

How to Effectively Work from Home

Since the coronavirus has upended all of our lives — both personally and professionally — one of the biggest topics of conversation has been working from home. While working from home was becoming increasingly common before the pandemic, the virus has forced many people to turn their kitchen tables into desks for the first time in their careers.

And while working from home has given the world plenty of hilarious TikTok videos and memes over the last several months, it's not exactly funny — to you, anyway — when you have a big Zoom meeting and your dogs won't stop barking or one of your kids barges into the room and demands mac and cheese while your co-workers are watching.

But outside of funny webcam disasters, the fact is the biggest challenge with working from home is avoiding procrastination.

I recently read a *Forbes* article, [Working Remote and 10 Things You Can Do To Prevent Procrastination](#), that has some really good, common-sense solutions. The article cites an IBM study in which 54% of those who responded said they'd prefer to permanently work from home even after the pandemic has been brought under control and 75% of respondents indicated they'd like the option to continue working from home at least part-time. It's clear the world of work is changing quickly. That said, employers certainly have the right to expect their staffers to continue producing quality work on deadline, even when working from home.

A great place to start is to use the same place in your home to do most of your work. It's great if you have a home office, but if you don't, you can designate the kitchen table as your "work space." It may sound like a small thing, but it can be tremendously helpful to know that when you go to this space, it's time to really buckle down and crank out some quality work.

When you're in your work space, you should build some mental boundaries while you're in your work space so that you don't constantly peek at the fridge with its leftover Chinese food. And when it comes to dirty dishes, laundry or errands, you should focus on completing those tasks outside of work hours, just as you would if you were in the office.

Added up, these small but important steps will help you keep your mind focused on your work.

Small but measurable steps is a simple way to keep yourself motivated and on deadline. Let's say you're new to working from home and you have a major project to complete. It may be beneficial to look at the project in stages, rather than in totality.

Focus on stage one of the project and once that's completed, move on to stage two. From there, it's on to stage three. This may seem like an obvious thing, but if you do it consistently, you may just find that big projects and rapidly approaching deadlines don't seem so overwhelming.

You should also focus on not be too hard on yourself, which is something I think is really important. As the article explains, getting down on yourself when you procrastinate doesn't do much good. The better course of action is to forgive yourself, identify why you're procrastinating and then simply move on.

With that, anyone working from home would be wise to ease up on the perfectionism. I get it, we all want to do good work and be recognized as a valuable part of the team, but there's a chance that your need to be perfect with every task is actually having the opposite effect.

As *Forbes* notes, constantly striving for perfection can lead you to set unrealistic goals and nearly impossible targets and deadlines, all of which increases the chances you'll procrastinate for fear of failure. The better strategy is to set goals and deadlines that will push you to produce quality work while also being realistic and obtainable.

Another key piece of advice is to not forget the value of a first draft is often in shaping your next steps. As you go back and look at the first draft, your brain may kick into a higher gear as it identifies ways to re-shape the ideas in your draft. In fact, subsequent drafts may be completely different than the first one, but that's OK, because the first draft has inspired where the project is going.

Don't worry about how that first draft looks, it's not about right or wrong, it's all about getting your ideas down and giving yourself a positive push.

Another thing you should consider is that little voice in our heads that's always hitting us with negativity. I'm sure many of our listeners know the voice I'm talking about. It's the one that tells us: "This has to be perfect" or "I have to get that promotion or I'm a failure" or "If there's even a minor mistake in this draft, my career is over."

What if that voice instead said things like, "I get to work on this cool project" or "I've done this work before, so I know I can do it this time" or "I have an important perspective that's going to make this project better."

To some degree, it's simply human nature to let our minds wander toward the worst-case scenario, but we can absolutely train ourselves to not fall for it. Believe in yourself and, perhaps even more importantly, believe in the body of work you've already created.

Whether you're working at your desk in the office or at your kitchen table, you have your job because you bring something valuable to your company. Don't forget that.

The next slice of wisdom is to simply avoid calling yourself a procrastinator. Sounds simple, right? Maybe even a little too simple? But here's the theory behind it. If you call yourself a procrastinator that's exactly what you'll become. It's a self-fulfilling prophecy.

If you're struggling to get motivated on a certain project, don't simply shrug your shoulders and tell yourself that you're a procrastinator and that's just the way it is. Take a deep-breathe, come up with a list of achievable steps, and get to work!

The *Forbes* article next recommends something that I think will cause more than a few sets of ears to perk up and that recommendation is: Reward yourself.

Human beings are designed to avoid discomfort and to seek enjoyment, and that applies to our work too. With that in mind, it may be valuable to reward yourself after you've completed elements of a project or task. For example, let's say there's one piece of that Dairy Queen ice cream cake left, and it has your name all over it. Instead of immediately scurrying off to the fridge to gobble it down, why not tell yourself that the cake is all yours AFTER you've completed step one of whatever you're working on?

It may also be good to go through your list of tasks and label things that are essential and non-essential. That way you can better utilize your time by completing all of those must-dos before you worry about the things that are a little less important.

I've always found that it's good to really focus on my projects that others are waiting on. For example, if I'm tasked with fact checking a brochure that can't go to the printer until I'm done, I give that high priority because I know other people can't do their jobs until I've done mine.

Ultimately, using the fact that other people are often relying on us to get our part of a job done so they can do their part of the job, is a great motivator. I don't think any of us relish the idea of one of our colleagues having to stay late in the actual office or even their home office because we didn't come through in a timely manner.