

## Remote Employee's Survival Guide

According to Gallup's State of the American Workplace report, 43 percent of Americans said they spent at least some time working remotely last year. It also reported that 31 percent of Americans work remotely 4 or 5 days per week. Growth of remote employees has grown at over 5 percent per year for the last 5 years. That means it is very likely that nearly 40% of us will be working remotely from our bosses and peers by the year 2020. Remote for most of us will mean from your home or apartment. The challenge will be to adapt to this independent style where no one is watching and yet staying as productive as when you were in the office.

At home you have all the distractions of the repairman visiting, the dog wanting out, the laundry needing done, the kids making extra noise, etc. Learning to stay productive and avoid these distractions will be critical to your success as a remote worker.

For most of us working remotely means being disconnected from the boss, coworkers, organizational changes, and the culture of the organization, it means being alone with no one in the office to connect with at all. For many, just the thought of not having an office to go to every day is overwhelming. Not having to get dressed up or hit the gym on the way to the office messes with the routines we have established. It can leave you feeling disconnected from the office, but also from the rest of the world. The fact that there are no coworkers to have lunch with and catch up on the latest industry news or company gossip spells loneliness for many. It feels as though you have been sentenced to solitary confinement. You may even start feeling stir-crazy. If you don't do something about these issues, you may find yourself acting out of character or have those closest to you think you have gone nuts. The worst however is if you don't learn to effectively cope with these changes you will find yourself on the short list for downsizing at the first change in business cycle.

Here are 10 tips for not only addressing these issues, but for excelling as a remote employee and becoming indispensable to your boss and coworkers.

1. Establish a routine. Much like you had a routine when you went to the office every day, have a routine to hold yourself accountable to getting up on time, getting a workout in, getting dressed for the day so that if you have the opportunity to connect with someone in person over lunch, you are prepared to do so.
2. Keep a schedule. Go to the office every day like you did before. The only difference is that you have a 10 second commute. Make the commute. Don't get stuck in traffic. Make it a habit to start on time. Be available to your team and coworkers during business hours. End your day on time. It is too easy to commute back to work after dinner and stay in work mode many hours beyond your normal schedule. Try to avoid this. Fatigue and burnout may set in if you can't separate your business life from your home life.
3. Make appointments to connect with team members. If you are miles from them and can't physically connect for breakfast or lunch periodically, connect via Skype or Gotomeeting on a regular basis. Keep your personal contact alive with your team and coworkers by showing your face, even if it is a monitor. When you do, look your best. If

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you look unshaven or under dressed, it will send the wrong message to your team members.

4. Remote doesn't need to mean disconnected in today's electronic world. You can stay in touch and even join meetings tools such as Skype, GotoMeeting, and Zoom. With video capabilities and screen sharing you can see the room and view the same presentations that everyone else is seeing. All this requires is a decent speed internet connection.
5. Be on time for your meetings even if they are online. If you are hosting them, it is even more important that you are prompt. Promptness reflects that you value everyone's time. I don't think I have ever seen anyone get in trouble for being on time. Being on time also demonstrates that you are dependable. People will start to trust and count on you for your dependability.
6. Be organized and maintain regular touch points with your peers to catch up on projects and issues in the office, you can still be an active part of the team even though you are not physically present. Your interest in their personal life and willingness to help out when issues arise can be of great value to your fellow team members. Find reasons to touch base by phone, email, or instant messaging throughout the day to stay in the loop, stay available and be useful to the team.
7. To be your best and to provide the highest value, start every week with a weekly plan. Outline what you intend to accomplish during the week. List out from 3 to 5 of the major initiatives that you are working on and intend to make progress on. Share this information with your boss. Simply ask him/her for feedback on your priorities. Make sure that your initiatives are the priority work. By sharing your plans you are demonstrating accountability for getting the work done. Many in-office employees don't demonstrate this kind of commitment and accountability. It will keep you top of mind as someone who is dedicated to making progress.
8. When you have issues or problems that are causing delays, update your boss on the issues and what you intend or are doing to address them. If the obstacles are above your pay grade, ask for help. Again, keeping the boss informed of your progress is the goal.
9. On Friday, give the boss an update. Send them a quick recap of your week. Tell him or her what you've got done and if something got in the way. Share what action you have taken and the progress you are making. This type of consistent communication will start to create trust in your abilities, demonstrate your willingness to be accountable for results and will show how and when you are helping out your peers. This will begin demonstrating your value to the organization.
10. When you have participated in a project or presentation or any portion of work that you would benefit by gain feedback from your boss, peers, or customers....do just that. Ask

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for feedback. Be specific by saying, I would appreciate your constructive feedback on my recent presentation. My goal is to continue to learn and improve, so if you have thoughts about how I can improve, I would really appreciate hearing from you.

During the first months of working from home, I found it necessary to meet people for lunch 3 to 4 times per week to feel connected to the real world. The change from a large corporate office with a sizable cafeteria and several thousand people to being home alone with the dog was an enormous change. Do what you need to in order to make both the physical and mental adjustment. For me, setting up an office with all the tools and technology I had before and in a place that I could be away from noise if others were home was comforting. My comfortable environment, pretty much daily connections with people I liked and in some cases were prospects or could provide feedback on making the transition to working remotely made all the difference. Truthfully, now I prefer this type of environment. Going back to the traditional office environment is OK, but I get enough of it when working at client locations.

If you learn your own personal habits and adjust your deep thinking work to the most productive times of your day, you may find that you are much more productive than before. If this is true for you, you may find that you are more valuable to your organization than before. In that case.....keep great records. Tell your story. Prove your value. Become indispensable!