

Working from Home

Due to the Coronavirus situation, many of you will be working from home for the first time. This can take some getting use to and does need a different approach to working from an office. We will explore some key techniques and approaches to help you make a success of working from home.

It does take more discipline and practice, and some find it easier than others. If you are someone who enjoys working on their own it can be bliss. For others where there is a need for more interaction and social contact it can be more challenging and at times demotivating.

Create a Routine

We all have a routine for the office, sometimes without realising it, so it is important to establish a routine for working from home. Create the set hours that you do and keep to them. Make sure you finish work at the time you would do normally, it's easy sometimes to keep on working.

Get dressed

It is important that you get dressed in clothes that you feel comfortable in but not slovenly, do not stay in your pyjamas or night clothes. Don't work in lounge wear or just pull on a dressing gown. It will put you into the wrong frame of mind, if you get dressed for work it makes you focus on work.



Create a designated workspace

In the workplace we have our desk or office, which we often personalise. We get use to that environment. If you can create a designated workspace at home, and if possible, create it in a room that you use the least. Make sure it's comfortable and that you are working from a desk or table.

If your workspace is in a separate room, you can then at the end of your working day, shut the door and 'go home'. This physical process helps you mentally switch off from work.

Socialise

One of the hardest aspects of working from home is the lack of social activity. One of the main motivators of the workplace is social interaction and teamwork. Work is a social place. As soon as we work from home, we lose that social interaction.

Fortunately, most organisations have messaging and conferencing apps. Use those or the ones you may have on your phone to have some 'chats' during the day. This will keep you motivated and attentive to your work.

If you find yourself lagging or beginning to lack motivation, check how long you have been working without a break. If it is more than hour, then do some socialising. Make sure you limit your time, it's easy to get distracted and suddenly you find you have spent an hour chatting or surfing the net. If you are prone to doing that, set a timer and when it rings, go back to your work.

If you are used to a 'noisy' office, then the silence of working from home can be difficult. Have a radio or music on in the background can help with your attention. It doesn't have to be loud, but that background murmur can be useful for motivation.

Break Down Work

When you work from home it can be really beneficial to break your work time slots between 30 minutes and an hour. Plan your work into time intervals and then give yourself a break for a drink or some social activity.

To do lists



It is crucial that when you work from home, that you work smarter. Whether you create one electronically or on paper, it is really important that you create a to do list for each day. Be realistic that the tasks you identify can be done that day and that you are not over planning.

Create your to do list towards the end of your working day, for your next day. That way it enables you to review your day and check you have completed all your tasks before finishing work. It also means that you are ready to start work the next day. Make sure you plan for any virtual meetings you are attending

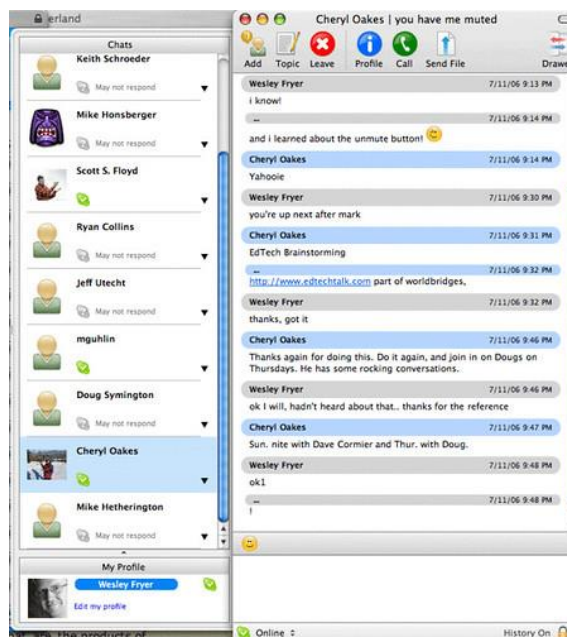
Get Outdoors

If possible, spend some time to get outdoors, whether that's going into the garden or you are able to get some exercise safely. This is crucial for home working as you are then changing your environment as part of your working day. If the weather is pleasant it can be very beneficial to get some sunshine during the day.

Self discipline

Working from home requires more self-discipline, there are numerous things that can distract us from getting work done. This is even more important if more than one of you is working from home or you have children at home.

Take more control, no matter how small, over some of the events on our day, we can begin to boost our productivity. If we have just a few minutes more, we can get more things done.



Learn to say no or not right now to other family members, so that they understand that you are working. Allocate a time when you will deal them.

Working from home can be difficult at the best of times, its even harder in these challenge situations.

Working Smarter

Working smarter is vital when you are working from home, as it is about how you deal with your time. It will enable you to be effective and have a controlled method of how you manage your time.

Working smarter creates the opportunity to ensure that you make the best use of time and your life. It enables you to control your time and to ensure that the work that you do produces the most effective results.

- To work smarter you need to take control of your time. Anything that you don't control steals your time, and these can vary in their impact. Working Smarter will assist you here and remove or reduce any negative effects.
- To work smarter you need to be disciplined and to think of your own needs.



Do You Make the Most of your Time?

It is important when you are working from home that you establish a schedule. That way you will get more done. Once you have created them, stick to them as much as you can, but you have to stay flexible and adaptable to the unexpected. Otherwise, when unplanned things happen, it will cause you just as much stress as trying to work without a plan.

Even if you are busy, it doesn't mean that you are always productive. We are often busy however at the end of the day, it is difficult to see exactly what we have achieved.

You have to ensure that you make the most of your time and work in the most effective way. Create your own routines and processes to make the most of your time.

You also need to consider the impact you have on other people's time when you plan your own work.

- Do you ever change your mind after you have started a task or work without deciding the direction?

This can be huge time wasters and it means you are not establishing your objectives in the first place. Be clear of your aim and direction at the start.

- Do you always assume that other people are busy because they haven't mentioned they have time to spare?

Part of being in a team is to ensure we share resources, don't be afraid of asking for help.

Do you ever?

- Waste too much time getting daily updates on routine activities as opposed to waiting for a more meaningful weekly summary.
- Jump to eagerly into the routine and more straightforward work and putting off the more complex and difficult work.
- Not starting the more important work early in the week and at around 10am in the morning.
- Not bothering to make a schedule for each day or if you do schedule, over scheduling – scheduling each day so tightly that it is impossible to stay on track and the schedule quickly becomes meaningless.

smarter not harder.

Working Smarter

- Set priorities - selecting the critical few tasks against the activities from the trivial many
- Avoid routinely working late
- Be selective always – throw away or discard everything you can live without
- Do jobs requiring mental effort when you are at your best
- Do one thing at a time
- Establish a fixed daily routine (if appropriate)
- Establish realistic working goals
- Fix deadlines for all jobs and stick to them
- Check regularly, on how effectively you are using your time
- Never postpone important matters that are unpleasant
- Occasionally analyse your interruptions
- Plan your telephone calls whenever possible
- Set a definite time or arrange meetings to discuss routine matters
- Treat a large job as a series of small, achievable tasks

The Smarter Attitude

The right attitude allows you to unlock your potential simply by valuing your time as if it was the single most important resource you have.

Take More Control

When we begin to take more control, no matter how small, over some of the events on our day, we can begin to boost our productivity. If we have just a few minutes more, we can get more things done.

We can improve our ability to be more assertive, forceful and confident in planning and to be in control of some of the events in the day. Ultimately, the momentum increases until you become almost unstoppable in your quest to get things done.

Create the Right Environment

- Be organised.
- Create a specific work space
- Learn to control the interruptions
- Use core times, signal that it is your core time to concentrate and not be disturbed and you will not disturb others
- Learn to negotiate timescales, this is important both with family and colleagues. What is the absolute latest time you need this for or, OK, but only if we can cover it in ten minutes flat! – I will schedule a time for us on etc.

If you are able to implement some of these tactics, you will reap the benefits in how you work and the way you spend your time. Working smarter will enable you to be more fulfilled and effective.

