

## HOME IS (NOW) WHERE THE WORK IS WHERE THE WORK IS

In response to the current COVID-19 (Coronavirus) outbreak, many companies are requiring some or all of their employees to work from home.

While working remotely does provide some advantages such as saving time and money by eliminating commuting, it can also increase stress levels. For many, this is an unexpected development they may be unprepared for.

Working remotely can be challenging under normal circumstances—but for those doing so for the first time or adjusting to sharing their home office with children, spouses or roommates—it is important to create structure and expectations. This applies to your colleagues and also within your home.

### POTENTIAL CHALLENGES WORKING REMOTELY:

- Lack of colleagues and managers to collaborate with and stay on task
- Working too many or too few hours
- Managing work/life balance and establishing boundaries to limit distractions
- Lack of everyday face-to-face interaction, increased feelings of isolation and decreased motivation and trust
- Potential for miscommunication due to lack of non-verbal cues

### ESSENTIAL TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL REMOTE WORKING

In addition to any best practices your company will share relative to specific requirements for your technology and cybersecurity, **the following tips enable optimal productivity:**

#### Prepare for Success

- **Create your workspace:** Establish a dedicated work environment that is free from distractions. Consider logging out of all social accounts during work (unless necessary for your job). If sharing a space with others, lay ground rules and expectations for noise levels and break times.
- **Evaluate and upgrade your home technology:** Consider increasing or boosting your Internet bandwidth especially if you have multiple people accessing your network at the same time. Those with spotty cell reception may consider a dedicated office line.
- **Establish set working hours:** Develop a routine where you “start (and end) your work day.” Potentially schedule a recurring meeting each morning to ensure you start your day on time. Similarly, log out and log off at the end of your work day.

## Stay Connected

- **Hold daily check-ins:** Maintain open and frequent communication with your manager, colleagues and those who report to you. Managers should hold regular meetings with team members. Establish expectations for response times to emails and phone calls while utilizing out of office reminders or notifications if you will be away from your desk for extended periods of time.
- **Leverage multiple technology platforms:** Phone, email and chat are likely standard in your work life. Using video conferencing may enable feeling more connected and decrease isolation (Tip: video calls can also motivate users to “dress more for the office” which can also help shift mindset throughout the day).
- **Be productive and proactive:** Plan to deliver the same productivity that you do when you are in the office. Have your manager or colleagues hold you accountable. Alert colleagues if you anticipate delays in your work or if you are collaborating on a group project.
- **Leverage technology support:** Leverage your company’s IT support desk if you have questions or need support. Understand that they are likely receiving a large number of requests for similar support at this time.

## Manage Your Time

- **Practice effective time management:** As you adjust to your new environment, you will establish peak performance times such as early morning before other family members are awake. Find the times that work best for you to maximize your productivity.
- **Build in time for the unexpected:** If you build in extra time for unanticipated work demands, you will be less stressed if and when this happens. Set aside time and you can always reallocate it to get ahead on a project if no emergencies pop up.
- **Take breaks:** Step away from your work area for 10-20 minute breaks every two hours. Take a short walk, read a quick article, check in with your family members or other friends working remotely. This shift in your focus will make you more productive when you return to work.
- **Be flexible and patient:** This is even more essential now that you are working from home. As your company is responding to properly equip the newly remote workforce, there may be delays in responses from colleagues or a lag in technology.