

How to Be Proactive and Productive While Working Remotely

(Under Stay-at-Home Orders or Otherwise)

Rather than allowing us to make iterative changes in our workways, COVID-19 has swept away the foundations of our *workways* in one fell swoop. (At their simplest, *workways* are “how members of teams or organizations get their work done.” They are the patterns of behavior — like muscle memory — that underlie the culture, values, and mission of the team, group, or organization.) **As painful as it is, we each have an opportunity to adapt our workways to remote working** and thrive in this new world of work. Working while under quarantine is different from standard remote work, though, so we’ll also need to acknowledge the unique challenges of working while under quarantine. The mastery we cultivate now in this new way of work will make us more effective, productive, and proactive in any condition or circumstance.

Working Effectively in Your New Environment

Have a conversation with your spouse/partner/family about your work-from-home (WFH) situation, sharing the requirements of your job and asking for their help.

If your spouse/partner is also working from home, do the same for them.
Iron out the division of labor for any childcare and other home chores.

Establish boundaries for yourself.

Physical boundaries, like office space in the home, and closed-door rules.
Time boundaries for when you will begin and end work each day (and some sort of cue to yourself and your family that you are switching from work time to family time).
Use time blocking to set aside time for important, focused project work; admin tasks; meetings; and recovery time.

Talk to your boss about your WFH situation, and ask for any accommodations you need to be successful in your role when working from home.

Different/flexible schedule
Special equipment or tools (or office equipment moved to your home office), like printers, monitors, head phones and the like.

Embracing Your New Team Structure

Consider how your communication with your team and your boss will need to change.

Work with your team to establish new routines and tools for communicating.
Avoid email for internal team communications, instead using a tool like Slack for conversations, and a tool like Asana for project tracking.
For each communication, identify who needs to receive it (and who doesn’t), the purpose of the communication, and any action you require from the recipient(s). Be as specific as possible, but in as few words as possible.

Flexibility of roles and responsibilities may be necessary going forward.

Identify areas where tasks no longer need to be done, or need to be done differently, or by different teammates.
With your team and your boss, establish a new structure that supports the work of the team while supporting the needs of the individual team members and their WFH/family situations.

Developing New Workways for Yourself (and the Rest of Your Team)

Identify workways that don’t work anymore.

List the daily/weekly/monthly tasks you have responsibility for, and then list how those tasks will need to change in the new environment (no longer done, done differently by you, done by someone else).
For responsibilities that are still yours, determine how those will change in a WFH situation compared to what you have done. Will these take more time/effort to do, different tools, additional support from the team?

Enroll your team (and boss) in new workways.

For each new workway, have a conversation with your team and your boss about what is changing and why.
Request what you need from them for you (and the team) to be successful with this new workway.
Encourage their perspective and input in creating a workway that works for everyone.

Additional Tips for Working Under Quarantine

Take care of yourself!

Get adequate sleep. Get some exercise (preferably outdoors).
Eat healthy foods. Adopt other self-care practices (meditation, yoga, journaling, etc.).

Give yourself some margin. Your “best” during these challenging times might not be the same as your best when everything is going well. The same is true for your teammates (and your boss).