

# WFH habits of effective people

Work from home, a perk that many employees have yearned for - the sought-after holy grail in the workplace. Then, 2020 arrives and with it a global pandemic, self-isolation and lockdown. Months later and most of us are eagerly anticipating returning to the office.



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Helene Vermaak, business director at The Human Edge says, “How times have changed and continue to change.” She believes that our new normal of virtual and distance working, and socialising is very likely here to stay...at least for a long while and with it a host of challenges to personal productivity.

While many of our distractions as we work from home may be minor inconveniences in the bigger scheme of things, they still contribute to a disorientating and challenging environment.

“During these uncertain times employees are not only dealing with an unstable Wi-Fi connection, home-schooling and trying to find a quiet space for a Zoom meeting (the closet and car can be helpful here), but also need to be constructive and add value, all posing a threat to productivity and, ultimately, to our livelihoods”.

Productivity is in jeopardy and working from home is affecting many employees output.

Vermaak identifies five of the biggest challenges that people are experiencing while working from home as:

1. Feeling disconnected from their colleagues
2. Having limited or outdated technology at their disposal
3. Too many distractions
4. A lack of focus
5. Feeling disorganised

“Expecting the same results in a different context is a recipe for failure. Our new normal is a new environment and therefore new behaviours and habits are required,” says Vermaak. “If you are struggling to stay motivated and productive while working from home, perhaps try to identify new routines and rewards. The good news is that habits are as adaptable as we are.”

She highlights some habits, which many of us will know, but that we can all try to help increase our productivity:

1. **Routine rules all** – the most common work from home habit is to try to keep the same routine at home as you had at work, if possible. Scheduling your day just as you would if you were headed to the office and being consistent in how you plan your day and spend your time throughout the work week can help.
2. **Break often and well** – without the meetings and interruptions found in an office environment, people who work from home can find they spend hours on end without taking a break. Avoid burnout by scheduling regenerating breaks throughout your day. Take a walk, get a healthy snack, or connect with a friend or colleague.
3. **Arrange an office space** – don’t underestimate the value of finding and creating a designated workspace. The ideal space will have a door, a desk and a comfortable chair that will enable you to focus and separate you from home distractions. Unfortunately for most of us this is not possible, so try to carve out an area in your home where you can set up your equipment and at least leave it intact at the end of each day.
4. **Connect consistently** – communication is always important, but paramount when distance is involved. Check-in frequently with colleagues, managers, and teams. The medium of communication doesn’t really matter as much as the consistency thereof.
5. **Dress for the job** – get ready and dressed for the day just as if you were headed to the office. Putting on “going out” clothes, rather than lounging in your pj’s, tells your brain to act and behave more professionally. It also helps delineate work time from the rest of your day.
6. **Tackle your to-do’s** – to-do lists, project plans, and strategies are ubiquitous to success and even more so when working from home. They will help you stay focused on the most important tasks at the most important times of the day. Lists are also helpful to stay engaged and motivated when you’ve lost some of the peer pressure that usually helps you do so.
7. **Start, stop and reset** – ideally try to start and end your workday at the same time, each day. Since work is never literally out of sight, it is vital to be strict about “clocking out” so you can regroup and get ready for the next day.

“We know that some human behaviours matter more than others and that certain habits have a compound effect that influences results in all facets of life,” says Vermaak.

This is true and no surprise with habits such as diet, exercise, and sleep. In addition to the above pragmatic, and perhaps obvious habits there are also three other unlikely habits that can significantly contribute to productivity at home, but also to make us feel engaged and fulfilled during these uncertain and difficult times.

1. **Get out** – it’s easy to get sucked into a busy workday that is often void of co-worker distractions, lunch outings and the casual breaks. One of the best ways to rejuvenate yourself during a long day at home is to simply go outside.
2. **Stretch** – find a few minutes to get up from your desk and stretch. Blame it on the less-than-ideal office equipment, stretching sore backs, necks and legs are necessary, especially now.
3. **Manage stress** – due to the unusual circumstances surrounding Covid-19, we need to be diligent about managing stress. One of the most common habits is to simply avoid watching the news. Meditation and exercise are also a must during this time.

“The above three habits can be adopted by the whole family, they are just some tips that can help us all work our way through the current pandemic and as we all try to find our new normal,” says Vermaak.

She concludes on a positive note, “Even while being faced with a world of uncertainty, there are many of us who have been able to recognise the advantages of working from home and have found ourselves being more productive. Some of the advantages include us having more time to ourselves, no longer enduring a lengthy commute and more family time.”

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