Working From Home: How to be more efficient while looking after your wellbeing

Working from home can be stressful due to the confusion of not having clear boundaries of work and home. It can also be filled with isolation which can cause depression but thanks to the Covid-19 pandemic, working from home has become the norm, and will continue to be for the foreseeable future.

So if you're feeling nervous about working from home full time, don't be. We've put together a guide that will help you not only enjoy working from home but thrive and even improve your career prospects. Keep reading …

Make an implicit agreement with your team and/or colleagues

Get organised

Build your collaboration skills and don't work in complete isolation

Don't be afraid to shout out and celebrate your achievements

Be compassionate with yourself and the rest of your team

Put a self-care plan in place

Make an implicit agreement with your team and/or colleagues

Working from home on a full time basis can be very challenging, especially if you're used to working in an office environment. A remote working environment is different, so it's important to set up an "office" at home and re-think how to engage with the team and conduct meetings.

- Be sure to set up an organised and quiet workspace, and accept that distractions are a normal part of the current situation you're in.

- Even if you're not in a leadership position; be proactive and set ground rules for communicating with your colleagues and support them whenever possible through the technologies available.

- Embrace and promote digital meetings, workshops, webinars, etc.

- Set goals and develop a plan that's agreed on by the entire team.

- Develop a daily routine

- Use available tools and technology like WhatsApp, MsTeams, Zoom, Slack, etc. to communicate; and Trello, monday.com, Asana, etc. to organise and plan.

- Be agile and establish time-based goals and objectives for the week, 30, 60, or 90 days, schedule regular stand-ups and 1:1s with your team and colleagues.

- Keep your calendar up-to-date and be available during your working hours.

- Start your working day with the right task:

  - Don't create daunting to-do lists. Instead, work on your to-do list created the night before and prioritise.

  - Throughout the day, our energy levels and focus deteriorates so it's important to start your day focusing on the right tasks. If your time is limited, dedicate 100% of your energy to the most difficult tasks you've planned for the day while you have high energy levels.

  - Try the Eisenhower Matrix (source: https://www.eisenhower.me).

Build your collaboration skills and don't work in complete isolation

- Improve your self-awareness (most of the time, how you see yourself is different from your true self and how others see you).

- Ask for candid feedback.

- Ask and welcome input from your team and colleagues.

- Be open and ask for new challenges.

- Champion collaboration.

- Socialise with your colleagues, for example through virtual lunches and coffee breaks.

- Touch base with your peers, partners, clients, and other working groups on a regular basis.

If you're not integrated in a team, why not form your own team?

- Identify the key people who help you and the organisation achieve your goals.

- Collaborate with these people on a regular basis. Be present and visible to them.

- Be generous and support them whenever possible.
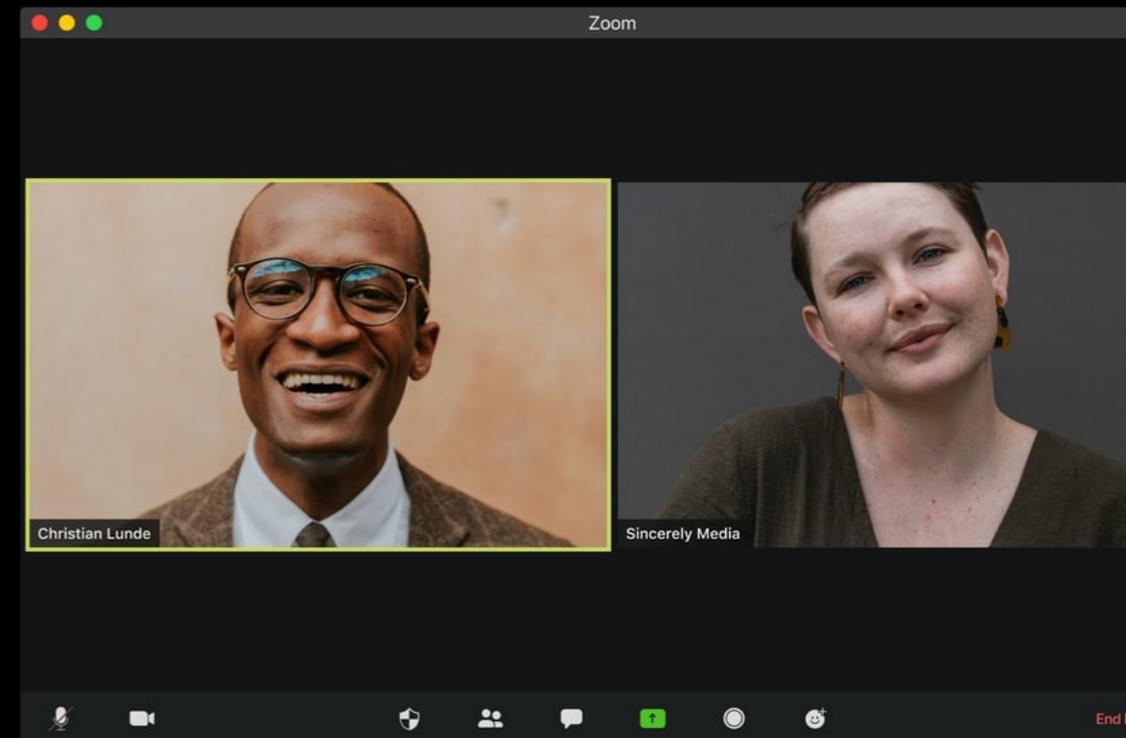
Don't be afraid to shout out and celebrate your achievements

- Identify and celebrate your small wins with the team.

- Stay in close contact with your senior team, ensure your tasks are clear and your impact and performance are visible.

- Develop your brand as a high performer.

- Keep the energy and the momentum going.

Be compassionate with yourself and the rest of your team

Recent research suggests that compassion can be a crucial part of a successful work environment. Showing compassion to colleagues, superiors or subordinates is vital to engagement, motivation and happiness at work.

Compassion is not about give and take. According to Jeff Weiner, the Executive Chairman of LinkedIn, compassion equals empathy plus action. This means understanding and putting yourself in other people's shoes with the intent of helping them and relieving their pain.

Here's how to be compassionate:

- Start by "taking off your shoes".

- Then think through what's going on in the other person's world – their fears and vulnerabilities, skills and strengths, personal and family issues, and workplace pressures.

- Go deeper and build relationships.

- Put your personal agenda on the back burner and try to understand the situation the other person's in and acknowledge that it requires a different attitude approach.

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But also remember that as important as showing compassion towards those around you is, so is self-compassion. Give yourself the same kindness and care. When you're having a difficult moment or fail at something, don't ignore it. Instead, acknowledge that moment with no judgement and try to replace those negative thoughts by reframing that story in a kind, friendly, and positive way. Think of what you would say to a family member or friend who's feeling pain or sadness.

One of the most important things to remember while working from home is to take care of yourself. Here are some simple things you can do:

Keep a Consistent Sleep Schedule

▸ When you're working from home and don't need to get up so early to commute and don't have any meetings until mid-morning you might be tempted to sleep in but don't! Keep the same work schedule.

▸ According to W. Christopher Winter, MD, the president of Charlottesville Neurology and Sleep Medicine in North Carolina and author of The Sleep Solution "When you're suddenly at home more, sleep schedules can take a hit as you try and adjust. But sticking to the same wake time and bedtime are crucial aspects of self-care because those contribute to sleep quality."

▸ Don't look at your phone or iPad as soon as you get out of bed.

▸ Avoid starting your day by spending time on your phone checking emails, messages, and social media. Instead, smart with a 'Power Hour' – 20 minutes exercise, 20 minutes reflection/meditation, and 20 minutes learning (for example reading a book or listening to a podcast).

Dress Up

▸ Working at home doesn't mean you don't have to prepare yourself for the workday. A similar preparation process should take place, i.e. take a shower, comb your hair, freshen up, brush your teeth, and dress as if you're going to the office (except the shoes!!). These practices will signal to your brain that it's a working day and get your mind ready.

Set aside time to re-energise during the day

Try to be intentional when working from home. Schedule regular breaks during the day for a simple stand up and stretch, a few breathing exercises, a 10 minutes brisk walk, a coffee/tea break with colleagues or family, a healthy and nourishing lunch. Set these breaks in your calendar and a reminder. Prefer an app? You're in luck because there are several options available – Stand Up, BreakTime, and Time Out.

If you have kids, get them involved in your self-care routine

‣ If your children are home from school or nursery, it's very easy to feel overwhelmed and stressed by having to work and take care of them at the same time.

‣ The best way to overcome this is to ask them to join you on your self-care routine. For example, invite them to go for a walk with you or ask them to join you when you have a 15-minute break to read a book or to stand up and

TAKE CARE OF YOUR SELF! ENJOY LIFE! AND INSPIRE THOSE AROUND YOU!

Self-care is not selfish. Self-care is making yourself a priority so you can live fully and take care of others, and this is even more important when working from home. And of course, you can also pamper yourself with your best-loved indulgences like taking a long bath, enjoying a mud mask, listening to your favourite music or a glass of wine.