

# Working from home and how to prepare for it



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working world

At the Digital Future of Work seminar, we have recently discussed the possibilities brought about by modern technologies. We all agreed that people's general resistance to change is one of the main barriers to better use of technologies by employees; HR departments should therefore focus on developing new skills and competencies so that people can take full advantage of new technologies.

The current quarantine situation is a "quantum leap" for many employees and businesses. In terms of change management, however, it is an ideal situation - both companies and employees find out that working from home is possible in areas they could not have imagined until yesterday, or even in areas they were 100% sure would not work. This does not mean, however, that a typical person will discard all their office work habits overnight and replace them with new habits for working at home.

Let's have a look at a simplified example to see how the change from office work to work from home can take place. After the first announcement that you are going to work from home, nothing may happen. You worry about a lot of things every day; you are overwhelmed with news and this is just one of them. Shortly thereafter, you may experience a phase of initial enthusiasm. You are happy to finally have a chance to reconcile work and personal life. You will spend more time at home, manage to do a lot of things, save time on commuting, get rid of boring meetings; you can finally get to things for which there was no time in the everyday "rat race", you can sleep a lot. Yet as soon as you start working from home, problems start creeping in.

You are alone at home and simply do not feel like "working". The tasks which you usually managed within a short time in the office suddenly seem dragging and difficult to finish at home as you keep interrupting work with the necessary dishwashing, following the latest news or playing games. You may even start to miss your colleagues, even those you did not talk much with at work. You enter the "valley of despair".

This is the place of turnaround. Until this stage, you have more or less continued your old stereotypes, using everything that you had previously learned and that worked for you in the office, even though it may not be sufficient for working from home. Now you need to look into the future and start adjusting work habits to suit the current situation. Small wins are enough - such as getting to use one new technology; whether WhatsApp or Teams does not matter. It is important to start trying new things and stop being afraid of making mistakes. And adding more items step-by-step.

We have some tips for you to better manage your work from home and to make innovations an integral part of your future work life.

## ■ For employees

### Define your workspace

- ▶ Having a home office is an ideal situation. Nevertheless, even if you work at your home kitchen table, dedicate certain space to work only; a certain part of the table may e.g. be reserved for work from 9am to 5pm. Then it can turn into a dining table again. This will help change your mindset to feeling like “being at work”.

### Keep your rhythm

- ▶ On weekdays, get up just as you would if you went to work. You can sleep in over the weekend. You can actively use the saved commuting time for other activities. The peace of home gives you an ideal opportunity to engage in deep mental work. Therefore, divide your work into several blocks to avoid unreasonably fragmenting the work requiring full concentration by emails or phone calls.

### Take breaks

- ▶ Take a break between blocks. If you can get out for a while to get some fresh air, do it. If you manage to stretch a bit, your body will thank you. A 10-minute walk will help your body more than coffee. You can also try a short meditation.

### Working from home while kids are at home

- ▶ You work from home with kids who are also at home as schools are closed. Take advantage of it. Show them how you work from home, try different learning styles with them. You have a unique opportunity to participate in the development of your children. In fact, teaching someone else is one of the most effective self-development methods.

### Alone, but not lonely

- ▶ You can sometimes feel lonely while working from home. Do not let this feeling grow. If you feel lonely, call your colleagues. You can also agree with the team to set a regular time for an online “kitchen chat”. If it doesn't work, call at least someone in your family or friends.

## ■ For managers

### Clarify your expectations

- ▶ The need to work from home came fast and you did not have space to properly prepare for it. Your subordinates are in the same situation. It is therefore important for you as the manager to take initiative and clarify with your subordinates what will be expected from them while working from home. How they should be available, e.g. by phone or email.

### Communicate

- ▶ Use all means of communication available to you. If you just write emails and text messages, non-verbal communication will be missing. Try to use video calls once in a while to replace the missing visual contact.

### Work with the team

- ▶ Set up regular online meetings. The frequency may vary, but if all of you suddenly have home office, it is a good idea to contact each team member separately at least once a week and, in addition, hold team meetings. Be aware that this may be needed more frequently, especially in the first days and weeks.

### Take care of your customers

- ▶ You need to take care of your customers, just like you take care of your subordinates. Many customers also work from home now. Connect with them and support your business online. Use the tasks and information from these online meetings to regularly delegate tasks to your subordinates. Working with customer will thus indirectly support your regular communication with subordinates.

### Don't forget to include humor

- ▶ Don't forget to laugh. You will help yourself and your colleagues to relieve stress and better cope with the difficult situation.

## ■ For companies

### Health first

- ▶ Ensuring business continuity is certainly important, but your people's health is a priority.

### Create conditions for working from home

- ▶ Although the present situation came up suddenly and you did not have time to prepare for it, try to create for your people suitable conditions for working from home where possible. Ask them how they think they could do their work from home. Individual creative ideas can help find the right business-wide solution.

### Use technologies

- ▶ Use anything you have. Even if you can only use your phone to regularly call your people, do it. It is a better solution than closing down your business. Gradually, you can start adding more advanced technologies. If you are already using technologies, involve as many people as possible and let them practice all features available.

### Educate employees online

- ▶ Prepare online training for your employees according to their needs. Whether concerning the use of communication technologies, virtual teamwork or professional qualification of individual employees, you have now a chance to develop your people for the opportunities that will come when the crisis is over.

### Data security

- ▶ In setting up technologies or processes for working from home, remember to ensure security of your data. Cybercriminals do not respect the abnormality of the current situation.

The current situation is new for all of us and we all learn on the go. We can, nevertheless, perceive any crisis or change as an opportunity to learn new things and engage in further personal development.



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