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Work-From-Home Best Practices

*Tips on staying productive (and sane) in
your new work environment*



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Abstract: As Exactuals employees, we were in the unique situation of having had already conquered the best practices for working from home, pre COVID-19. Now, we face additional obstacles and distractions due to government-imposed restrictions and, for some, our family members being home with us. This is how Exactuals has managed.

A few months into the COVID-19 pandemic, many organizations around the world have found themselves functioning in a way they probably thought impossible, and that's with their staff working from home. As Exactuals colleagues, we have been fortunate to be employed by a company that has been working remotely for almost a decade. Prior to the government-imposed quarantine, we were in the unique situation of having already conquered the best practices for working remotely. Now, we face additional obstacles and distractions due to our family members being home with us, without having the option to sneak away to our local cafe.

It is imperative that you **schedule time for yourself** throughout the day. Block your calendar and **set a reminder to take a lunch**. Force yourself to **walk away from your screen**, especially when you **start to lose focus**, or begin to **feel a bit irritable or anxious**. **Great things to do while working from home and taking a break?**

Literally anything.

I've reached out to my coworkers across the nation to gather their thoughts and habits on how they continue to stay focused during these times. At Exactuals, we've always found working remote, or from home, to be a privilege, and so we have treated it as such throughout the years. Now that the nation has mandated a quarantine, we find ourselves to be extremely grateful that our team has continued to function, business as usual, without a hitch. So, we hope to share our steps and best practices to help you stay focused during these times when distractions are exceedingly present.

Get up and get ready

Everyone in the household should get up, tuck in their shirt and get ready to work. We have found that remote school isn't great in pajamas, and neither is work. You may be surprised at how much more energy you have, just by slipping out of your slippers and into some shoes with soles.

Set the mood

Find your dedicated workspace. Many of us who have been doing this for a while have an actual office in our homes where we can shut the door and sit at a proper

desk with a monitor and an ergonomic chair and keyboard. This is definitely ideal; however, for those of you who aren't quite there yet, you must find your space. Make sure you have proper lighting and stay off of your couch and especially your bed.

Structure your day

Aside from all the meetings invites that are likely flooding your calendar, block time to actually get work done. Start with a "to do" list and group similar tasks together and prioritize them. It's key to schedule the most important tasks during your time of minimal distractions. Some of us find this golden hour to be first thing in the morning, before our major distractions get out of bed.

Take your breaks

It is imperative that you schedule time for yourself throughout the day. Block your calendar and set a reminder to take a lunch. Force yourself to walk away from your screen, especially when you start to lose focus, or begin to feel a bit irritable or anxious. Great things to do while working from home and taking a break? Literally anything. You can stretch, play fetch or walk your dogs, exercise, meditate, play

an instrument, read a book or take a nap. Your home is your oyster.

For those of you with families and little "interns" running around all day, we have gathered a few bonus tips to help them help you. Setting boundaries is important. One of my colleagues had his kids create a sign with a string that can hang on the outside of his office door. The sign has two sides: one side says "stop" and the other says "go". If he is in an important meeting, he puts the stop side out. Since his kids were involved in making the sign, they are a bit more invested in paying attention to it. Some of my colleagues alternate using an office, or alternate locking doors, so that the kids can only distract one of them at a time. For most, avoiding the distractions altogether is preferred. Many with kids in school have expressed that they plan out their entire day, the night before. Structuring their time allows you to structure yours. And some have realized that sneaking away to take calls from the walk-in closet is also a preferred option.

Most importantly, when working from home, due to a pandemic or because you've been fortunate enough to land a job whose culture is to work remotely, it's important to set a stopping time. One of the issues that I have struggled most with over the years is not knowing when to turn the lights off. Eight hours can quickly turn into 12 or 16, especially when submerged in a large project.

One of the things that Exactuals has tried to engrain in all its employees is that family is always first. Live in the moment and be present with your families each and every day. ■



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