

Realising Potential Through Partnership

GUIDE



WORKING FROM HOME

*How to have a positive and productive
working environment at home*

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Please customise all of this document to suit your organisation.

Employer's Perspective

Purpose

This document should be tailored to your organisation's operations to give everyone in the company access to the clear guidelines that will keep your organisation moving forward, regardless of the geographical location of your staff. The purpose of this template is to ensure that all members of your staff have the information they need, are well-informed on their role, its responsibilities and the subsequent list of accountabilities they'll be required to meet while working remotely. In essence, it's a simple guide that an employee should refer to if they feel a lack of organisational support while working remotely.

Scope

The scope of this document extends past the physical boundaries of your office, and gives your employees the information they need to achieve the organisation's strategic goals while working remotely. Think in terms of how your organisation would operate if everyone were in the office, and apply these principles to the context of remote work.

Mission Statement and Vision

Just as you would in a face-to-face meeting, it's vital to inform staff members of the organisation's short and long term goals, its mission statement and the reason *why* the organisation is moving in its current direction. Ensure that each member of your staff is well-versed in the purpose of the organisation, and remains committed to improving customer and supplier relationships, as well as the internal procedures that we'll map out later in the template.

Rules, Roles and Responsibilities

The organisation should have already established its organisational chart, which maps out each role, and how that role contributes to the overall performance of the organisation. If you haven't already done this, plot out a simple chart showing each of the organisation's different departments, who they report to, and what their daily activities achieve. Ensure that you have position descriptions on hand that you can refer members of your staff to, and there's a high level of communication with relevant management figures. The organisation should establish a document that staff members can access remotely that reiterates the rules within an organisation, and this should include a dress code for any external meetings to maintain a sense of professionalism, as well as smaller details regarding streamlined communication and logging of their daily activities.

Accountability

Each member of your staff should be informed of their 'number', that is, the metric that they'll be held accountable to in the organisation's next catch-up or formal meeting. If a member of your staff isn't aware of their number, they're likely to become lost and unproductive. To mitigate this risk, establish a number of KPIs they're required to meet on either a weekly or fortnightly basis.

Remote Working Arrangement

Taking into account the data from the role, its responsibilities and the subsequent accountabilities, you should establish your remote working arrangement that is tailor-fitted to each member of your team. This should cover an employee's hours, expectations, their accountabilities list and workload, and should be agreed upon by both parties involved.

Communication Policy

It's essential to ensure that members of your team are communicating regularly, but they're also utilising just one means of communication so important messages aren't

forgotten. If your organisation uses the Google Suite, for example, make sure you've told staff that they should communicate via Gmail and the GChat function; reapply this to your organisation's preferred means of communication.

Meetings

Having staff-wide discussions is imperative while working remotely, so maintain a high level of communication and keep some time free to have a meeting to inform everyone of any key changes to the organisation's business model or vision. Before you start one of these meetings, make sure there is one facilitator or mediator of the conversation, as a group call with a dozen or more participants can be tricky to navigate. Establish a list of key issues that will be discussed and pass this information on to all employees, so they're briefed and ready for your meeting.

Management Responsibilities

The management team remains obligated to ensure that each member of the team is aware of their role and its responsibilities while working remotely. Quick, informal 'catch-up' sessions via Google Hangouts or Zoom are an effective way to make sure that members of staff are in-line with the short-term goals of the organisation, so every member of the team is working together.

Equipment

It's the employer's responsibility to ensure that each member of its team has access to an adequate level of technology, as well as a stable internet connection to operate with the same effectiveness as working in your office.

Health Guidelines

The organisation has an obligation to maintain the health and psychological safety of its employees while working remotely. This can include the encouragement of routine breaks to get some fresh air and sunlight, as well as staff 'catch up' sessions that spark conversation between employees to increase their sense of belonging. At Best Practice, we've established what we call the 'High Five', which provides a solid

foundation for the health and wellbeing of your staff, and maintains their focus and productivity.

Cybersecurity

Day-to-day activities like emailing and accessing internal documents remotely poses a significant risk of third-parties compromising the data that your organisation is obliged to keep secure. Make sure that your organisation has an information security policy like [ISO 27001](#) to maintain the integrity of the data stored.

Employee's Perspective

Maintain Your Routine

An important part of working from home effectively is maintaining your morning routine as you would if you were headed into the office. Just because you don't *have* to be out of bed at a certain time doesn't mean you should set your alarm clock any later; you should maintain a steady time to wake up, perhaps squeeze in some exercise and slowly ease into your morning.

You could potentially replace any time you would have spent commuting to and from work for some meditation, exercise, or anything that constitutes a productive, psychologically-beneficial activity. If you're living in a metropolitan area, this could be in excess of 90-minutes per day that you could leverage to read a book, go for a walk, meditate or do some more vigorous exercise. Giving your brain a rush of endorphins on a regular basis is one of the best ways to maintain your cognitive health, so consider how you could replace the time previously spent commuting with something beneficial.

Customise Your Workspace to Boost Productivity

When setting up your home office, it's important to designate space purely for work. Operating remotely can prove problematic when it comes to blurring the lines between your personal and professional life, so make sure that you've established some clear boundaries - if possible - in your household to create a working environment and a separate personal environment. Don't hide away in a dark corner- move some furniture around in your house and get a desk set up near a window or in a room filled with sunlight. This is also beneficial when it comes to any video calls you'll have internally, or with clients, where you need to optimise the lighting for the call. Ideally, your face should be well lit, for example facing a window. It's a good idea to ensure that there is not a light fixture in view of the camera, as the camera will expose for the light source and make your face dark. It's also important to ensure that the lens of your webcam is level with your eye line. Try not to be looking down and the camera and when you're speaking "eye contact" is made with your audience by looking at the lens not your own face or the audience. Ideally, you should be able to segregate yourself and your office from the rest of the house, but that's not applicable to all homes. At the very least, your workstation should be positioned away from the major distractions in your home, and for psychological benefits, near

some source of natural light. If you're not able to close off to distractions easily, invest in a set of noise cancelling headphones so you can more easily enter a productive headspace with the elimination of background noise. It's also important to keep your workstation clean, and free of distractions. Try to take a minimalist approach, with your computer and any necessary documents easily accessible, but avoiding overcrowded. When your desk becomes cluttered, it can subconsciously signal to your brain that it's a frantic day before it's even begun.

[For more information, we have found this great article.](#)

Treat it Like an Office

It's important that while you're working from home, you treat it as an office space. This means that you should have already established a clear start and finish time with your employer, as well as break times. In exchange for your wage, your employer expects a certain amount of work from you each day of the week, and you need to acknowledge that first and foremost. From here, you can establish your routine, which should incorporate some small 'refresher' breaks for you to walk away from your workstation. One of the most effective ways to get your brain into 'work-mode' is to actually dress for the occasion. Whether or not you've got a meeting with colleagues or clients, dressing for the part can make a significant difference when it comes to your productivity and work ethic. Resist the urge to turn to distractions like a TV in the background, even if it's playing something seemingly productive like the news.

Managing Your Wellbeing

While remote working has enabled a completely new way of operating, it's also proven to increase anxiety, isolation and feelings of loneliness after a prolonged period. This, of course, is dependent on the individual's circumstance, but overall it's important to cover a few of the basics in terms of managing your emotional state while working from home. Don't stay sitting in front of a screen all day- try to break it up with short 'power breaks' so you can break up your routine, distract yourself for a short time and return to your work feeling more focussed. If you try to push through, you're likely to get less achieved, and the quality of work can often slip to the point you'll make small errors that you otherwise wouldn't have made if you were feeling fresh and focussed.

Make sure you stay in contact with your colleagues and loved ones through this period, and start each day with an activity that you enjoy. However, this might mean you'll have to manage your time using social media, because idle time can be easily wasted while you're scrolling through your feed.

For more tips, [click here](#).

Meetings & Staying Connected

An important part of the remote working process is staying connected with your colleagues, as well as your friends and family. In the context of your organisation, you should move past having formal weekly meetings, and condense this into short, more informal 'catch up' sessions. These catch-ups should revolve around work, but shouldn't only center on your daily activities. Talk about how you're feeling, and ask how your colleagues are dealing with the current situation. These candid conversations will build trust between colleagues, and foster that sense of trust and belonging to the organisation that can often result in more motivated, productive members of staff.

With your idle time, try to set up either a social call with your colleagues over a lunch-time break, or meet up just before it's time to log off for the day and go over what you've accomplished, and what your plan looks like for the remainder of the week.

For any meetings you have with colleagues or clients, you should ensure that your computer or device is positioned with the sun in front of you, rather than behind so you're not silhouetted by the light. Try your best to keep your device equal to your shoulders and head, so you don't appear too dominant to the person you're having a conversation with; this can prove invaluable when communicating with clients. If you need to move to a separate area to escape any background noise of traffic, family members or a TV, try to set up close to a wall with a plain white background with no distractions behind you.

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