

Tips for working from home during COVID-19

It seems like over the last couple of weeks the impact of COVID-19 spreading around the globe has turned the world as we know it upside down. As a result, many workplaces have been forced to require their employees to work from home. For us at Pacific Maritime Lawyers, we are already a virtual law firm and have been for over 5 years so COVID-19 has not affected the way that we work, as it has for many of you.

I transitioned from working in an open plan office to working remotely from my home office nearly a year ago. Working from home suits my lifestyle choices but for some, especially the extroverts and those who thrive amongst others, working from home can be isolating, lonely and an unexpected shock to the system!

Here are my **3 top tips** when adopting successful working from home practices.

Tip 1 – Connect

Connection is key as being connected to others is important for our mental and physical wellbeing – it basically keeps us happy, which is what we all need right now. In a work context, this includes connecting with your boss, your team and with your clients.

Obviously, working from home means that you do not physically see your boss, employees or work colleagues every morning when you arrive at your work desk, there are no trips to the local coffee shop or catch ups over lunch. Working from home means you have to make an effort to connect and communicate. For me, one thing I do to connect is call my boss every morning, which is a bit like a check-in and is a good opportunity to discuss what each of us will be up to that day.

It is also important to connect with your team. For us at PML, we have a weekly team meeting using Microsoft Teams (though other platforms like Zoom are also great!) so it's just like having a face-to-face meeting in the office (only you can wear your pyjama bottoms to a virtual meeting!). For teams that work remotely, it is crucial to hold regular and consistent team meetings so that everyone feels engaged, connected and to boost team morale especially in light of the effects of COVID-19.

On a client level, we have found that even before the outbreak of COVID-19 many clients are open to virtual meetings as it is convenient and efficient way to communicate – they too are juggling both a work and home life!

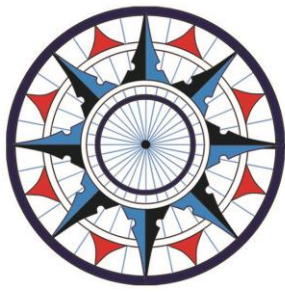
Tip 2 – Prepare

When implementing working from home practices, a crucial question all employers must ask is whether their employee(s) are prepared to effectively work from home, especially at short notice, like in the outbreak of a pandemic. Employers must be aware and take into consideration that not all employees will be able to set themselves up to work from home quickly, easily or financially.

Things to consider are:

- Does the employee have all of the hardware i.e. laptops, that they need to do their job?





- Does the employee have all of the software (i.e. document management systems) installed on their devices to do their job?
- Does the employee have a desk, chair and adequate lighting?
- Does the employee have a reliable, secure and stable internet connection and phone service?

One thing that employers can do is require employees to do a self-assessment of their proposed home working space to ensure that the space is suitable for working from home. Employees should also be up-front with their employers about what equipment they need and what they are missing to make sure that they are suitably equipped to work safely, securely and comfortably.

Tip 3 – Focus

When working from home you need to make sure that you maintain focus and motivation to ensure that you are working as productively as you would in a traditional office environment. For me there are a number of practices that I have adopted which have helped me to maintain focus, including:

- Having a dedicated workspace that is set aside for work-related activities, whether this may be a room in the house or just a small space in your small apartment. This will lead to less distractions and making you more focused and productive than working on the sofa! Having a dedicated work space will also help you draw a line between your work life and home life at the end of your day.
- Organising the day – while the day may not always go as planned it is important to have a plan before the day starts so that you start off on the right foot! It may be a good idea to schedule in some time for unexpected matters that crop up when least expected!
- Getting dressed – even though you are working from home this does not mean you should stay in your pyjamas all day! Getting dressed will make you feel like the working day has started and you are ready to face the day ahead.

Remember, not all of these working from home tips will work for you but they will give you something to think about when implementing your own work from home practices. And, finally enjoy!



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