

The Work From Home Planner

	Ask Yourself	Action points
<p>Do you understand your rhythm?</p> <p>Everyone works differently. Office situations force you to conform to an externally imposed rhythm, but WFH could allow that to slip, making it harder for you to be productive.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When or where am I at my most creative (what were the circumstances When you had your last few creative spurts?) • When or where do I feel most lethargic? • How do I align my day so that I address the most demanding tasks When I have the highest energy? And do the most mundane tasks When I feel low? • Do I feel a certain sense of casualness working from home? do I feel I am more 'serious' with work in office? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Even while conforming to the schedule set by your office, you have room to plan this. If you have the highest energy levels first thing in the morning, don't use them to cook lunch. Put in a couple of killer hours early and then head to the kitchen. Chop stuff the night before. • Do what it takes to get into 'work mode' - if that means dressing the part, do it.

	Ask Yourself	Action points
<p>Have you mastered the new communication stack?</p> <p>Zoom, Slack, Notion, Basecamp, Miro... You must learn to get comfortable with the new tools on the block because they are here to stay.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you faced any personal challenges such as finding it hard to raise a hand to make a point, making yourself heard, understanding everything that was being said? • Have you faced operational challenges - not having the right people in the meeting, not being able to arrive at a consensus, approval processes taking longer, etc? • Have you faced tool-specific challenges? For instance, losing track of tasks or important action points, having to manage multiple tools, etc? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The best way to solve the personal challenges with tools is to have more practice runs and just become confident and familiar with them. Practice with friends. Take the time to optimise your setup. • Modify your SOPs so they are optimised for remote working, rather than face-to-face. Account for the fact that a lot of the informal spread that happens in an office will not take place now. • Investigate productivity plugins that make the tools smarter. For example, Slack has plugins for polls and integration with Google Suite. Zoom can be integrated with Google Calendar. Basecamp can easily be integrated with CRM tools like Zoho.

	Ask Yourself	Action points
<p>Have you defined your boundaries?</p> <p>If this is the first time you are working from home, then areas that were previously recreational areas (watch Netflix on your desk) are now work areas. While this doesn't seem like a big problem, it could subconsciously trigger distractions you don't want. Even if you are a veteran, you could have the constant need to check on news.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have I defined physical boundaries? Do I have a space that is only for work? • Have I discussed these boundaries with other people in my house? • Do I feel frustrated not being able to go out? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Optimize your space, no matter how small, for work and leisure (even if it means moving from one end of the dining table to another) • Set guidelines with those in your home - with respect to space, time and even volume • Mix it up - work in different places around the house if that helps overcome location fatigue.

	Ask Yourself	Action points
<p>Are you working effectively in teams?</p> <p>Most issues that arise out of working from home when you're a team comes with miscommunication and lack of clarity that a physical meeting brings. Thankfully, many of these are easily solvable.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What were the misunderstandings because of which work suffered? • Did I feel awkward at any points of time doing things that were casual before? For instance - formally asking for a clarification, or bouncing an idea off someone? • Were there any examples in which some team members took disproportionately longer or made mistakes they normally wouldn't? • Am I getting bombarded? Too many emails, Slack notifications, calls, etc, more than before? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document. Everything. Any action point should be formally put down - the tool doesn't matter, it could just be an email or Slack message. Assign responsibilities so there is total clarity in terms of who needs to do what. Share notes - some people might have missed out on some things because of a bad connection • Some team members might not be as comfortable as everyone else with virtual meetings. Seek them out, counsel and spend time with them and make their tasks easier. • Bigger problems need collective solutions. Employers are all ears right now - so make your suggestions.

	Ask Yourself	Action points
<p>Are you able to get the most out of your day?</p> <p>You could be letting personal time encroach on work or work encroach on personal time – both are common and undesirable situations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do I finish my work task list in the intended time? Why or why not? • Am I able to factor in time for new ideas and learning? • Do I have enough “personal time” for exercising, cooking, being with family and entertainment? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calendar everything - yes, even personal time. Buffer in enough time between work tasks, which will allow you to take care of unexpected things that happen at home. Sticking as far as possible to a rigid self-imposed calendar will help you. Combine this with the learnings in the first point so you can map out when to do creative work, when to do mundane tasks, etc. • Create goal plans - break your tasks down into smaller sub-tasks. • If you work alone or in a small team, consider having an ‘accountability buddy’ (from or outside work) so both of you help each other out.

	Ask Yourself	Action points
<p>Are you able to maintain relationships?</p> <p>Work is not just about the professional relationships we have with our colleagues, but many of the so-called softer aspects as well. While easy to disregard, they are important!</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have I spoken to my colleagues for things other than the immediate work we are doing? • Am I (and my team) aware of new organizational dynamics since we started working from home? • Do your colleagues know something new about you, your home or your family since you started working from home? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remember, you can have Slack groups grouped by purpose: Informal ones for banter, for ones to discuss work ‘without the boss’, and others serving water-cooler purpose, to throw around new ideas. • Do non-work catch-ups. This could be just for a bunch of you, or more formal as a team or organization. Slack for example, allows for many tools and using Zoom you can have virtual happy hours!

Mind it

Finally, a piece of advice we have for you is to take care of yourself. The lack of human connect, being able to go out, worry about the economic outlook and of course, the news of the pandemic itself pouring in can have a debilitating effect on your mental health. Now, more than ever, it’s important to take care of yourself. There are online therapists you can speak to. Tell your team you need some time off to recuperate. Don’t ignore exercise. [A wonderful guide on maintaining your mental health](#) during this most stressful of times has been compiled by The Mind Clan, a mental health platform that has access to more resources, therapists and more. If you work alone and need to connect, consider joining a virtual community like [Remote Indian](#).

All the best. Remember, this too shall pass, and hopefully the post-Covid world will open up new opportunities, and we all would have learnt something new. Till then, stay safe and virtual high-fives all ‘round.

We’d love to hear from you.

Have feedback on this planner? Tell us how you’re using it. We’re all ears!
Mail us at deepak@thehardcopy.co