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Working from Home: Tips for Success

I've worked from home periodically throughout my career with varying levels of success when it comes to productivity. Along the way I've learned some simple and effective lessons that work for me, and I hope you'll find them beneficial too.

The keys to working remotely are discipline and routine. It's tempting to think, "Oh, I'm working from home… I'll just set my alarm a little bit later and roll out of bed a few minutes before I need to start." From my experience, this is a dangerous path that leads to days of lower productivity and fulfillment.

The big message here is that it's important to make working from home as close to a regular workday as possible. Yes, working remotely will eliminate your dreaded commute and give you access to the comforts of home, but that doesn't mean you should sleep in or get lazy with your routines.

Here are my top 5 tips to help maintain productivity when working from home:

1. Set your alarm and eat a good breakfast.

Wake up at the same time every day and use your reclaimed commute time to prepare a nutritious breakfast. Most of us skip healthy choices in the morning rush and this is a great opportunity to eat better and start your day off right.

2. Keep your hygiene routine.

Go through your standard morning routine as if you are heading into the office to see people: take a shower when you usually do, fix your hair as you normally would, etc. While it's tempting to let personal grooming slide when you know you won't be leaving the house or seeing anyone in-person, hygiene is a key to productivity. Most of us already have a good routine for this, just keep it up!

3. Dress (almost) as if you are working in the office.

While I'm not advocating that you wear a suit or tie to work from home, I always dress a bit more formally than the situation requires. For example, I wear a collared shirt and follow a business casual dress code at home, even when sweatpants and a hoodie are just one drawer away. This, along with tip #2, are especially important if you have remote meetings. Our team encourages video meetings for remote collaboration as they foster engagement and a feeling of connection with coworkers. By dressing for work, you put yourself in the mindset for work, but you are also ready for any impromptu video calls that may occur throughout the day.

4. Don't sit still.

Normally your day at the office will include getting up for a walk to the water cooler or coffee station, or visiting other coworkers around the office. This activity, however minor, disappears almost completely when you work from home. Your amenities are closer, and your colleagues are only a click away, so take some time to walk around your house or enjoy a quick stroll in your neighborhood. If you find a traditional office environment sedentary, working from home can be a whole new level of inactivity unless you take deliberate actions to compensate.

5. Have a dedicated and comfortable workspace.

Whether you have a home office or will be working from another room in the house, it is important to remember that ergonomics remain important. If you need a bit more lumbar support because you're working at the kitchen table, grab a throw pillow. If you're used to using a mouse at the office, get a mouse for working at home. Make sure your table/desk and chair are at the proper heights and adjust as necessary. You may have to be inventive here, but as someone who suffers from a bad neck, I've found many ways to improve my ergonomics at home when required.

All of these tips require a bit of discipline and maybe some ingenuity, but the payoffs in productivity and fulfillment are immense. Good routines and a proper work environment are truly worth it when it comes to work/life balance and what you can achieve in a day. This is what I've learned and I'm a better remote worker because of it. Give these tips a try and good luck!

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Chris is the Senior Consultant and Service Adoption Specialist on the Technology Experience & Enablement team. Chris started out at WBM on the staffing team and his passion for helping end users find their path extends into his work with his current team. Chris works closely with end users to examine how they work and find ways to make their day to day lives better through technological adoption with a net benefit for the businesses employing them. This blend of problem solving and working closely with people plays to Chris' strengths and allows him to make a real difference in end users' day to day work lives.