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WORKING VIRTUALLY

How to get the best out of virtual work

Human Capital | March 2020

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VIRTUAL WORK IS HERE TO STAY

30% of survey respondents in a 2019 study released by OWL Labs already work remotely full-time¹

48% of survey respondents in a 2019 study released by OWL Labs work remotely at least once per week¹

COVID-19 work challenges

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COVID-19 is taking the world by surprise, and virtual work has become the new normal

Accept your new virtual reality

Working from home can normally be a welcoming change to our days at the office. However, when working from home suddenly is the new normal, we need to change our ways of working. The lines between our work life and personal life can become blurry, and it can be tempting to escape from our routines. In circumstances like COVID-19, your virtual working situation may not be ideal, due to small living space, many people under the same roof, limited options to get out for exercise or having children at home caused by school closures. We need to find out how to adapt our ways of working to fit our new virtual reality, and utilize the tools available to create new routines.

Ask for support

Accept that adapting to this new setup can be challenging. Finding the right balance between keeping in close contact with colleagues, and avoiding meetings that could have been an email, is more important than ever. Understand that the very definition of work now also entails being social with your team members. This should be an important part of your daily work task.

Be aware that many families are very squeezed now with trying to look after their children and work at the same time. It is important to be very inclusive and flexible around their working conditions.

Working from home does not mean you have to work all day. If you need help to plan and prioritize your work, or if you have any anxiety or feel disconnected from your work and colleagues, please raise your concerns and speak up.

We want to share some practical ideas on what you as an individual can do in the short and long-term to adapt and progress in this dynamic environment.

This guide will help you overcome some of the challenges caused by virtual work, and help you seek out the learning potential to make the most of working from home.



Tips for virtual work

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We have developed 10 tips that will help you be successful while working from home:



1
Keep a
routine

2
Structure
your day



4
Stay
connected

3
Have a
dedicated
workspace



5
Learn
new tools

6
Take a
break!



8
Keep up your
motivation

7
Balance a dual-role
at home



9
Embrace the
gift of time

10
When the day is
over, shut it
down



1 Keep a routine

Create a routine for yourself to start and finish your working day. When you're working from home, the line between your work and personal life can become blurry. So think about what you'll do at the end of your working day to help you switch off.

- ✓ **Keep your routine.** Don't mess with your circadian rhythm. Keep a similar routine to the one you would have in the office (i.e. start and end time, coffee break, gym break, informal catch up with your leader, etc.).
- ✓ **Your bed is not a desk!** It's tempting to work from your bed, but not creating a line between work and relaxation leads to decreased productivity and lower quality sleep.
- ✓ **Don't do housekeeping.** It is tempting to clean your house or do the laundry, but try to avoid it during work hours. If you have to, use your planned breaks.
- ✓ **Schedule your lunch** in your calendar and make it visible for your colleagues and managers. It's easy to forget when your colleagues don't bring you to the canteen.



Structure your day

Structure is important to make sure you spend your time on the most essential things and maintain productivity. Create a system and set boundaries that work for you. Experiment and adapt to you and your family's needs. Finally, make it visible in your calendar.

- ✓ **Create an overview** of your day and structure all tasks and deadlines in to-do's lists. Whether it's on paper, in excel or a in a virtual Kanban board it's a good way to focus your time and stay on track.
- ✓ **Try working in intervals.** For example the pomodoro method; 25 minutes of concentrated work followed by 5 minutes of break.
- ✓ **Block your "working time".** Block out time in your own calendar for "working time", where you get work done and don't take any calls and use this as a tool to hold yourself accountable for deadlines.
- ✓ **Celebrate your wins.** Remember to appreciate what you did do during the day – even though there might be more items on your to do list.



Have a dedicated workspace

Ideally, set up a dedicated, quiet and distraction-free work space. Your workspace should allow you to take care of your physical well being. When working from home, it's important that you sit well, have proper lighting and vary your posture throughout the day.

It can be hard to turn off and relax if you always have your laptop by your side – and it can be hard to be productive when lying on the sofa.

- ✓ **Have a dedicated space** for productive and concentrated work.
- ✓ **Establish guidelines** with your family/friends to ensure minimal distraction during working hours.
- ✓ **Ensure you have what you need** to perform your tasks, e.g. laptop, charger, Wifi, portable mouse, etc.
- ✓ Ensure that your working station is **the right height**, has enough light and allows you to sit with both feet on the floor and a straight back.



4 Stay connected

Working from home can make you feel isolated at times without the social aspects of the office environment. Make sure to regularly check-in with your colleagues - like you would at the office. Turn on your camera and say hello.

Connect with your team each day

- **Schedule at least one check-in** every day to discuss tasks and plan for next steps.
- **Create a Teams group** for your team and share both work related and social moments.
- **Turn on the camera!**



Dedicate time for social catch ups with colleagues

- Schedule a **virtual coffee** with a colleague.
- Host a **virtual lunch or virtual Friday bar** to make sure you stay connected and follow each others life as normal.
- **Make an effort** to stay in touch with colleagues living alone or coming from abroad who might have an extra need for social contact.

5 Learn new tools

Take this time to prepare for the future of work. According to Deloitte's latest Human Capital Trends report*, the future of work will increasingly involve more flexible working arrangements, with virtual work being a trend on the rise. Virtual work can increase flexibility and support diverging schedules.

1. **Familiarize yourself with technical tools** that can increase efficiency and enable you to work seamlessly, virtually. Your new reality is virtual and technology will therefore be your eternal enabler.
2. **Collaboration in teams increases the need for technology.** Use this time to find virtual work arrangements that fit you. Tools such as Microsoft Teams and Zoom let you work together on a shared canvas. This will enable you to collaborate, co-create and spark creativity and ideas even though you are not co-located.



3. The Future of Work is here - use it!

Take a break!

Working from home can feel unstructured without the natural break of meetings in the office. So make sure you take regular breaks where you step away from your work and activate your body.

- **Schedule your breaks.** And don't make it a private appointment – taking a break is completely legitimate.
- **Get some fresh air.** If you're able to, get outside and go for a walk once a day. It helps refresh your mind and stops you sitting down all day which is terrible for your health.
- **Exercise.** Keep your mind and body in shape. Physical exercise is important to keep us effective and in a good mood.



- **Explore mindfulness.** Explore mindfulness and meditation to destress!
- **Take calls on your phone** instead of your laptop. This allows you to move around in your house/apartment while talking.
- **Stand up while working.** Place some books or boxes under your laptop or maybe your kitchen table is high enough?

Balance a dual-role at home

Working from home while having children in the house can be a great challenge and forces you to get creative with your work and parenting schedule. Balancing between being a parent and getting your work done can seem daunting. Accept that it takes time to adapt and find your own rhythm.

- **Create moments that matter.** We often find it difficult to spend as much time with family as we want to. Take this time to create moments that matter for your family.
- **Make a family schedule.** Create a schedule of playtime/school work, meal times, etc. helps both you and your children cope. This can also mean dividing up the parenting duties between you and your partner.
- **Manage expectations.** Especially with small kids it can be challenging to put in the same amount of consecutive hours as normal. Manage expectations with your leader and team and consider to make use of the flexibility of spreading out work across evenings.
- **Laugh. A lot.** Laughing helps you and your family to deal with the difficult situations that can arise as you are all adjusting to this situation.

Keep up your motivation

Working from home means it's up to you to motivate yourself and get as much out of your time as you would in an office setting. What distractions are around you and what motivates you? Think about this and plan your work around it.

✓ **Get in touch with a colleague or friend** if you are feeling de-motivated. Social interaction and check-ins, even just 5 minute calls, can also help you to stay motivated.

✓ **Changing from your pajamas or sweatpants** into your office outfit can also help you increase motivation, get into the workflow and spark concentration.

✓ **Turn off notifications** and sounds from all app's and reception of mails and dedicate time for answering mails approx. 3 times a day to avoid being distracted from your task.

✓ **Speak up!** You are definitely not the only one who will feel de-motivated at times. Find out what sparks your energy and interact with colleagues and friends to let them know how you feel.



Embrace the gift of time

Working from home means less time spent in traffic and transportation – embrace that extra time and use it for what matters to you!

We all have our own way to decompress, whether it's going for a run, getting a massage, or simply sitting quietly to relax.

While it may be hard to squeeze in, schedule time in your calendar and stick to it. And make sure to plan for time to unwind when you're not at work as well.

What matters to you?

- ✓ Spending more time with your family
- ✓ Exercising – now you can finally start on the fitness programme
- ✓ Relax! You finally have time to read that book you bought ages ago
- ✓ Watch that TV series on Netflix
- ✓ Be you!



When the day is over, shut it down

When you're done for the day, shut your laptop down and relax! It can be tempting to keep checking e-mails but this creates blurred boundaries between work and time off. Stay off when you're off.

We can often be our own worst enemy when it comes to work-life integration. While it can sometimes be necessary to work again in the evening, make sure to prioritize a break to eat with your family, put the kids to sleep, exercise or relax. While you may be tempted to check emails outside working hours, acting on it can mentally pull you back into work mode, and put a dampener on critical time to recharge. Remember, that relaxing and recharging are equally important, even though you are home all day.

One way to keep clearer boundaries between work and time off is to install a repetitive symbolic act such as packing your computer away in your bag to mark the end of the day.



Tools for wellbeing

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Utilize the broad spectrum of apps that can help increase your wellbeing while working virtually - we have gathered a few examples for your inspiration

Find inner peace



Calm

Meditation and sleep app. Daily calm advice and weekly sleep stories.



The Mindfulness App

Guided meditations and mindfulness sessions.



Headspace

Mediation app, with everything from sleep to efficiency centered meditations.

Get your heartrate up



Nike Training Club

Free workouts from Nike Trainers around the world,



Seven - 7 minute workout

Quick workouts that you can do at home.



Endomondo

Track your running, compare with friends and reach new goals.

Get creative and learn



Podimo

Listen to podcasts while taking a break or going for a walk.



Lake: Colouring Books

Unwind by colouring pictures or start from scratch with a blank canvas.



Peak - Brain Training

Exercise your brain, memory and attention span.

Take time and reflect



1 Second Everyday: Video Diary

Start creating your life movie, adding a super short video to your daily video journal.



Reflecty

Start keeping a journal for Happiness, reflecting on the day, and life in general.



Moodnotes

Self-care and anxiety journal, Find mood patterns and identify thinking traps to get new perspective

Your Deloitte support

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Our dedicated Deloitte team can support you with strategies to strengthen your wellbeing and increase productivity when working virtual and remote.

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