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How Working From Home is Becoming the New Norm

For many businesses, remote working seemed impossible for a multitude of operational and financial reasons. But with the COVID-19 pandemic relentlessly plaguing the world, working from home has become the new standard. How will this change the corporate setup?

Enforced flexibility

A pandemic is one of the most socially, economically, and politically disruptive events that could ever happen. Infections and fatalities constantly increase, business operations are shut down, and scientists race against time to find a cure.

Companies lucky enough to remain operational still face a significant challenge: maintaining business continuity. For most, the simplest way to achieve this is by moving their business resources online and adopting an effective remote work strategy.

A wealth of benefits

Remote work offers several benefits for both employees and employers. In addition to saving time and eradicating commute-related stress, remote work can improve employee productivity. A number of studies reveal that the freedom to create a comfortable environment and schedule encourages employees to perform at their best.

At the same time, employers benefit from reduced overhead expenses while also having access to a wider pool of applicants. Because workplace flexibility is among the top considerations of many young job seekers, remote work arrangements would be right up their alley.

Encouraging development

Many businesses believe that a traditional office setup helps bring about better relationships and collaborations. However, data actually points out that interpersonal behavior and communication — not solely proximity — are the key drivers of trust and teamwork.

Traditional work arrangements also make it easier for managers to look after their employees — it's easy to see who is and isn't at their workstation during office hours. However, mandating work hours and location makes sense only for time-sensitive and location-dependent jobs like retail, manual labor, and healthcare, where employees need to be physically present.

Embracing change

Being forced to adopt a work from home policy in the face of a global crisis isn't an ideal circumstance to test the waters. Full-time remote work doesn't and won't work for all businesses. But this shouldn't stop you from accomplishing projects and sustaining productivity and efficiency. Leverage your resources to help you weather the storm and emerge stronger than before.

Though we have yet to see if remote work is here to stay, it's currently a nonnegotiable aspect of the corporate setup, and we should learn how to make the most out of it.

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Help Your Staff Learn the Gear They Need for Remote Work

While being able to let your staff work from home is a distinct advantage, you still need to execute your remote strategy properly. A big part of this is the hardware your staff has at home. In addition to the primary items like computers and smartphones, these are the items your employees need to have.

A reliable keyboard and mouse

PC users obviously need external keyboards to operate their machines and work on files, but there are laptop users who splurge on external keyboards because they prefer how these feel or love to customize some or all of the keys.

Some aspects you want your staff to consider when choosing a keyboard are:

Interface – Is it wired or wireless? They won't have to worry about a power source with wired boards, though battery-powered ones can easily last a year. Choosing a wireless one will mostly depend on whether or not they like to move around and still type away as normal.

Comfort and ergonomics – How do the keys feel on their fingertips? There's now a wide variety of key types to suit their fancy. And if they're worried about carpal tunnel syndrome, there are now keyboards with keys laid out like a very wide V so that users can hold their wrists at more natural angles.

Extras – Does it come with a number keypad and/or a trackpad? Does typing fill the room with sound, or is it muffled and silent? Make sure that the keyboard they choose has at least the things that would help them do their job, and at most make them happy whenever they have to work.

When picking a mouse, they'll want to think about interface, comfort, and ergonomics, too. And while some are satisfied with a trackball or trackpad, the majority might prefer the ease of use a mouse offers. They'll most likely have to work for hours on end, so it all boils down to what they're most comfortable with.

A computer monitor (or two)

PCs, laptops, tablets, and smartphones all have their own screens, though most prefer screens they can easily read from and use. If your employees are among the lucky ones who work on a file with one screen while using another one

to display their references, then they might find it difficult to go back to a single-monitor setup. Thankfully, replicating a dual-monitor setup is just a matter of getting another monitor, connecting it to their computer, and adjusting their display settings.

Of course, setting up dual monitors is their prerogative. If they're buying monitors, screen aspects to consider are size, aspect ratio (i.e., the proportions of its width and height, resolution (i.e., image quality), and interface (although ports mismatching video cables is a problem that's easily fixed with adaptors).

However, they don't even have to buy a new screen if they have a smart TV or a TV they've connected to a Chromecast or other similar device. Laptops running on Windows can detect such internet-connected devices, and all they have to do is go to Settings > System > Display > Multiple displays, then adjust their settings as they like.

Webcam and headset

If an employee's computer doesn't come with a web camera, they'll most likely have to purchase one separately, especially if you regularly keep in touch with your team via video conferencing. They'll need to primarily consider video resolution and sound quality, plus other features such as noise cancellation and autofocus. To reduce external distractions, they might want to use a headset, though isolating themselves in a room and hanging a "Do not disturb" sign might work just as well.

Letting your staff work at home can be a big boon for your company — provided that employees set their devices up properly and that you have a good remote work policy in place. If you're interested in taking full advantage of remote work but don't know where to start, talk to our experts.

We're more than happy to help!

FEATURED PARTNER



SentinelOne's Autonomous Endpoint Protection Saves You Time by Using Multiple AI Engines, Providing Complete Visibility into All Activity, and Even Rolling Back Threats with a Single Agent.

RJ2 SPOTLIGHT

Felipe Carmona

Support Supervisor

Felipe has been working in the IT field for the last 12 years. He has a computer science degree from Roosevelt University. He started his career working as an IT Co-Op while finishing up school. He then worked for 2 construction companies in the Chicago area where he helped managed the construction sites' technology needs. Before coming to RJ2 he was the Helpdesk Supervisor and managed daily network operations for a business communications company in Arlington Heights.

Felipe enjoys taking trips with his family, going to the movies, and spending time by the pool in the summer. He is an active member in his church and volunteers in his community.

Fun Fact: Felipe has been a homebrewer for the last few years. He has a passion for creating flavorful drink recipes, which he shares with friends and neighbors.



BUSINESS PRESENCE

Work From Home Burnout is Real. How to Avoid It.

When was the last time you really stepped away from work and took some time just for yourself? Shut out all the noise -- the email, the Slacks, the texts, the Twitter notifications, the constant worry about that big project -- and just took a moment for yourself to regroup and refocus?

Workplace burnout doesn't solely happen when you're putting in long hours at the office. It's also a risk when you're working from home, camped out at your kitchen table in your sweats.

In fact, the risk could be even greater given our current situation. One expert told me the suddenness with which so many of us were forced to start working from home -- while also losing our childcare in many cases -- combined with a global pandemic that seems to have no end in sight, means the risk of burnout has intensified.

Not great news. We've got enough on our plates to worry about. So here are the signs of burnout and

what you can do about it.

Work-life imbalance.

When you were going into an office every day there was a clear distinction between your work life and personal time. But now that you don't have a commute to mark the beginning and end of your day and your office could now be in your kitchen, you can end up working all the time if you're not careful.

How to fight it: Set your work hours, communicate them with your boss and colleagues and then stick to them. (Yes, there will be times when you will work late, but try to make that the exception, not the rule.) It can also help to create a signal that it's time for you to switch gears to personal time: Some people change into more comfortable clothes, go outside and hit Wiffle balls, while others go for a run or workout.

Lack of control.

Employees who feel that they

lack control over their schedules, interactions and time management are at risk of burning out.

How to fight it: Create a schedule that designates time for work, family and yourself -- and then be sure to stick to it.

Missing social connections.

Even if you're in a crowded house, your family members might not offer the same support your colleagues did when it comes to issues with work.

How to fight it: You have to be more deliberate with your social interactions when working from home. It takes a little more effort, but continue to reach out to your co-workers: Slack them, set up a quick video check-in and lean on them the way you would at work.

Article from CNN Business: Kathryn Vasek

Feature Partner Product: SentinelOne

A group of defense and intelligence experts saw savvy attackers compromising endpoints seemingly at will. Traditional approaches failed to provide sufficient protection. They founded SentinelOne to develop a dramatic new approach to endpoint protection. It's one that applies AI and machine learning to thwart known and unknown threats.

Our team understands how much endpoints matter. When attackers come after our privacy, intellectual property, infrastructure, and collaborative modes

of working, they assault more than just data. We're under attack, and so are our values. That's why we're dedicated to keeping our breakthrough platform ahead of threats from every vector. Gartner, NSS Labs, and industry leading organizations recognize that our approach sets us apart.

Give us a call to schedule a demo for you!

May

"It is only when they go wrong that machines remind you how powerful they are."
- Clive James

TIP OF THE MONTH

Tips to help working from home feel more normal:

1. Get Dressed for Success!
2. Create a dedicated work area.
3. Replicate your office work tech as much as possible
4. If you do not have an ergonomic desk or chair, plan more physical breaks to get up and stretch.
5. Avoid the fridge! Try and not snack all day.
6. Get some noise-cancelling headphones to block out the noise of your home.

