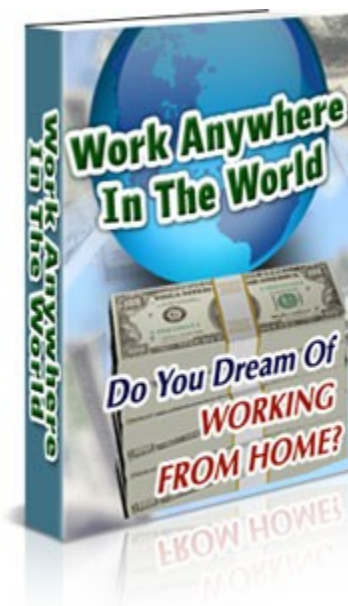


Telecommuting: Work Anywhere In The World!



Brought to you by
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Introduction

Telecommuting, also referred to as working from home, is a highly popular subject these days. Many people are seeking ways to avoid stressful commutes and hectic offices, so that they could enjoy their personal surroundings while working.

Working from home requires a blend of discipline, effective communication skills, and resourcefulness. If you are considering telecommuting, whether that be with a current job or a new one, this guide provides a solid overview of what you can expect.

While there are many advantages to working from home, it's not everybody's preferred choice.

Is Your Job Suitable For Telecommuting?

If you're currently employed and wishing to telecommute, you should ask yourself these essential questions:

1. **Is your job location dependent?**

Some types of jobs simply need you to be there, physically. In those situations, there's nothing you can do about it except change jobs. Later on you can read about the types of telecommuting jobs, and even how to find one.

2. **Can your job be completed outside of the office?**

This is essential, because the goal of telecommuting is to work from home. Some jobs aren't suitable for full time telecommuting, but you may want to consider if a part time schedule would be appropriate.

3. **Are you disciplined?**

Discipline is key to successfully work from home. It's very easy to say you are disciplined, but you truly won't know until you're in the thick of it. Yet, it's quite important to give some serious thought about. After all, working from home typically means with little supervision.

If you're job focuses more on project deadlines versus how many hours a day you work, you'll find it easier. Simply put, if you aren't getting the projects done someone's going to notice.

4. **Do you have the equipment and supplies you need to work from home?**

Maybe this is assumed by most, but a lot of people don't realize the actual equipment and supplies they will need. You can read more about this further on in the guide.

5. **Can you access your company's network from outside the office?**

Most companies that support telecommuting will already have a procedure put in place for those outside the office to remotely and securely connect to the company's network. Yet you will likely need Internet access, and you can also find out if that's something your company is willing to pay for.

Telecommuting: The Ups And Downs

Working from home isn't always what people dream it to be. There are advantages and disadvantages just like any job. The biggest challenge telecommuters face is staying focused and disciplined. Focus can be difficult when you aren't in an office environment with peers who are also focused on work. Discipline is a tough one as well – because when you work from home, you're often faced with many distractions.

Discipline and focus go hand in hand. If you aren't set up properly in an office environment at home, you'll have an even tougher time. Distractions such as paying bills, cleaning the house, and socializing for example, can shake your focus and ability to get your job done.

Working from home doesn't necessarily mean “work whenever you want”. Most telecommuters have to stick to a typical 9-5 schedule, and often interact throughout the day with other team members and/or management.

What a lot of telecommuters actually end up doing is working TOO much, to try and overcompensate because of the impression others might have about their productivity (since they aren't physically in the office). This isn't an ideal situation either, because by working beyond the normal business hours you're expected to, you just end up burning the wick at both ends. It can be difficult to achieve a balance between work and home life.

Yet while focus and discipline can become challenges in any telecommuter's day to day life, there are still many advantages to working from home.

For example, not only do you save money on commuting to the office, but more importantly you remove the STRESS of commuting. In today's world, commuting in the rush hours is a huge source of people's daily stress. To be able to wake up and walk five feet to your office is irresistible to most.

The other great thing about eliminating a commute is the time saved. Time is so precious in today's busy world. For many, just having the time to send your kids off to school and greet them at the end of their day is priceless. For others, simply having the time to sit down to a hot dinner before late evening is a joy.

Another great plus to telecommuting is LESS meetings. Meetings drain so much of our time while in the office, that there can be many days where NO work can get done due to meetings. Working from home most often results in being pulled into less meetings, and not being interrupted at your desk so much. Hence, many telecommuters' productivity actually increases dramatically when given the actual opportunity to get some work done.

Key Success Factors

If you plan on working from home, whether full time or part time, you need to prepare yourself beforehand.

Create A Functional And Quiet Work Area

This is one of the most crucial factors to consider, especially if you plan to work from home full time. If at all possible, you should set your office up in

a separate room. This will provide you with the best environment to work, with minimal distractions and plenty of room.

If a separate room isn't possible, try to find an area of your home that's quiet, and not frequented a lot by other members of the family. Having a quiet work area not only increases your productivity, but is sometimes essential when having meetings or discussions over the phone.

Your work area also needs to be functional. You need adequate room to get your job done as well as adequate lighting.

Pay Attention To Ergonomics

You might not want to invest in an expensive office chair at first, but it's something you should seriously consider budgeting for. Since you'll be sitting at a desk most of the day, you should be comfortable and not putting any excess strain on yourself. These days you can find office chairs that provide ergonomic support for your back and arms.

Have All Required Equipment And Supplies

Do you know what equipment and supplies you'll need to work from home? Now is the time to make that list, and be prepared before any telecommuting begins. A lot of people who work from home need a computer and Internet connection at minimum.

Other things to consider are items such as a cell phone, printer, scanner, fax machine, etc. Get a list created and sit down with your boss to review it. Find out what equipment and supplies you're responsible for, and what the company will provide.

Identify Your Working Hours

Not all telecommuting jobs let you adapt working hours that are suitable to you, as some jobs require fixed hours throughout the day. But if you do have the flexibility of starting earlier/later in the day, and ending earlier/later in the day, now is the time to identify that.

Discuss your preferences with your boss, and also explain the reasons why you want to work those hours. Most jobs can be flexible within a couple of hours. When considering what time of morning you'll start work, think of any home life responsibilities you might have. Things such as getting the kids off to school for example. Also take note whether you are more alert and productive in the mornings, afternoons or evenings.

Learn How To Communicate Effectively

Since you aren't communicating with your peers and management face to face while working from home, effective communication is critical to being successful. You will likely have to rely on email and phone most often. In many sectors, employees communicate via email all throughout the day, so it really pays off to be able to write effectively.

Creating emails that are professional and to the point are key. You should always keep in mind that others' time is just as valuable as your own, so avoid sending emails that aren't necessary. Be concise and always present the facts for a problem, solution or information.

To keep your emails professional, make sure your spelling and grammar are correct, and avoid things such as "smilies", capital letters, and using a lot of color when unnecessary. Also, avoid personal emails – always assume that your emails can be passed around the office.

It's also really helpful to use bullet points or lists when applicable. Readers

find it easier to scan information presented this way, rather than read paragraphs upon paragraphs of text. Highlight important areas, especially questions that you're posing to someone. The last thing you want to happen is having to send more emails because the receiver didn't notice or acknowledge your principal questions.

You may find yourself on the phone more often than if you were in the office, obviously. Do not fall into the trap of "hiding" away behind your desk at home, and alienating yourself from your peers. Do not hesitate to pick up the phone, and maintain consistent communication. This not only helps you feel like more of a member of the team, but also provides a good reminder to the rest of your team. Sometimes your peers (and maybe even management) in the office benefit from some daily interaction with telecommuters.

When working from home, it's essential to stay informed about what's going on in the office. The onus is on you though, to make sure this happens. Remember, you're benefiting from working from home, so you need to be aware of how to make it all work.

A lot of times telecommuters can suffer "out of the loop" syndrome – meaning, they're missing out on unofficial office gossip and events. Many times those who don't work in the office are the last ones to hear about office changes, personnel news, etc. You can improve this situation, by staying in contact with your peers and management.

You have to work harder at it than if you were physically at work, but only you can decide if it's worth it in the long run.

Managing Expectations

This ties in with the previous section. As was said earlier, the onus is on you to raise the level of communication and stay on top of things. The onus is on you here as well, to manage expectations between your management and those depending on you.

You should be fully aware of what your boss expects from you day to day. Managing expectations means that you know what's expected of you and you step up to the plate. For example, don't wait for your boss to ask you the status of a project, instead provide them with a weekly update.

If you're working with a team on a project, you should be managing expectations there as well. Providing detailed updates, delivering information to the required parties, creating and keeping to a schedule are all examples.

The key to managing expectations is to communicate – early and often.

How To Maximize Your Productivity At Home

If you want to work from home, then you'll likely want to know how to be a star at your company and an incredible asset. After all, your company isn't going to go for telecommuting if you aren't being productive. The following tips will help you maximize your productivity:

1. **Create a routine for yourself**

Get up at the same time every morning, and try to start and finish work at the same time each day. Creating a routine like this will help you remain focused throughout the day.

2. **Take a lunch break**

You might think you'd be most productive if you worked through the entire day, but that's not necessarily true. First of all, you shouldn't skip meals because you'll feel sluggish and tired in the afternoons. By taking a fixed lunch break, not only will you be more alert for the remainder of the day, but you're giving yourself a break from the office or computer.

3. **If you sit at a computer all day, take frequent 5-10 minute breaks**

By taking frequent small breaks, you give your eyes a rest from the monitor, as well as an opportunity to release any stress and tension.

4. **Minimize external distractions**

Pay attention to what distracts you throughout the day. Is it the radio or television? Or perhaps it's friends calling you, thinking you're home

so why not have a chat? Try to identify your major distractions and then remove them, or at least minimize them.

5. **Know your technical support options**

Many telecommuting jobs require you to work on a computer. You should find out what your company's technical support options are before starting to work from home. Will you be responsible for purchasing and maintaining a computer? This information can affect your choices, so be sure to get all of the details up front.

How To Remain An Asset To Your Company

Working from home sometimes gets a bad rap, because there will always be those who will assume you aren't being productive when you're not in the office. If your boss or manager approves of you working from home, then don't worry about what some others may think, just focus on keeping your boss happy.

One sure way to show your boss and others you mean business is to respond to problems right away, be available throughout the work day, and communicate progress throughout a project.

If you aren't answering the phone or responding to emails, then you will most likely ruffle a few feathers in the office. People who rely on you or work with you in a team need to know that they can reach you. Effective communication is one of the most important facets of making

telecommuting successful for all involved.

Another thing to consider is flexibility. The more flexible you can be for others, the better. For example, someone may need to schedule a late meeting that falls outside of your preferred working hours. If you're flexible enough to be there, you'll show others your commitment.

How To Approach Your Boss About Telecommuting

Do you feel your job is suitable for telecommuting, yet nobody in your company or office works from home? If you're approaching your boss about telecommuting for the first time, then you should be prepared beforehand.

First of all, consider starting out just working from home part time. That way, your boss will feel more at ease and willing to give it a try. Come to an agreement about which days you'll start working from home. Try to come up with solutions and answers to everything before you approach your boss, so it's apparent that you're serious and have done your homework.

How prepared are you to work from home? Do you have the equipment you'll need, such as a computer for example? Do you know if you'll have to provide your own or if the company will supply it? Do you have a functional work area already set up at home? These are all things you should consider before approaching your boss.

Don't forget to highlight all of the many benefits of telecommuting.

Employees who work from home are often times more productive than those

who work in the office. There are less distractions at home, and in fact many telecommuters tend to work more.

Types Of Telecommuting Jobs

Perhaps your current job isn't cut out for telecommuting, or you're seeking new employment. If it's telecommuting you are interested in, there is a huge variety of jobs with varying skill levels to choose from.

This is by no means an exhaustive list of the types of telecommuting jobs available, but it's a great starting point.

Data Entry Jobs

Not much skill is required for this job category. Typically, all you need is a computer and the ability to enter data (and likely an Internet connection). A word to the wise though, there are many companies and folks out there pulling scams on innocent job seekers. Make sure to do your research and look at reputable companies. You'll learn more about finding a telecommuting job in the next chapter.

Data entry can get rather monotonous, but if you lack the skills required for other work at home jobs, it's a great way to get started.

Freelance Writing

A lot of people don't realize the potential income in the writing field. If you have sharp writing skills, this is an area you should definitely take a closer look at. There are many places looking for qualified freelance writers. You can find many websites by simply searching for "freelance writing" at any search engine such as Google.

Freelance writing isn't just about writing for magazines or creating novels. Writers make money doing all sorts of things online and offline. Things such as copywriting, creating technical documents for companies, greeting cards, essays, and much more. Anything that gets written is pretty much fair game. Decide if you want to write for yourself (to get publicized) or for someone else (as a ghostwriter).

Customer Service

Providing customer service over the telephone is another great telecommuting position. Many companies will train you and require little experience. And this type of telecommuting job most often offers flexible hours.

You should have a separate business telephone line as well as a headset. You may even be required to have access to the Internet.

Virtual Assistant

A virtual assistant is somewhat like a work-from-home secretary or office manager. It's an administrative position that can involve a huge variety of tasks. Things such as making appointments, handling research, writing, proof reading, coordination of projects, and bookkeeping are just a few of the many tasks that a VA can take on.

Virtual assistants are often times much more than just a secretary. They offer support throughout an entire business structure, and sometimes also personal support as well. You can find out a lot more about this field by looking online. Simply search the term "virtual assistant" and you'll have plenty of reading material at hand.

How To Find A Telecommuting Job

There are many websites online that display telecommuting jobs. But if your goal is to work from home, you should first identify what it is you'd like to do. Working from home may sound appealing, but that can change depending on what type of work you'll be doing.

Take the time to analyze your skills and choose a profession that's desirable to you. Then seek out jobs in that profession – and they don't necessarily have to be advertised as telecommuting positions. Many companies don't even make their telecommuting positions known to the public because they get bombarded with inquiries from unqualified people.

If you find a position being offered that appeals to you, but doesn't state whether or not you can telecommute, don't hesitate to contact the company. Follow their guidelines for applying for the position, and if you are chosen as a qualified candidate, you can inquire about telecommuting further in the interview process.

It's equally important to create a professional resume which outlines your skills and shows the company that you're qualified for the position. Just because you want to work from home doesn't mean applying for the job is any different than those working in the office.

Telecommuting Myths

Below are five myths that many people mistakenly believe about telecommuting. Remember, working from home is just a change in where you work. The job itself is still what it was in the office.

Myth #1: Life Is Hassle Free!

Think working from home is all roses? Sure it has its advantages but let's stay realistic. Working from home brings its own set of hassles and problems. Not only do you have to set up your office all on your own and have adequate equipment, but you must create an atmosphere suitable for working as well. Other problems that often come up are those that require technical support. If your computer breaks down and you're physically in the office, it's much easier to get support and/or a spare computer to work with. When you're at home, you have to rely on yourself a lot more.

Myth #2: You Don't Have To Deal With Coworkers And Office Politics

While working outside the office secludes you from coworkers somewhat, you have to work even harder at maintaining communication. Especially if you work in a team environment. And those office politics that you miss out on are sometimes important pieces of "unofficial" information that you may be the last one to find out about.

Myth #3: No Need For Daycare

Working from home is not a substitute for daycare. You'll have responsibilities and people relying on you, and can't be expected to get your job done and watch children at the same time. Even if your children are quiet and well behaved, they won't get the attention they deserve if you try to be all things to all people. Realize that working from home is still a REAL job. The moment you start thinking of it as anything other than a real job, you'll run into trouble.

Myth #4: You Can Work Whenever You Want

Maybe if you worked for yourself, you can choose the hours you work. But most people who telecommute are working for a company. Companies have established working hours for a reason. Their clients and people who rely on them need to know their availability. The same applies to you. Although working from home may allow you some flexibility on when you start and end your day, don't confuse it with working for yourself. And on a side note, those that do work for themselves often times work ten times harder due to the makeup of their entrepreneurial personalities and demands of running a business.

Myth #5: Finally, No Distractions

This is your ultimate goal when setting up a home office – create an atmosphere with little to no distractions. Although it should be a goal, do not expect it to be the case all of the time. You'll have different types of

distractions working from home versus being in the office. You'll still need to learn ways to manage those distractions and maximize your productivity.

Summary of Tips

Below is a list of tips that will help you succeed in a telecommuting job. Keep this list near by so you can refer to it often and check off completed tasks. By following these tips, you can maximize your productivity at home.

- Find a quiet place at home to set up an office area
- Get a comfortable chair to take care of your back – ergonomics IS important
- Let friends and family know ahead of time that just because you work from home, doesn't mean you have free time during working hours to socialize
- Create a schedule that is suitable to both you and your employer
- Stay in touch with your coworkers and management
- Remember to take breaks during the day
- Do not skip lunch, the food will act as fuel to help you get through the day
- Create a plan each day so you're aware of what you need to get accomplished
- Provide status updates to your team and/or management on a timely basis
- Minimize your distractions at home
- Test whether or not some light background noise will help you be more productive (such as the radio)

- Know who to contact for technical support

Conclusion

Does working from home still appeal to you? You've just got a solid overview of many aspects of telecommuting. Take some time to carefully review your situation and home life before making any radical decisions. Be honest with yourself and try to picture how you would feel working from home versus being in the office.

Not everybody is cut out for telecommuting, yet if you think you're a good candidate, then by all means follow your goals! You will never truly know until you try.

Make sure you have signed up for the MomsDotComDream newsletter, (if you haven't already!)

You will get instant access to a huge guide full of online job links for moms, home business ideas, and basics for getting started working from home.

You will also receive news from time to time which can help you towards your goal of working from home – especially about marketing yourself and your business online.

Go to www.MomsDotComDream.com now and sign up!