



How to Stay Productive Working from Home

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If your idea of working from home involves wearing pajamas and working on your laptop on a couch in front of your TV, it's time to change your mind set.

Have a Separate Office Space

Just because you don't have to go into an office and sit behind a desk everyday doesn't mean you can stay in bed or in front of the TV with your laptop trying to complete your work.

Career experts recommend setting up a specific office area in the home so you can "go to work" and not be distracted by dirty dishes, a crying child or a favorite TV show.

"Where your workspace is makes a big difference," says Sara Sutton Fell, CEO of FlexJobs and a at-home worker for nearly 10 years. "When my second son was born, I realized it was really important for me to get more separation, so I moved my office to a space above our detached garage rather than in the house."

Set Clear Boundaries

Having a dedicated work space is half the battle, but you also need to set rules about who and what can enter your office.

"Create very strict boundaries where there are no dogs, kids or spouses allowed," says Cardone. "The door needs to remain shut with only those that have top clearance allowed access."

The work space should also be void of distractions. For instance, forgo putting a TV in your office or checking Facebook five times a day.

Keep Regular Work Hours and Prepare

Maintaining normal office hours can help maintain productivity.

According to Joel Garfinkle, author of *Getting Ahead: Three Steps to Take Your Career to the Next Level*, not only should you strictly abide by your work hours, you should make sure your family and friends also respect the rules.

"Your family and friends need to pretend you simply aren't there, unless it's a dire emergency," says Garfinkle. "Remind your family of these hours and let them know you expect them to respect your work time so that you won't have to work when you should be spending with them."

In addition to setting the hours, career experts say it's a good idea not to work all day in your pajamas. Keep your normal preparation routine, take a shower and get dressed, even if your commute is just down the hall.

"People brag about working from home in their underwear, but that is no way to grow a successful business," says Cardone. "Have a set time, wake up, shower, and get dressed just as you would if you were commuting to a professional office space and you will be more productive."

Change Your Mindset

Avoiding a long commute and having more flexibility over your schedule are enticing results of working from home, but there's more to it than these perks.

"The main motivation of convenience or comfort, which most people who work from home have, is flawed," says Cardone. Yes, it's more convenient to not have to go to an office every day, but remote workers can't view it as an excuse to slack off.

While self-starters are better suited for working at home, according to Sutton Fell, she says being a proactive communicator is the "secret weapon" to being successful.

"By taking initiative to communicate, you have a motivated and leading role in the connection with your colleagues' activities and keeping them abreast of what you're achieving and keeping on the pulse on everyone's expectations."

Know When to Throw in the Towel

If your productivity is declining or it's difficult to balance work and life, then it may be time to re-evaluate your work situation.

Perhaps you need more interaction with co-workers or bosses or maybe being at home is too distracting, but it's important to be honest, says Garfinkle.

"It's OK that you're not well-suited for working from home," says Garfinkle. "There's nothing wrong with that."

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