



As the CDC continues to recommend distancing, now may be a good time for businesses who have not yet explored telecommuting (allowing employees to work from home) to do so to help protect employees from getting sick and/or spreading a virus and to sustain your business. Not all positions or employees are a fit for telecommuting, so this should be evaluated. It should also be noted that COVID-19 telecommuting is for appropriate positions and staff for a period of time determined by the company. Below are some ideas to help you get started.

### Steps to Prepare for Telecommuting

- Clarify your Personnel Policies, checking with a Human Resource or Legal Expert if needed
- Provide Managers with tips for leading and managing off-site teams, such as:
  - Understanding successful telecommuting strategies
  - Utilizing good communication skills
  - Providing clear goals and objectives for each employee
  - Outlining the timeframe for accomplishing goals and objectives
  - Creating online reporting systems
  - Determining who needs access to different levels of information (shared docs vs. restricted docs)
  - Identifying the equipment, software and other resources needed to support telecommuting
  - Providing employees with needed resources
  - Having an agreement on resource use and information/data security
  - Ongoing dialog and regular meetings
  - Determining how questions that come up should be asked and answered
- Prepare appropriate Employees for working from home on a temporary basis:
  - Ensuring they understand the company's expectations of them, including work habits, goals, objectives, timelines for getting work done, reporting requirements, etc.
  - Confirming that they have the self-motivation & discipline to work from home
  - Understanding the level of their time and project management skills
  - Letting them know strong communication is required between them and their manager and team for this to work

### Employer DOs & DON'Ts

- **DO assess employees' remote working capabilities.** Certain positions—and employees—are better suited for working remotely than others. Consider whether an employee's duties are sufficiently 'portable,' and whether the employee has demonstrated the ability to work independently and productively before approving any arrangement.
- **DO communicate expectations.** Managers and employees should be on the same page when it comes to expectations for remote employees, including scheduling and hours of availability. Will remote employees need to be available during normal business hours or can they set their own schedules? You'll also want to outline

location(s) where work will be performed and performance standards. Be sure to spell everything out.

- **DO stay connected.** Keep the lines of communication open by checking in regularly with remote employees, and arrange conference calls and in-person meetings to keep them in the loop. Many technology solutions and applications are available to help keep employees connected. Remember to provide feedback on performance and apply the same standards to both remote employees and on-site employees.
- **DO spell out what tools and equipment are provided.** Additional equipment or software may be necessary to maintain a proper level of connectivity. Outline who is responsible for providing and maintaining any necessary equipment or related services. Will the company provide a computer? Who pays for the internet connection? What about phone service? Is there an allowance for necessary services? These are all questions that need answers outlined in a remote work policy.
- **DON'T discriminate.** There may be employees who wish to take advantage of a remote work arrangement, but whose job duties make it prohibitive. While job functions can serve as a reason for limiting remote work opportunities, it's important to ensure that discrimination on the basis of race, sex, religion or any other protected class doesn't play a role in any denials. Keep in mind, however, that allowing an employee with a disability to work from home may be required as a form of **reasonable accommodation** in some instances. Employees who work remotely should receive the same opportunities for advancement and professional development as their in-office counterparts.
- **DON'T overlook security issues.** Ensure that offsite employees are able to maintain the security of computer files, correspondence, equipment, materials and any business data. Employees should also follow any security protocols for remote connectivity. Depending on the sensitivity of the information being handled, a home office should include security measures to **protect against data breaches and cybercrime** similar to those required at the official worksite.

## Employee DOs & DON'Ts

- **DO create an organized workspace.** Separate a space from the rest of your home to help minimize distractions. Use to-do lists, calendars, and filing systems to keep yourself organized.
- **DO make sure to take breaks.** Breaks throughout the day for lunch and exercise will help you focus more on your work.
- **DO make sure to be in constant communication with your boss and coworkers.** If you have a scheduling conflict or cannot meet a deadline, inform your boss in advance and make arrangements to ensure your tasks are completed.
- **DO set office hours and give yourself a specific time to work.** It can be based on a schedule that works for you. Having a specific work time can ensure you don't spend too much (or too little) time working and can avoid spending your evenings checking emails.
- **DO have a social life!** It's easy to get caught up in your work at home. Be sure to get out of the house on the weekends at a very minimum to enjoy the things you love outside of work.
- **DO create boundaries for your family while you're working.** Let them know, despite being at home for work, you must limit the distractions you have throughout the day.
- **DO use apps to help you stay organized.** Tools such as [Google Docs](#) can help you keep track of important documents and stay on top of your to-do lists.

- **DO get ready for the day.** Even if you decide to get showered and dressed at noon, make sure you change out of your pajamas and into appropriate clothing. You never know when you'll have a surprise video conference call or interview.
- **DO have a backup plan.** There will be some days where working from home becomes impossible. Whether it's a faulty Internet connection or some other interference, have a backup workplace in mind, like a library or a coffee shop.
- **DO work during normal business hours.** This makes it easier to work with clients, your coworkers, and your supervisor.
- **DON'T let your work day slip away.** It's important to create a routine you can stick to and a schedule that allows you to be productive.
- **DON'T handle household chores during work hours.** It will become extremely distracting and it will take twice as long to complete your work.
- **DON'T take personal calls while working.** If you do have to make a call, ask your supervisor if it's okay for you to break away for a few minutes.
- **DON'T bring your work into an area where you could be distracted.** Spaces shared by friends or family can easily create distractions.
- **DON'T become disorganized.** Be sure to create an office space that allows you to keep all your work in a neat and organized place.
- **DON'T allow your email to become a distraction.** While it's important to check your email throughout the day, be sure to dedicate a block of time to checking your email rather than having it constantly open.
- **DON'T procrastinate.** Even if you have a project that isn't due for another week, make sure you aren't waiting until last minute to meet your deadlines.

## Resources

- Cloud
  - Office 365
- Collaboration
  - Google Docs
  - Slack
  - Yammer
- Organization
  - Evernote
  - One Note
- Project Management
  - Basecamp
  - Pivotal Tracker
  - Trello
- Quick Answers from Boss or Team
  - Email
  - Texts
- Regular Communication
  - Email
  - Google Docs
- Screen Sharing
  - GoToMeeting
  - Google Hangouts
  - Join.me
  - Skype
- Video Teleconferencing
  - BlueJeans
  - Zoom

## Resources

SkillPath Seminars

10 Dos & Don'ts When Working from Home by Heather R. Huhman

Recommendations from Pamela Tumpap who has tele-commuted on and off for over 20 years of her career