



6 Tips for Building a Productive Work from Home Environment for Your Organization

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For some, working from home may seem like a dream. Free roam to the kitchen for a snack? Sounds like a plan! But for others, working from home is simply disorganized chaos and abundant distractions. That leaves those in leadership positions with a tough job: finding ways to help their employees create a positive work from home

environment that they can thrive in and maintain for as long as they need.

Whether working from home is a new, temporary experience or a permanent option in your organization, these tips can help lay the foundation for employees to maintain productivity, organize their home work space, and avoid the common distractions that so easily befall us at home.

1. Maintain a Dedicated Work Space

The dining room table may not be the best place to set up a home office. Some employees may see it as a convenient place to put down their laptop, it's likely not the best space in their house for work. For the lucky few who have a dedicated room for their own home office, they can shut the door to outside distractions. Discuss home work spaces with employees and recommend a quiet space that is dedicated strictly to work.

This ensures that their desk and work space is used *only* for work and not as a dual vanity and work desk in the bedroom. Setting up a dedicated workspace minimizes distractions around them and, most importantly, separates their work and home lives. It can be difficult for work from home employees to separate their work life and home life. If working from home causes them to think about work *all the time*, they could be at risk of a burn out. It's important to your employees' mental health and happiness that they understand how important it is to step away from the desk at the end of the work day— and no going back until the next day starts! Otherwise, an employee burnout could cause a sharp drop in productivity or worse, the costly loss of valuable employees.

2. Digitize Your Company's Documents

Your office may have an entire room dedicated to filing documents and materials you need—this is not accessible to remote employees. As well, leaving your employees to figure out a way to share and perform tasks with paper documents while they work in their respective homes could be setting them up for failure.

Instead, look into investing in a multi-user document management system for your organization that can reduce the time it takes to find and share documents across your entire company. With a digital workspace, employees will be able to upload, share, search for, and file documents digitally into a platform that everyone has access to. No more chasing paper trails—your team's work is much safer and accessible in a document management system.

3. Stick to a Normal Work Schedule

Your employees may be finding it tough to stick to their normal office routine when their commute goes from 30 minutes down to a 30 second walk across the hall. However, sticking to the schedule they use for office days is one of the best ways to create a healthy work-life balance when working from home.

Help your employees understand that their brain is already wired for this schedule—no changes will be made other than the time spent in the car. This means that they'll get those commute hours back in their day, but otherwise there's no reason to break any part of their routine that helps them stay productive and efficient in the office. Some may express that their normal routine is simply not efficient for home— and that's okay! Drive home the importance of routine and provide guidance on appropriate ways to modify their routine. Routine is important, even if it changes. The real key here is that they *have* a schedule and stick to it. This supports and reiterates the importance of

separating work life from home life to maintain productivity and lessen distractions.

4. Declutter Your Space and Home

A key part in keeping a dedicated work space is keeping it clean and orderly. Keeping a clean desk at work is a great way to stay productive, and this doesn't change at home. However, with no one around to cast judgement, many people find it more difficult to keep a clean desk at home.

Tell your employees that their new desk space should mirror their desk space at work. Let them know how a clean workspace can prevent common work from home distractions. This ties in with our previous tip: dedicating a workspace and separating it from the clutter of home life.

5. Utilize Technology and Stay Connected

While some of your employees may be happy to know that they won't get easily distracted by co-workers stopping by their desk, those visits are often necessary for their daily tasks and good for their social well being. Thankfully, the tech market is filled to the brim with robust and affordable communication apps that can help your team stay connected at home. Solutions like Slack, Zoom, Google Meet can not only help your employees improve communication but also combat feelings of isolation. This can be a small investment into your digital communication that drastically improves collaboration and productivity throughout your business.

Another important factor to consider is whether your business has utilized automated workflows. For many offices, the ability to walk up to a co-worker's desk isn't just about chatting—it's also for sharing documents that need signatures or approval. Without a digital

workflow system, your business productivity could plummet and the lifecycle of a document could grow by days, ultimately hurting your bottom line.

A workflow system built for multiple users keeps the entire business running smoothly by automating when documents are shared, with whom they're shared, what each member of the workflow needs to accomplish, and more. No stamps needed— let the system do the running around for you.

6. Set Work Expectations with Your Team

It's important to communicate your own work from home schedule with your employees. Your hours may differ slightly or there may be a new, more efficient way to contact you than before. Set clear expectations with your team regarding your hours and clearly communicate your availability should they need you. Be sure your employees know to do the same, setting standard hours and communication flows can help the entire organization understand who's "in the office" at any given time.