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10 Work From Home Tips During COVID-19 for Insurance Professionals

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7 MIN READ

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The COVID-19 pandemic has changed our world in the blink of an eye. Our economy, our social lives and even our jobs are immensely different today than they were just a few weeks ago. Four years ago, a [2016 Gallup survey](#) found that 43 percent of employees in the U.S. work remotely at least part of the time. During the past two weeks, that number has skyrocketed. As many of us shift to working from home, we are all searching for ways to make this experience more bearable, even productive. And on top of that, in the insurance industry, we are also trying to figure out how to keep our operations running while maintaining our focus on restoring lives, even as we are away from our offices. I've been a work-from-home employee since before working from home was cool. I began my career using dial-up to access the network. I carried a beeper so I could be in touch at all times. Now, technology has evolved to allow us to be far more productive working at home than in the early days of my career. In addition to using technology to my advantage, I've found several strategies that have helped me to be a successful and productive remote employee. As many employees in the U.S. and even worldwide are now working remotely, I'd like to share some of these strategies in the hopes that it will help you in your transition to working from home.

Staying Connected

We work on teams. We work for people. We work with people. We have partners. We have employees. We have clients. A key strategy for success in working from home is effective communication. [One study](#) found that only seven percent of communication is verbal. So what makes up the rest of our communication? It's body language, tone, facial expressions and eye contact. Much of this non-verbal communication can be lost as we transition to working from home. So how do we overcome our new virtual communication handicap as we work from home during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Over-Communicate

It is critical that we stay in touch with each other. While we can't share small updates or ask quick questions around the water cooler, there are plenty of other ways to ensure this communication happens. There are many instant messenger and collaboration tools like Microsoft Teams and Slack, and our good old friend—email! We must step up our digital communication game.

Practice Good Email Etiquette

Speaking of email, now more than ever is an excellent time to review the basics of good email etiquette. Written words are a display of professionalism. We are moving fast these days and we are all at risk of making typing mistakes. Proofread every email. Written words can communicate tone—tone that may or may not have been intended. Be careful with the way you approach your emails to remain professional for your intended audience.

Leverage Video Conferencing

Whenever possible, video conferencing can help act as an acceptable substitute for conversations where an extra measure of non-verbal communication is important. Whether it be a job interview, a one-on-one check-in with an employee or a team meeting, a video conference can help everyone feel a more human connection—something we all need right now.

Be Aware of Personalities

Be aware of the personalities of the people you work with—especially your own. Some people are more reserved than others, while others tend to dominate the conversation. This might make it difficult for an individual to speak up on the phone. Make sure everyone has an opportunity to be heard.

Not Out of Sight, Out of Mind

Every one of us has important work to do. But our work is all part of an important ecosystem of value that we create for our customers. That work must be visible to our teams, our leaders and everyone we might collaborate with to ensure the ecosystem remains healthy.

Provide Regular Updates

A weekly status report can go a long way toward keeping your work visible to your colleagues. For example, consider sharing a regular update on your claims. Relatedly, when you receive an update from someone else, take the time to read it, digest it and ask questions related to the work you are doing.

Project Yourself

Star Trek portrayed some pretty cool technology that allowed Captain Kirk of the Star Ship Enterprise to have Scotty “beam him up.” In reality, we may not be very far away from holographic technology that may someday allow us to do some interesting things with remote presence (did you know the hologram market is projected to be worth [4 billion by 2024?](#)) Until then, consider using strategies that will virtually project ourselves into our remote offices. What do we mean by this? Speak up in meetings. Your voice should be heard. Be available online. Your presence should be felt. Volunteer for assignments. Your work should be seen.

Cultivate Friendships

For most of us, we spend more time with our coworkers than we do our own families. A [2017 study](#) found that employees who felt they had a “work family” were up to 84 percent happier, more connected and more successful in their jobs. It is vitally important that we continue to foster friendships among our coworkers. When you join a conference call, consider spending the first few minutes chatting like you would around the watercooler. “Hey, how are you doing? How is your new baby? What are you doing to stay sane during this crazy time?” That investment in time will pay exponential dividends both for you and for those you work with.

Maintain a Professional Worksite

I am convinced that we will all look back at this time of crisis and find a multitude of silver linings. One of my favorite things right now is the sweet background noises of working parents juggling their daily work alongside families all at home. Even at this moment, I am sharing an office with my 15-year-old son who is working on his online assignments for high school. While these arrangements certainly put some added stress on employees, it is also a time that we can all offer understanding and empathy for each other. We will get to know each other in ways we would not otherwise have been able. Even still, the below work from home tips during COVID-19 can help you to maintain a professional work environment despite these unique and challenging circumstances we find ourselves in.

Find a Comfortable Place to Work

You may not already have a fully outfitted home office. Invest in an ergonomic office chair. Your back will thank you. Try to find a room with a window. The sunlight will do your soul some good. Pick a room with a door. You’ll need it when you need some quiet time to concentrate.

Beware of the Speakerphone

Speakerphones have notoriously poor sound quality. Experiment with the various forms of teleconference at your disposal from your cell phone, to headphones to digital calls from your laptop. Figure out which one has the best sound quality and stick with it. We are all taxing phone systems far beyond typical, so make sure you have a backup in case one system starts to fail.

Make Yourself Up Every Day

I know it is tempting to roll out of bed and fall right into your office chair. Everyone loves a good pajama day every once in a while. But pajamas signal to your brain that it’s time for bed. You ultimately won’t be as productive as you might have been. You will likely feel better about the work you do in a day and be more productive if you look the part. A [2014 study](#) focused around a Chinese travel company, Ctrip, measured productivity for call center staff who were given the option of working from home for nine months. The study found that their staff completed 13.5 percent more calls than the staff in the office, there was 50 percent less attrition and employees reported higher job satisfaction. As the insurance industry continues to shift and stabilize its remote operations, I am confident in our collective ability to continue to maintain our services and productivity, while adapting to new methods and ways to help restore the lives of our customers. We are all engaged in a massive, worldwide work-from-home experiment that I believe is going to forever change the way we work for the better.



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