



# REMOTE WORKING GUIDE

This document is designed to be used by supervisors wishing to support remote working for their teams or individuals wishing to work remotely either permanently, regularly or on an ad hoc basis. It provides some key considerations that will help improve the success of remote working arrangements.

## IDENTIFY THE BARRIERS

Think about what may stop you or your team from working successfully outside the office and put reasonable solutions in place.

Basic tips:

- Forward your work phone to your mobile so you can answer calls. Even better is to use a seamless system like Skype for Business.
- Implement mail scanning and document scanning processes in paper-centric organisations. Encourage the use of electronic calendars rather than paper to-do lists which notoriously get lost on trains or left in the office. Create effective e-filing structures so things are easy to find.
- Review job roles and identify what tasks can be done remotely and what can't. Is there a way of flipping the non-remote tasks so they can be done remotely (eg e-filing instead of physical filing or minuting meetings by teleconference)? Can you structure your work week so you can do remote tasks from home most days and save non-remote tasks for your days in the office?

## ORGANISE YOUR TECH

Generally the onus is on employees to ensure they have a suitable working space wherever they are working from. Employers may consider providing enabling tech like laptops or BYO device schemes that make remote working easier.

Employees should think about their work set-up at home and ensure they have a suitable PC or laptop, reliable internet, second monitor etc.

Basic tips:

- Invest in a headset or headphones for your computer or mobile phone. If you're dialling into lots of meetings or making client calls, having a headset that minimises background noise and improves call quality is helpful. It's also better for your posture!
- Organisations may issue laptops instead of PCs to employees to enable remote working. Alternatively, businesses can have a number of laptops that employees can book out when they are working remotely- it's a bit clunky but may be better than relying on employee's home infrastructure.
- Organisations may consider financial support options that enable employees to purchase tech items- perhaps a partnership with a local computer store to secure a discount or a salary advance scheme.
- Engaging with an in-house IT team or external specialist to identify any tech risks related to remote working and how they can be mitigated.

- Employees should research or speak to an accountant about tax implications of working from home. In Australia employees can claim deductions for home office equipment if they work from home.

## CREATE YOUR WORK ZONE

If you're working from home it is important to create a work zone where you can work effectively during the day. A separate home office is ideal, but if that isn't feasible then a space away from distractions like other family members, pets or the TV is recommended. Ensure your zone is comfortable and complies with any Occupational Health and Safety standards to ensure your zone is ergonomically set up and safe.

Basic tips:

- Find a comfortable space. An office desk or dining table work best due to their height. Try to avoid working on the couch with your laptop or hunching over a coffee table!
- Ensure your space is well lit- invest in a lamp if needed.
- Get a decent chair! You need to be comfortable so perching on a wooden dining chair for hours on end or on a 30 year old office chair with busted wheels isn't ideal...
- Set up your space like your office desk if you can. Have all your stationery items handy so you're not constantly having to go find pens, or a notebook or a phone charger etc (I have a big pencil case with all my working from home stuff in it so I know I have everything I need)

## SET BOUNDARIES

Ensure that your friends and family are clear that while you are physically at home, you are in fact 'at work'.

Basic tips:

- Remote working isn't a replacement for childcare and where possible children should be in care or in school while you are 'at work'. Of course there are exceptions, for example you might log in for a few hours while your sick toddler naps, be able to work while an older child entertains themselves during school holidays or you may have someone caring for your child in the home.
- Create a sign for your door or workspace so people know whether or not they can interrupt you.
- Create good habits to minimise disruptions such as taking and returning personal calls during break times, or perhaps schedule lunch with family members or friends to socially connect during the day.

## CONNECT WITH COLLEAGUES

it is particularly important if you work from remotely to connect with your colleagues.

- Give them a quick call or use online messaging systems to say hi and maintain your relationships.
- If you work as part of a team (eg lawyer and assistant) set scheduled time to check-in and make sure to include some time for general chit-chat.

- Dial into team meetings via video conference.
- Ensure key things like birthdays or office events are in a team calendar or circulated to everyone so remote workers are just as connected as those in the office (although without the joy of birthday cake!)

## **BE HEALTH & SAFETY AWARE**

Studies show that people working from home are more sedentary than office-based colleagues (mostly because home based workers feel they need to be 'on' all the time to prove they're working and because they don't have the natural distractions of the office).

Basic tips:

- Take minibreaks to break up your day and give your eyes a rest from screen-based work. Fill your empty water bottle, use the bathroom, go check the mailbox, look out the window for a few minutes.
- Use calendar reminders to schedule breaks. Get up from your chair and stretch or walk. Fitness trackers often have activity monitors and will prompt you if you've been seated too long.
- Stock up on healthy snacks. The temptation to snack when your pantry is so close by is strong! Make sure you have fresh fruits, nuts and other healthy snacks you can grab.
- Use the time you'd otherwise be commuting for fitness. Take a quick trip to the gym, boot up a yoga video on YouTube or take the dogs for a walk around the block. Home based workers tend to miss out on incidental exercise (like taking the stairs between floors or walking from the station to the office) so it's important to schedule activity into your day.

## **CREATE ROUTINE**

Some people struggle without the set structure of the office environment so you may find it helpful to create your own for your remote work days.

Basic tips:

- set your start/finish times and break times and stick to them as much as possible. This consistency is important to ensure you stay on track, but also for your colleagues to know when they can reach you.
- If your hours need to vary for any reason ensure you communicate with your supervisor and your team.

## **RAISE ISSUES EARLY**

If working remotely isn't quite what you expected or there are things that are making working remotely difficult, speak to your supervisor as soon as possible. The earlier things are amended, the greater the chance of long-term success.

## **FOCUS ON OUTCOMES**

The measure of success for remote working is your ability to deliver the outcomes required of your role. If you can't meet the expectations of your role remotely, these arrangements may not

be right for you. Supervisors and employees need to both be completely clear on what is expected.

Basic tips:

- Have a specific conversation about expectations and make a written agreement (even an email confirmation is sufficient) so both parties are clear and have a something to refer to if there are any issues.
- Agree on how progress will be monitored. Are there KPIs or other metrics that can demonstrate outcomes? If work is more strategic you may wish to set 'project updates' where you can discuss progress against plans or deadlines.
- Supervisors need to be very clear if expectations change for any reason. A verbal discussion followed by a written communication is ideal.
- Start the week by planning your time. Whether you're working remotely full-time or just a few days a week, it's helpful to know what work you need to deliver and when you're going to complete it. It also means you can identify the work that would best be completed remotely or that must be completed in the office and plan your time accordingly.

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