

Staying Productive While Working from Home



Virtual teams have become commonplace as we all navigate COVID-19. Some companies may be working virtually for the first time. Since SBT has offices all over North America, we have developed some strategies for coping with virtual workplace communication and making sure everyone stays productive. For those of you who typically work at jobsites (or have a mix of both on-site and off-site workers), we have another guide for you:

[Jobsite Productivity Amid Social Distancing](#)

According to an Airtasker study, “remote workers actually work more than in-office employees, averaging just under 22 days per month compared to 20.5 days of workers who physically go into an office.” Employees can amplify that remote work productivity by maintaining a daily routine, double-checking task comprehension, and creating a space within their homes that promotes concentration.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

The guidance detailed in this eGuide is not a standard or regulation, and it creates no legal obligations. It contains recommendations from third-party sources that are advisory in nature, informational in content, and are intended to assist industry partners in providing a safe and healthful workplace. Please be sure to consult local authorities to ensure compliance with specific regional, statewide, and federal laws.

HOW EMPLOYEES CAN BE PRODUCTIVE AT HOME

This shift in typical workplace culture hits especially hard for employees who might be used to going into a physical office every day.

Stick with a Routine

When you wake up for work at home, go through the same morning routine as if you were going into the office. **Get out of your pajamas.** The simple act of changing your clothes tricks your mind into work mode.

After you are dressed and ready to go, **create a dedicated workspace for yourself at home.** Not everyone has a home office, but you can create a temporary one for yourself, so long as it is not in your bed or on your couch. When you do choose a spot, try to keep it near a window for the natural light benefits.

Create a daily list of the top three tasks you need to accomplish. Start those first. Once you get them done, having those first few tasks crossed off gives you a sense of accomplishment—which can boost your work-from-home productivity levels. Break down large tasks into small, digestible parts. Each step of the way, you are setting yourself up for big accomplishments.

Get Focused and Stay Focused

When you are working on something that requires your full focus and you have no meetings on the schedule, put your cell phone on “do not disturb.” It’s tempting to respond when people text or call, but picking up your phone breaks your concentration. Instead, work in 30-minute or 1-hour bursts. Some people prefer the pomodoro method: 25-minute sprints of work with short breaks after each. No matter your method, you can check your phone quickly after each quick break to ensure you didn’t miss any business calls.

Don’t be afraid to take breaks. Get up and walk around for a few minutes to uncloud your mind and give your eyes a break from your computer screen. While productivity at home is key, if you are staring at a computer screen and getting nothing accomplished, you are not being effective. Breaks take your mind off your work momentarily, and you can sit back down to get your tasks done refreshed.

When someone communicates with you about a work matter—whether it’s via email, video chat, phone, or otherwise—ask clarifying questions. In the absence of body language and vocal inflection, a lot can get lost in translation. So even if your discussion seems straightforward, make sure you review the important points with your co-worker(s) to ensure everyone understands. If you have effective virtual managers, they will do their part as well in ensuring teams are on the same page.

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PRODUCTIVITY TIPS FOR MANAGERS WORKING FROM HOME

Managing a team of remote workers can seem intimidating and comes with its own set of frustrations; however, the good news is: your team can continue to be productive while working from home and, sometimes, will be even more productive.

Find the Right Check-in Balance

Do not check in with your team constantly. It can become more bothersome than helpful. As Ben Bisbee and Kathy Wisniewski suggest in *The Unashamed Guide to Virtual Management*, check in either once a day or once a week—whatever would be most typical for your personality and work style. It's important to check in though. Even though your office has become mostly virtual, do not be an absent manager.

Get to Know Your Team to Promote Work-from-Home Productivity

Take this time to get to know your team better. Simple, free tests like [16personalities](#) can give you greater insight into what tasks on which your team members will excel, how their work styles vary, and how to promote remote work productivity. Assessments such as [CliftonStrengths](#) offer more in-depth characteristics about your team but require a fee.



When you are touching base with your employees, ask them when they are most productive at home. While normal business hours are 8 to 5, the construction business are typically 7-3:30, your team might find they might find they are most productive at 6 p.m. If your business allows for flexibility, **consider letting them work during times when they will be more effective employees instead.**

PRODUCTIVITY AT HOME FOR BUSINESS OWNERS

As we all stare down this pandemic and figure out how to manage it, your company is adapting to a virtual work environment. If you do not have policies in place already, write them: what is required from your remote workers, how you will conduct virtual performance reviews (tip: always use video!), and what happens if the amount of work to do is increased/decreased. Ask employees what's working and what's not if this is your first time without a physical office space. **By setting these remote work policies now, your business will be even more prepared and productive in the future.**

Hold all-staff meetings every other week to check in on your employees, and have fun with them!

Leave some time at the end for office trivia or, if you are giving a presentation, use pictures, videos, or even [memes](#) to engage your employees. No matter what, it's crucial to keep your employees informed.

Professional and educational development are important, even when everything is virtual. Find webinars, articles, etc. that will boost your skills, and pass that along to your team. Let them network with people in the industry online, ask them to come up with a presentation on some aspect of your

business that they're really good at for a virtual lunch and learn, or even send them books to read to promote learning and engagement.



COVID-19 prevents teams from meeting in person, but there are still plenty of ways to stay engaged and keep others engaged, too. As we all wait to get back into our offices, taking into account the high importance of maintaining workplace dialog and communication open will help set the stage for continuous productivity and engagement. And while these tips may help boost productivity at home, many of them will apply to our physical offices too!