question or something to talk through. Should I ask via email, IM, phone, put time on their calendar? This is a very important thing to know about others and yourself in remote workspaces.

16. Face to Face Time - spend time with the people around you at home. As we learn to practice social distancing, it can be especially hard on those used to daily face-to-face interactions. Be especially thoughtful and meaningful with extra quality time spent at home with your family and roommates.

On working with family/children at home:

17. Designated Work Zone - when you have a family—particularly children or teens—at home when you're working, having an "off-limits" workspace can help prevent interruptions. This is a hard one for most people as this is all new. But if you are measured by what gets done remotely, this becomes a necessity.

18. Set Expectations - with other people in your home. Let your family know that just because you are home doesn't mean you're available. Communicate that during working hours—when you're in work mode—that time and space must be yours. Again, another hard one especially if your children are young.

19. Music - keep music playing. Give your kids an hour-by-hour schedule of who'll be the "DJ" on Spotify. When they have music in the background, they might sing along. It certainly helps pass the time.

20. Scavenger Hunts/Projects – some kids really enjoy these, and they're simple to set up. Just print pictures based on a theme (superheroes, cartoon characters, etc.). Then hide them around the house and give your kids a list of clues to help find them. Or design a project they can work on over the next several weeks. They can chip away at it day by day. You'll keep them busy—and give yourself time to focus.

Sustain the transition to remote work as seamless as possible.

Working away from the business for long periods of time can present unique challenges. We hope these tips for working remotely bring your team and families closer together. What's more, we hope they inspire you to bring your best most reliable selves to work every day—even from the comfort of your home.

Be safe. Stay healthy. Be SURE.

Your Inspirit Growth Team!

INSPIRIT GROWTH®
Strategy. Belief. Breakthrough.

PI CERTIFIED PARTNER

"Inspiring better coworkers, better work, better world."™