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Telework, flexwork, ROWE. Call it almost anything and it usually comes back to, “Working from home.” According to a variety of surveys, 85% of companies offer flexible work arrangements to their employees; only 38% of companies allocate one desk per one employee; one company saved $195M in one year thanks to the increased productivity of its flexible workforce. Flexibility is good for companies and good for employees, but best practices are only starting to emerge. Following are some tips for making a work-at-home arrangement work for you.

Get dressed. Shower, brush your teeth and put your favorite slippers on. Clothes communicate, even when you’re the only one who knows what you’re wearing.

Go out. Eliminating a long commute is one real benefit of working from home. However, putting yourself in a professional mindset might require a physical shift. Driving kids to school, walking the dog, hitting the gym first thing or simply circling the block… any of these routines will help you move from home-and-family to working mode.

Designate a space for work. If it has a door, all the better. When you are in there, you’re working. When you are not working, close the door and don’t go back. Anyone who works at home knows the allure of slipping back to check one email or to make a quick call, and suddenly two or three hours have slipped by. Going back in at night is fine if it is part of your routine. Just don’t blur the lines between work and home, even when your work is at home.

If you work at a desk, sit down. Preferably in a good, comfortable chair. With the items you need at hand. While you wander through the house hunting for a stapler, you are not working. What happens at work, stays at work; keep strict house rules about “the office” and any supplies in there.

Plan your breaks. No cubicle-bound soul stays glued in for eight hours straight. Take a lunch and intentional, timed breaks during the day. A highlight of home-work is the ability to time-shift away from an 8-5 schedule. If you know you are most productive in the morning, get up early and do it. If you wrap up your workday at two o’clock because your work is done and the dog wants to play, then that is a schedule that works for you.

Go out after work. Find ways to recharge your human side by mingling among the masses. Professional associations, teams, clubs and classes will keep any recluse-tendencies at bay. By 2013, 1.2 billion people will be mobile employees. Working at home can work if you know how to work it.

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