

WORK @ HOME

Success Factors Checklist

You may not be able to control all of the variables, but there are many things you can do to make a virtual work arrangement as successful as possible for you. If you're a seasoned virtual worker, some of these may have fallen off your radar.

Set the stage...set the tone

- Arrange for childcare.** Your EAP may be able to help. If your children will be at home, you may need to “tag team” with others. Have rules and activities to keep older children occupied. Talk to your manager about current guidelines.
- Create a dedicated office space.** If possible, use a separate room with a door. If not, work to carve out a quiet space that's free from distractions. Check your company policies regarding data privacy and equipment security.
- Mind ergonomics.** Strive for a setup that supports efficiency, productivity, and protects your health. Prioritize comfortable, supportive seating, good lighting and computer proximity.
- Dress for success.** Although many people see comfy clothes as a virtual perk, consider the impact on your mindset. It's important to recognize what helps you to feel motivated, successful and energized for work.
- Organize your day.** Working at home requires a disciplined mindset. It's important to organize your day by setting daily priorities. Schedule your day as if you were in the office, including breaks away from your desk and for lunch. Put them on your calendar to reinforce.
- Build in motivators.** Working at home means you also need to supply more in-the-moment encouragement. Figure out what feels rewarding – like a virtual “high five” – and use that to energize and propel you through the day.
- Be aware of distractions.** Notice what draws your attention away from work and be proactive about avoiding those situations. For example, put a sign on your front door for deliveries. Let personal calls go to voicemail. Address personal tasks during breaks only.
- Set boundaries with family and friends.** Make sure they understand that even though you're home, you are working. Be clear about work hours and when you can interact and when you can't be disturbed. A visible “Do Not Disturb” sign can be helpful.
- Communicate well.** Be comfortable, confident, and well-versed on all technology used in your role. Explore tutorials or ask for additional training if needed. Use care to be professional in all communications. Always be prepared and punctual for meetings. Speak up; be engaged and an active contributor. Minimize multitasking.

Staying connected

- Be responsive.** Be readily accessible via phone, email, or instant messaging. Be sure to respond in kind. Keep your calendar up to date and stick to your schedule. Deliver work on time. Take initiative whenever possible.
- Connect with teammates.** Make it a habit to connect with your teammates on a daily basis, be it work-related or just a quick hello. Nurturing relationships can be as important as the work-focused talk.
- Pick up the phone or initiate a video chat.** Try to approximate face-to-face as much as possible. This is especially valuable when working through a problem, brainstorming, and establishing a relationship.
- Notice and acknowledge effort and success.** It's hard to labor away in isolation with the feeling that no one is noticing. Try to notice others' contributions and offer thanks and kudos regularly – directly or in team settings.
- Have regular meetings with supervisor.** Use meetings to not only review your workload and confirm expectations, but also explore career development. Ask for projects that will further the goals you identify.
- Speak up!** Don't let "out of sight" equal "out of mind." Learn to be your own advocate – talk up your accomplishments. Ask for the support you need and opportunities to learn, grow, and develop. Be alert for spontaneous opportunities

Staying healthy

- Be in control of your eating.** Plan meals in advance using fresh, healthy ingredients. Schedule time specifically for eating to make meals and snacks more satisfying. This can reduce grazing throughout the day. Watch out for mindless snacking or eating due to isolation and boredom. Listen to your body's cues. Eat only in response to physical hunger and stop when comfortably full.

- Move about.** Many hours spent sitting can leave you feeling sluggish and less productive. Take advantage of being at home to stand up and stretch periodically, perhaps during meetings. Build bursts of activity into the day, such as a 5 minute run up and down stairs. Get moving on breaks...walk the dog or mow the lawn.

Staying balanced

- Use all resources to find your rhythm.** Ask for tips and company-specific strategies from veteran teleworkers. Explore apps for time management and organizational strategies. Try timers, reward systems. Be honest about your challenges and motivated to find solutions.
- Bookend the day with routines.** Use rituals to mark the transition from work to personal time. At day's end, turn off your computer, close the door, and commit to the idea that the office is "closed" until tomorrow morning.
- Take your breaks.** Taking a break can help renew your sense of motivation, reduce decision fatigue, and improve creativity and productivity. Set an alarm if you have to!
- Counterbalance social isolation.** Make an effort to connect with others outside of work. Call or video chat with friends or loved ones. Use free time for activities that fill up your spirit.

For the transition and beyond

- › Recognize your needs
- › Be aware of resources
- › Understand expectations
- › Be proactive
- › Stay flexible

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