

# Handling The Challenges Of Remote Working



A flexible work schedule that includes the option to telecommute from home, is something that many employees look for today because it allows them to have a better work-life balance and get rid of the daily commute.

For an organization, a flex-time schedule is a great recruiting and retention tool and often leads to higher productivity.

That said - there are still plenty of challenges of working remotely. Here are eight of the most common challenges and how to tackle them.

## Challenge 1: Time Management and Routine

Home requires a certain amount of self-discipline because you will have to manage your own timeline and be responsible enough to meet deadlines without reminders from your coworkers.

For many remote workers, this is the biggest challenge of working remotely, whether part or full-time.

Establish a regular routine and schedule. If your team works across different time zones, identify the times when most of (if not all) the team is available for collaboration.

When setting your schedule, allow yourself some time to wake up and take care of a few things before sitting down for work for the day, and plan a lunch break in the middle of your shift.

Avoid chores, errands, and other distractions until outside of your working hours. If you were working in an office, you wouldn't be available to do those things anyway.

If you can't set up a designated home office, dedicate an area of your home for work and do your best to avoid it when you are otherwise off the clock. At the end of the day, walk away from that dedicated work area, and stay away from it until you return to work the following day.

Using it for pleasure will make it hard to focus on work. As tempting as it may be to work from the bed while binging on Netflix, you certainly will struggle with routine and time management this way.

*Working from home gives you the flexibility to adjust your schedule as you need to, but it doesn't mean you should just work whenever you feel like it.*

## **Challenge 2: Malfunctioning Technology**

There's nothing worse than when you suddenly cannot connect to the internet or are dealing with the Windows blue screen of death. Technology is a necessary evil when it comes to remote work.

Though you can't stop technology from malfunctioning occasionally, you can rely on the use of cloud-based business tools and software, such as PLANERGY, Microsoft Office or Google Docs, and Asana to keep things running smoothly despite a technological mishap.

Cloud-based software only requires an internet connection, so if your internet service fails you, you should be able to go to the library or the coffee shop where Wi-Fi is available and pick right up where he left.

If you're dealing with a malfunctioning computer, you can use your mobile device, borrow a friend's device, or visit the library to get right back to work.

## **Challenge 3: Keeping Morale Up**

Despite the fact that employees with flexible work often have higher moral and enjoy their job responsibilities more than those in a traditional office environment, it can still be a challenge for them from time to time.

Working from home often means isolation and because of that, you won't get a pat on the back from your teammates or manager for a job well done.

One of the ways to solve this issue involves using real-time communication methods outside of email. Using Skype or a Slack channel to communicate with your teammates and superiors can help you feel like you have more of a traditional pay working relationship.

Consider setting up a water cooler Slack channel for chit-chat so coworkers can get to know one another better even though they are working a remote job.

You can also request regular check-ins with your supervisor to discuss the progress. If you find your supervisor is only focusing on areas where improvement is needed, specifically ask about what you are doing correctly.

## **Challenge 4: Sharpening Skills**

Depending on your work-at-home role, you may have to take care of your own career advancement by improving your skills on your own.

If your organization doesn't offer internal opportunities for advancement or provide ongoing training, then find and attend classes in your field.

You don't have to pay a lot of money to do this because there are a lot of no-cost professional courses available to help you get started.

Aside from enrolling in courses, you can also read books, magazines, and industry publications to keep up with the latest news and trends in your field.

## **Challenge 5: Forgetting to Take Breaks**

When you're working alone, it's easy to stay in front of the computer during your lunch. Sure, you're not paying full attention to the computer because you're also eating a meal. But, it's important to get up and take a real lunch break to give your brain time to rest.

Giving yourself breathing space between tasks is important to both your productivity and your physical health.

The average computer-based worker should take a 15-minute rest for every two hours of work to prevent burning out their mental capacity.

Taking these breaks can be difficult if you don't have a dedicated room to escape to that serves as your break room and there isn't anyone to share a coffee with. Take a virtual coffee break with a friend or co-worker by having a cup of coffee and a video chat.

It's even better if you can go to the coffee shop or take yourself to lunch.

## **Challenge 6: Lack of Interaction**

When you work from home and are at the computer all day, you get plenty of digital interaction. But, this doesn't replace the need or desire for face-to-face interaction. Make it a point to get out of the house as often as possible with friends and family.

Even if it's just to take the dog for a walk with your neighbor, you'll be able to socialize a bit, which will help keep your spirits up.

If you don't want to work from a coffee shop, look into renting a local co-working space a couple of days a month so you can get out, but still have a productive workday.

## **Challenge 7: Distractions**

At home, there's lots of potential for distractions, such as an unexpected phone call or visitor at the door. Your family may have unrealistic expectations of what

you can do since you're home all the time.

Discuss your job with your partner and children about disruptions during work hours and make your schedule clear in advance when possible.

Though working from home is a benefit to your family members, it's essential to set and maintain reasonably boundaries - and the same can be said for friends and neighbors, too.

Place a note on your office door that says I'll be available after 6 p.m., to let people know not to bother you.

As if the in-person distractions weren't enough, some remote workers don't need to use tracking software to track their actions on the computer while they are on the clock. In these situations, websites like Facebook, YouTube, and BuzzFeed can become major time-sucking distractions.

When you want to take a break from work, it's easy to think you'll check Facebook for a few minutes. Next thing you know, you'll look up at the clock and it's an hour later.

To prevent these kinds of distractions from derailing your progress throughout the day, use browser plugins and/or parental controls to block access to your social media and other websites you are tempted by during your work hours.

## **Challenge 8: Tracking Progress**

As a remote worker, there's no one there to directly monitor your work and keep track of your progress. That's why you have to advocate for your own success and advancement.

Do this by making notes of the projects you've participated in, steps you've taken to improve your skills, and your productivity at various points throughout the month.

This information will be useful during your regular reviews with managers and supervisors within the company. Keeping notes is far better than trying to remember everything off the top of your head under pressure.

# Challenge 9: Neglecting Self-Care

When a flexible working option is available, companies see that absenteeism drops a bit because of the flexibility it offers. But for people out there who are permanently remote, there's often a sense of guilt for taking any time off - mostly because if we're unable to move, there's still the option to work from the couch or the bed.

It's easier to justify working through illness since you're already home, whereas, in an office, you'd have no problem leaving and going home to rest.

To help keep employees focused on healthy self-care habits, institute a quick and easy paperless process for taking time off or calling in sick. This way, no one has to call their supervisor while feeling under the weather. It'll make it easier for them to prioritize well-being.

For organizations that are wary of allowing their staff to telecommute due to fear that employees will abuse the privilege, there are ways to keep your team on track.

Clearly outline your work-from-home expectations, set productivity goals, and conduct progress check-ins on a regular basis.

Knowing what is expected, as well as knowing they'll have to meet with a manager or another team member will help keep your remote employees focused on their tasks and encourage them to work their full shifts to get the job done.

Ultimately, there are distractions in the traditional workplace that disrupt focus and create productivity issues.

Yes, challenges of working remotely exist, but many successful companies offer the option to telecommute - and many startups today work with fully remote teams across the globe. Using a platform like PLANERGY can simplify working with a remote team.

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