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Living & Working Remotely: Three Factors to Consider

Daphne Stanford · Wednesday, November 23rd, 2016

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If you're an introverted type who tends to hole up at home, rather than go out, or if you're a self-starter, you might prefer to conduct much of your day-to-day business remotely, rather than commute to an office every day. Here are three factors to consider in order to live a healthy and productive existence while working from home, regardless of how often you leave the comfort of your slippers and pajamas.

Work Vs Life: Balance is Key

It used to be that France was touted as the cultural ideal when it came to a life-work balance—and perhaps there's still truth to that, in terms of [hours worked per year](#). However, there's also a newfound respect for flexibility in the workplace: that is, the ability to have a flexible work schedule in which hours are not strictly based on a 9-5 schedule, but instead are extended into the evening and weekends, at times, with the freedom to take part of an afternoon or morning off. There's also the option of working remotely or from home that's becoming more widely accepted: [according to Fast Company](#), a recent survey of business leaders at the Global Leadership Summit in London predicted over 50 percent of their companies' workforce will work remotely by 2020.

[The New York Times](#) recently profiled Sara Adams of CECP, a company that incorporated a pilot program encouraging employees to adjust their schedules so that they either worked remotely or adjusted office time twice a week. Adams says she wished they had tested stress levels before and after the experimental schedule, since she and many others noticed a dramatic difference in the way they felt and their ability to reach goals. The bottom line is, flexible work schedules are becoming increasingly popular and in-demand, and companies only stand to benefit from listening to what employees say they want, since failing to allow workers a more variable and convenient schedule results in faster rates of burnout and employee dissatisfaction.

There's also [the ROWE model](#)—Results-Only Work Environment—developed by Cali Ressler and Jody Thompson, which bases employee evaluations on performance, rather than presence. Although significant longitudinal data about ROWE have not yet been recorded, Phillis Moen and Erin Kelly of the University of Minnesota did do some initial impact research and found there was increased job satisfaction and decreased work-family conflict. Though the findings were limited in scope and duration, it seems as if increased attention to accountability and performance—as opposed to hours spent in the office—could be a game changer, in terms of transforming the traditional daily grind-style work schedule.

Contrary to what many employers might expect, employees are skilled at setting up a system of what works best for them in terms of compartmentalizing their time, setting up a work space, and

communicating with their work contacts from their home office. Take [Nathan from Appnovation](#), who has discovered techniques to ensure his remote work performance would succeed: good communication—with the help of a high-quality headset and speakerphone option; daily mental preparation to replace of the morning commute; frequent breaks in order to encourage creativity and mental breakthroughs; maintaining a social life during lunch breaks, evenings, and weekends; and breaking up one's daily routine in order to vary work locations.

Taking Care of Oneself: Healthcare Options

Considering the percentage of the population that lives in a rural area without access to a lot of infrastructure and fixtures considered basic to most cities and metropolitan areas: schools, clinics, libraries, malls, and supermarkets. As a result, many of the modern conveniences taken for granted by city residents are either nonexistent or accessible only by driving an hour or so out of town.

One major, ongoing source of need is that of reliable, professional doctors and nurses to treat patients with everyday concerns as well as long-term illnesses and conditions. Remote counseling or telemedicine is especially useful and in demand, as types of medical care that are seen as non-emergency, by nature, are likely among the first to disappear or be deemed unnecessary—such as counseling.

There are a number of [benefits of counseling through telemedicine](#), including more immediate access to help and better quality of care. Since there is no longer any need to worry about commute time, wait time, and scheduling issues, the process of meeting with a counselor is much more efficient. Also, the quality of care doesn't suffer since patients from rural areas have access to the same counselors as do city dwellers. The challenge of remote counseling is how to establish trust and confidence while communicating via Skype or phone, as opposed to in person. However, for those patients who are more dramatically introverted, the extra distance could prove to be a helpful and empowering environment.

Finances: Take Charge & Keep Learning

For those of us employed full-time through a traditional employer, taxes are usually relatively straightforward—whether we're working remotely or not. However, for those of us who have joined the new gig economy, taxes can resemble a complicated maze of forms and deductions that can feel overwhelming to navigate on our own. Short of consulting with an accountant, there are a few resources you can consult in order to make the process as painless as possible. Intuit has an excellent [guide to self-employed expenses and tax deductions](#) on their website. And of course, you need to set aside a portion of your income for federal Medicare and Social Security taxes that would ordinarily be taken out, automatically—also referred to as [self-employment tax](#).

If you are the head of a not-for-profit organization, you probably know that nonprofits are generally tax-exempt, though there are [some exceptions](#), so be sure to do your proverbial homework. The IRS has a [virtual workshop](#) all about taxes available on their website for small business owners, and the [Small Business Administration](#) (SBA) has a number of related tools. [Square](#) also provides a few helpful resources for self-employed professionals as well as small business owners, if that applies to you.

Artists and creative professionals, especially, should arm themselves with as much information about self-employment taxes and financial management as possible. This awareness should include informing oneself about health insurance options. For the latter concern, consider joining an organization like [Freelancer's Union](#), which, in addition to providing advice on filing taxes and navigating deductions, also partners up with reputable health insurance providers so as to help you avoid a situation that lands you in the emergency room with a broken ankle and no way to pay your medical bills.

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Whether you have a disability that limits your day-to-day mobility, you live in a rural area, or you simply prefer to work remotely due to the nature of your work, I hope you've come away with a few reasons to feel secure in your current or future plans for working remotely. Here's to a diverse workforce and a future full of different possibilities and alternatives to the traditional nine-to-five grind.

Image Source: [David Mulder](#)

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