

100 IDEAS FOR WORKING FROM HOME

Rituals that shape your work day

1. Establish transition rituals for when you "go to work". And when you "come home".
2. Don't just wander directly from your bed to the computer.
3. Don't check your emails in bed.
4. Wait with starting work until your normal time, even if you no longer spend time on transport.
5. Do not stay "at work" longer than normal.
6. Take a walk with a podcast in your ear before going to work.
7. Read a chapter in a novel after the kids have left. Candlelight and a good cup of coffee.
8. Put on some loud music if you need to shift your brain into gear.
9. Get dressed for work before "showing up" – this will also improve your online meetings.
10. Use your work mug. The one from which you only drink mediocre, cold coffee. Things trigger thoughts.
11. Call your mother when you are off since you no longer have to be stuck in rush hour traffic. Good deeds and love are good just because.
12. Establish a fixed routine where you go for a walk when you get off work; that way you can "come home from work". You can of course always take the bike.
13. Enjoy your time off work with a good conscience.

A small home office

14. Find a set place at home from where you always work. Preferably a place with a door that can be shut. [Physiotherapists do not seem to recommend the bed].
15. Think in terms of beauty and stimulating environments. Not just in terms of a work environment. For instance, you could buy a bouquet of flowers every week to decorate your home office.
16. Establish a professional environment and room for your home office, and make sure to take short breaks and move about frequently. Write while in a work position.
17. Table, chair, light, keyboard, monitor. Headset?
18. Good acoustics in your work space make it easier to hold online meetings, and you will experience less disturbance from other noises.
19. Should you build a shed in the garden or set up a local shared office?
20. You do not need to share everything. It is OK to have a professional and private personality.
21. Consider if there are places at home where you do not want a camera.
22. Consider if there is work you do not want to do from home. Professional arguments or difficult conversations perhaps?
23. Doesn't working from home just mean "not at the office"? In nature, at the library, at a café?

Time for immersing yourself

24. Focus. You can accomplish more in a couple of hours with peace and quiet than in a whole day where you also have to provide homework help or listen to your significant other's online meetings.
25. Establish peace and quiet at work. Physically and mentally. Noise and interruptions from other people and digital devices make it harder to concentrate, so you can get stressed out more easily.
26. Ruhe-tage [this is a German word that is used some places to describe a weekly morning where everyone in the department has peace and quiet to read trade literature, get to grips with complicated tasks, etc.].
27. Quiet time, 1-2 hours that are marked in the calendar for individual reflection. This is time during which you are unavailable to answer emails or take the phone.
28. Activate your auto-reply when you are unavailable for a longer period of time.
29. The brain works perfectly well without Wi-Fi. Consider going for a walk while contemplating a work-related challenge or lie down in a hammock.
30. Make it easier for your colleagues to immerse themselves. Are you sure they need to be CCed on the next email?
31. Deadlines are good. They allow you to prioritise the chaos.
32. And then it's time for a break.

Breaks are power

33. Take breaks. Particularly if you have a lot of online meetings. Otherwise you will be thinking like a tipsy person by the end of the afternoon.
34. Add your breaks to your planner to make sure you take them.
35. Mental work is hard. So don't think too much during your break. Instead, mow the lawn or get the washing machine going.
36. Use the auto-reply during your lunch break so that your customers and colleagues don't panic. And so you can have peace of mind.
37. Make your own canteen. Fill up the fridge with nice snacks.
38. Lunch dancing with your significant other, who is also working from home. Perhaps each in your own room if you need to build up courage first...
39. Synchronised workout with your colleagues. Three, two, one... now
40. Enjoy your ability to go out and get some fresh air, and maybe even experience some daylight in the winter.

Chitchat by the coffee machine

41. A common digital coffee break with no more than four people from your team [don't be more or the online conversation won't flow well]. Structure it so that you take coffee breaks with different groups every week, such that everyone gets to talk to everyone eventually.

42. Curb your enthusiasm for technology. Supplement with live people.
43. On the flip side: Immerse yourself in your enthusiasm for technology and discover how you can play and be informal digitally.
44. "Guess a home". A colleague presents pictures, and the others have to guess.
45. "Know our colleague": Send close-up pictures [not in the me-too way], and have the others guess who it is.
46. Call people instead of just automatically sending an email. For example every day at 10:00, while you are making a cup of coffee or tea.
47. Colleague roulette: Draw lots about who should go co-walking together this week. Possibly with a weekly theme or just professional sparring.
48. Find a common subject. A project, volunteer work, a common Spanish course.
49. Be honest. If you did not meet for a Friday drink and bingo before corona, is there a need to introduce that now?

External inspiration

50. Book inspiring online presentations [or physical ones if you are permitted]. It will generate inspiration and new ideas across the entire organisation.
51. Morning of learning: Discuss the day's news from all over the world between 09:00 and 09:15 every day. Then you are ready to face the day.
52. Reading club. Read a book, which you can then discuss during an online or face-to-face meeting.
53. Online conferences. There is a wealth of free conferences and presentations.
54. Professional online forums where you can discuss nerdy subjects with people outside work.
55. Professional sparring and social relations do not need to be limited to colleagues. Perhaps it is an occasion to discover what the other people in your network know and can do?
56. Hold a 10-15 minute online presentation for your colleagues on a subject that you are enthusiastic about. You will all learn something, and you will train your online presentation technique. And you could record it and perhaps use it in other contexts.

Involved management – from a distance

57. Don't think of what you are doing solely as a corona experience. Think in terms of sustainable, long-term work from home. How should it work?
58. Take time for management. It can no longer be done by doing the rounds at the office. [It might not even have been possible to handle it that way then].

59. Focus on quality of work instead of people sitting at the monitor. Show trust. The most effective employees may be the ones that turn off their phones to concentrate.
60. Pay particular attention to new employees, transferred employees and temporary employees, who do not have strong existing relations.
61. Systematically ensure frequent conversations of an authentic and, in certain respects, coaching nature. It brings people closer and generates a connection, a feeling of community, meaning and direction.
62. It is easier to work from home if you have a large house with lots of room and no small children. What can you do for those who have a harder time?
63. Ask your employees what works for them. They have certainly given it a lot of thought, so you might as well ask.
64. Treat your employees to a work-from-home goodie bag with: chocolate, liquorice, good coffee/tea, toasted onions [which everyone knows can spice up a bland lunch], a potted plant... Come up with more options. Use the money you have saved in the canteen on conferences and product celebrations.

65. Open-house meetings without an agenda as online meetings. This lets your employees ask you about everything going on in the organisation which they cannot follow from a distance.
66. Establish a mini think-tank on the topic or the organisation, which can help come up with good ideas for improving satisfaction and motivation. It does not only have to be of interest to management.
67. Requirement to meet at the office one or two days a week so that you can meet physically. [If that is permitted]. Do something together on those days.

Enthusiastic online meetings and workshops

68. Online meetings are just meetings. What applies in the real world is still valid. Remember to have a meeting chairperson, an agenda and a recap.
69. Plan and prepare thoroughly. Test.
70. Involvement, commitment and variation are three important keywords.
71. Short breaks – and MANY short breaks. Minimum 5-10 minutes per hour.
72. Everyone needs to have their camera on. One cannot say it enough. Video rules. It is about trust.
73. Use a countdown clock [not just a regular clock] in the breaks, and ask people to "stay" in the meeting but to turn off the sound and camera. Bigtimer.net works well.

74. Again: Variation is the key to holding long meetings or workshops online. Switch between presentations with slides, without slides, group work in break-out rooms, plenary discussions, presentations of group work, group work while out for a walk [e.g. separate meeting booked with 3-4 people. Participants log in with their mobile phones, put on their headset and walk while discussing the subject].
75. Continuously use different formats. For example, for common discussions: you could ask questions along the way, put up your hand, ask in the chat, etc.
76. Eat lunch together in groups of 3-5 in break-out rooms. This allows for informal chat.
77. Make sure that you have assigned three important roles for online workshops: facilitator, chat moderator and IT expert.
78. Make sure to include everyone in the informal chat that takes place in conjunction with the meeting, even if someone is working from home while others are present.
79. For online full-day workshops: Send a bag with lunch and/or snacks home to all participants. It starts conversations – so say those who have tried it.
80. Set time for small talk at the beginning of the meeting – or log in to the meeting a few minutes earlier and talk to those who have done the same.
81. Hold online meetings when it makes sense – otherwise give your eyes and brain a break.
82. Use smart cooperation tools for involvement: Mentimeter or just Menti: Kahoot's more serious cousin – good for voting, word clouds, etc. Miro.com: common whiteboard where you can brainstorm together on any subject. Slack/Yammer: common, simple and user-friendly communication tool.

Glitter on a weekday

83. Transfer DKK 10-20 to your colleagues/employees on Friday for sweets.
84. Online concert which all employees [and their families] can listen to.
85. Do the Bring Sally Up Squat Challenge. With a camera, of course [YouTube is your friend].
86. Don't try to organise a sing-along. It has been tried. It's awkward.
87. Home office equipment bingo.
88. Online beer tasting – Friday bar. Send a case of beer home to everyone and get a professional from a brewery to guide you through it.
89. Same as above just with chocolate.
90. Online Escape Room [Google is your friend].
91. Play Charades online. For example on Skribbl.io.

92. Get your colleagues to focus on those small victories that improve energy levels – such as naming the best idea of the month.
93. Wednesday bingo with cool prizes. [One sheet should suffice].
94. If everyone throws a little glitter on each other, it will be more fun for everyone than if there is only one person responsible for the glitter. That said, some people will be more natural at it than others.

The mental push

95. Accept that you cannot be effective at all times. [This was probably also the case back at the office... but shhh].
96. Now you have the chance to be really good at working from home. It was a trend even before corona; it has just been adopted much more now by the companies.
97. You cannot eat lunch with your colleagues, but your neighbour is probably home. Voilà. New times, new opportunities, new people.
98. Time saved on ironing and transport. Shouldn't you spend that time on something that improves your quality of life?
99. Lots of people choose quite voluntarily to work from home because this lets them do something cool. Translators, authors, self-employed people of all sorts. Maybe they are on to something?
100. Take a moment to think about the people on the front lines of society, while you were able to read this article with a cup of coffee in your hand and without wearing a face shield.