

# Workplaces

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**The Working from Home Issue**



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# Workplaces

BoF Workplaces 

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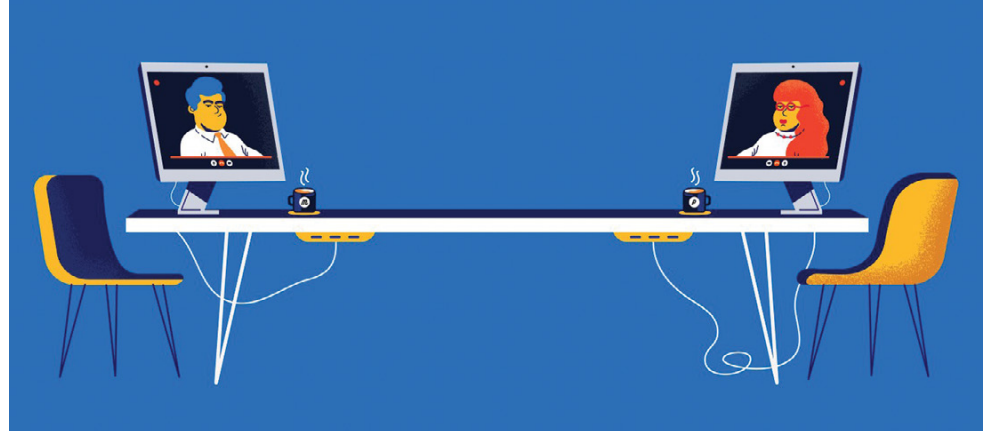
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We began 2020 with the same unbridled optimism with which most new years start. Then our world was unexpectedly turned upside down by coronavirus. In a matter of weeks, we went from a thriving economy, and record low unemployment and vacancy rates in the U.S., to a world nearly shut down by a global pandemic.

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## Where I'm Working: (Emily Clingman)

My cool loft apartment near Boulder, Colorado

Since this month's Workplaces theme is home offices, and as a remote employee of Bellow Press, I've commandeered this column to give you a tour of my home office — which is in a spare bedroom of a cool, loft apartment near Boulder, Colorado, with a stunning view of the Rockies. I haven't always been this lucky.

For the past 25 years, as a journalist, a photographer and a maker, I have had a home office. In my early years, it started as a sewing studio, then an office for writing and business. My home offices have changed locations of-

ten (I move a lot). Sometimes I've had a spare room to myself and other times I've been crammed into the corner of the kitchen or a bedroom. A few years ago, my home office was the dashboard of a 1998 Subaru Forester my husband and I drove around the country for a year on an epic photography road trip (that's another story).

For the past five years working with Bellow Press, I have written hundreds of stories about workspace design. I realized that my home offices over the years, while functional,



were poorly designed and lacked the essential fundamentals a workspace needs. An old desk from the thrift shop and a cheap Shaker chair is absolutely the wrong set-up for someone who works in a seat all day. Knowing what I know now about ergonomics, productivity and wellness, I decided to level up my current home office. Even though I have a whole room to work with, I don't necessarily have the budget or the space to do a lavish overhaul. Instead, I chose three elements to focus on, taking cues from corporate office trends.

### Sometimes working from home requires a sense of humor.

The first priority was to get a proper chair and a height-adjustable table. I went with the AIS Devens task chair. It's comfortable, adjustable with multiple positions and ergonomically supportive. I paired that with the AIS Day-to-Day height-adjustable table, with soft start/stop and memory presets. This change alone completely transformed my work life. Using a supportive and comfortable chair has significantly eased this horrible back pain I've developed from sitting in crappy chairs for 25 years. It got so bad I was spending half the day laying

on my office floor because my back couldn't take sitting in horrible chairs anymore. Also, having a sturdy and portable height-adjustable table with a smooth and spacious work surface is a billion times better than somebody's great-grandfather's enormous and elephant-heavy 1920s roll-top desk.

Another priority for me personally, is the ambiance of the space I'm working in. I am incredibly bored and uninspired by spaces that lack character or meaning. We've learned art is a way to boost wellness and productivity in the workplace, and that's something I can easily incorporate into my workspace at home. Studies show just looking at a photo of nature provides the exact same benefits of actually looking out the window at nature (inspiration, stress relief). As a photographer of beautiful landscapes, I kind of have the hook-up in this arena.

### For those of you who are trying out a home office for the first time, it can be challenging to stay focused and disciplined under the best of circumstances.

The third element is more like a separate space, but that's kind of the point. I think of it as a maker's corner or a design studio. My journalism job involves staring at tiny black letters on a white computer screen every day, all day, all the time. Lately, I've been craving color and dreaming about the days I used to design clothing and work with textiles and





sewing machines. So, I set up a space where I can work out some design ideas swimming around in my head. It's a place where I can paint and draw, play with fabric or otherwise be creative without a screen. We've been seeing more and more companies include various versions of maker spaces in their offices for employees to take a brain break to do some art for a bit to refresh, or a team might work out an idea just presented in a meeting while playing around at a woodworking table.

If you have a hobby or a creative skill, you can incorporate that into your workspace — or into your work day, if say, you already have a workshop in the garage. The point is to provide yourself with opportunities to engage all of your senses and talents, with the aim of gaining different perspectives toward work, toward life, everything.

When thinking about your home office, which can be an entire room or simply a little desk in the corner of the kitchen, notice where

you're uncomfortable and distracted, physically and mentally, then make a few changes to improve your health and productivity while using the space. Might I suggest *Workplaces* magazine for inspiration.

For those of you who are trying out a home office for the first time, it can be challenging to stay focused and disciplined under the best of circumstances. Be easy on yourself and be flexible when you can. Sometimes working from home requires a sense of humor. Here are some nuggets of wisdom I've learned along the way:

- Procrastination pacing around the house can totally be reframed as soft power walking, because wellness.
- Stay put. You won't get any work done at the coffee shop.

- If you need an hour or two of uninterrupted time, tell your kids if you don't see them or hear them for the next hour, you won't yell at them or make them do any chores. They will scatter like cockroaches. Be prepared though, to emerge from your office to find some sort of shit show — pancake batter all over the kitchen floor or 40 holes dug in the backyard because, "We're making an obstacle course to see who can run around the fastest without falling in the holes. The loser breaks his ankle." You have to weigh your options with this tip.

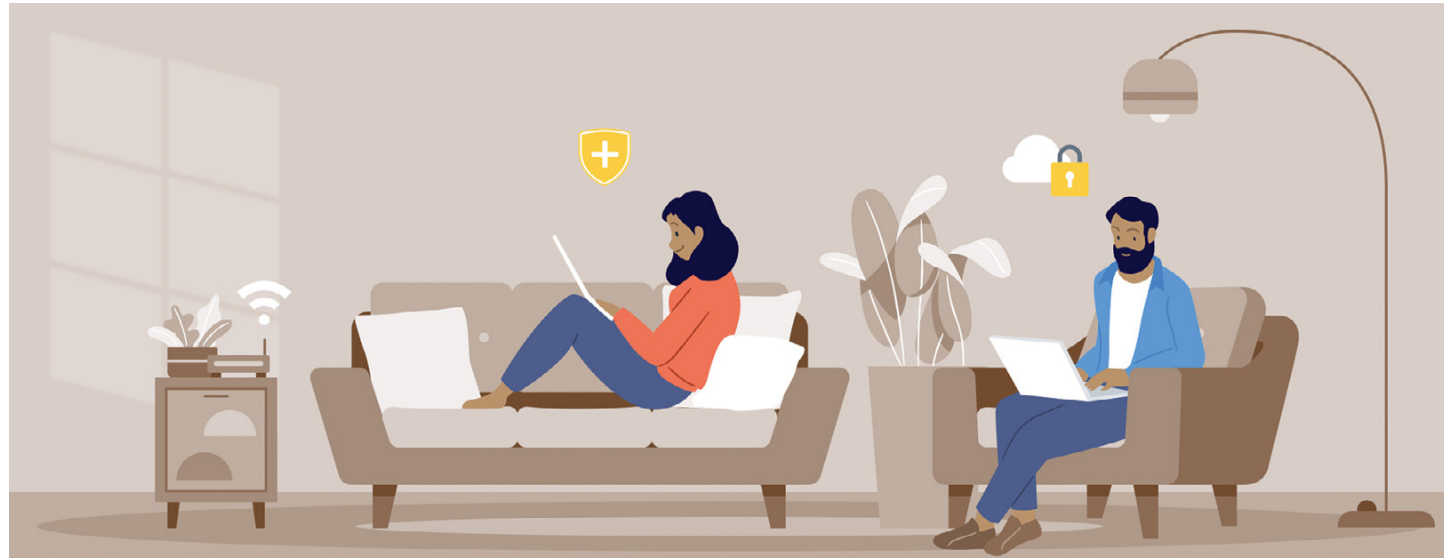
- As soon as you're ready to jump on a conference call, every one of your neighbors' lawn care services will show up and start mowing.

- You should probably get dressed. **WPM**





# REPORT SHOWS WORK IS CHANGING BEFORE OUR EYES (AND LIKELY WON'T CHANGE BACK)



In a tracking survey of global corporate real estate professionals at large corporations conducted by CoreNet Global, the amount of respondents who say they now support a corporate mandate for remote work has nearly doubled in two weeks to 97% from 56% two weeks ago.

Additionally, 78% of end users surveyed think expanded use of virtual meetings (e.g., vs. face-to-face meetings) will last beyond the current crisis, and 72% think expanded use of remote working will last beyond the current crisis.

From March 17 to 19, CoreNet Global surveyed its 11,000 members to gauge the evolving corporate real estate (CRE) response to the COVID-19 coronavirus challenge and to identify practical steps members can take to support their company's effort to ensure employee safety and business continuity. Separate surveys were sent to end user members (122 responses) and service provider members (176 responses).

The survey was an update to one conducted from March 4 to 6. The findings reveal major changes in less than two weeks, with corporate real estate organizations dramatically increasing the depth and breadth of their response to the coronavirus challenge:

- Ninety-seven percent of respondents are supporting a corporate mandate for expanded remote working, compared to 56% in the previous survey.
- Some 70% are encouraging employees to avoid public places and public transportation, up from 20%.
- Thirty-nine percent have reduced hours of operation at one or more facilities, up from 15%.

- Fifty-five percent have shut down one or more facilities, compared to 24% previously.
- Eighty-eight percent are encouraging employees to avoid direct contact in the workplace (e.g., handshakes), up from 56%.
- Forty-five percent have established more stringent security (e.g., building entry) procedures for visitors, such as health screenings (up from 31%).
- Twenty percent are providing on-site health care professionals, up from 8%.
- Ninety percent are postponing or canceling business meetings, up from 69%.

In a new survey question, almost half of the respondents (48%) stated their companies are making accommodations for parents whose children are out of school due to the coronavirus outbreak. Several respondents indicated their companies have expanded PTO (paid time off) to support employees in balancing home and career.

As revealed in the survey, the biggest challenges in addressing the COVID-19 coronavirus include:

- Rapid pace of change and new government mandates
- The fluidity of the crisis
- Adapting for a long-term crisis
- Managing functions that cannot be handled remotely

Containing fear.  
Internet and network bandwidth was cited as the top concern for those working remotely. **WPM**



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## FOR MANY, THE HOME IS NOW THE OFFICE



Pat Davison

FOR THE FIRST TIME, MANY ARE LEAVING OFFICES TO WORK FROM HOME, AND IT CAN BE A JARRING EXPERIENCE TRYING TO BALANCE WORK WITH HOME.

STORY BY JOHN HORN

**THE WORKPLACE HAS CHANGED.** Lives have changed. Everyone's at home these days, be it parenting or working. For most of us, both. What is a workplace anyway? If the coronavirus is changing anything, it is our idea of what makes a workplace, well, a workplace.

For the first time, many are leaving offices to work from home, and it can be a jarring experience trying to balance work with home. Few homes are outfitted with the latest ergonomic furniture. Distractions are everywhere, from barking dogs to crying kids to home improvement projects grabbing our attention.

You're not alone. Here are a few examples of workers who have found themselves working from home for the first time.

### Longer days, T-shirts and shorts

Pat Davison is working from his home in Charlotte, North Carolina. He's a director of standards for MHI, a company that provides supply chain solutions.

MHI represents trade associations for anything you'd find in a warehouse — from fork trucks to conveyors and everything in between.

Before COVID-19 restrictions, he said his work day looked a lot like this: Go into the office, sit in a chair for

eight hours, maybe hit a couple of meetings and do a bit of teleconferencing.

Davison and his company have had to make adjustments and quickly.

"If you're running a manufacturing plant, you can't have people working from home," he said. "We did not have a work-from-home policy in place. It just wasn't an option.

"Now, management created one in one week. And they want us available from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. But they also realize employees have children who are now at home."

How has it impacted his productivity?

"Honestly, I find I work 10- or 11-hour days. And I'm wearing shorts and a T-shirt now," he said. (On March 28, temperatures in Charlotte were 77 degrees).

"All jokes aside, it's a lot of teleconferencing and much more task group meetings. Management preferred to have us in the office, but my employer realized we now need a WFH policy."

He said employees are utilizing Skype to effectively communicate.

What's his view on work-from-home policies in general, for workers who really don't need to be onsite every day?



# Workplaces



Beth Ann Anderson



Jessica Carron





Jessica Carron

"There's no good reason for not doing that," he said of working from home. "Your commute, for one. Plus, an hour to take lunch. That's two hours of productivity that I can make up, easily."

### Missing the camaraderie

Beth Ann Anderson is a manager of photography production based in Seattle. She oversees photo and video shoots in places like Australia.

She, too, said her company was not prepared for a work-from-home policy. It was a rush. They created a virtual private network (VPN) and put measures in place for people to work remotely. The scramble was short-lived.

"We got a VPN, but were late to the game, like a lot of us," she said. "But they reacted and put a system in place for us to work remotely quickly."

With social distancing, it's not as easy when it comes to coworkers. What about your graphic designer? The tech person you talk to everyday? Skype goes a long way, but there's something about the personal connection, the camaraderie in the workspace.

"How are we going to be in touch now?" Anderson asked.

So, you're a now-at-home photo production manager with a young son, who's not in school.

"My son, like a lot of people, has access to an online curriculum," she said. "But if you work from home, you

should be doing something productive. The more people in the house, the more (that) gets done.

"And I'm not going to lie, I love a good spreadsheet. I really do."

One thing she does not feel comfortable with in this newfound work-from-home culture is yelling. She's not having it. Nor does she like superfluous social media.

"You have to let that shit go," she said bluntly. "There's no need to raise our voices. Not now.

"And can we stop it with the Tik-Tok?"

### Truly off the grid

Jessica Garron is a senior science consultant at the University of Alaska-Fairbanks. She coordinates oil spill-related research and also teaches scientists around the globe. In addition to working full-time for the university, she's working on her dissertation now at home.

Life in the Arctic Circle is no joke. And you live there by design. However, you typically might have a workplace you visit Monday through Friday, with the workplace accoutrements they may provide.

Garron now does her work remotely, without the sake of certain creature comforts. Her internet access is limited to her mobile phone. In her at-home workspace, there is no running water, which is common in the frozen North, like Fairbanks.

She is as off-grid as one can get. **WPM**





## WORKING FROM HOME

by Michael A. Dunlap

**WORKING FROM HOME HAS NEVER BEEN MORE PROMINENT IN OUR VOCABULARY.** Whether you are directed, volunteered or simply chose a full- or part-time at home work environment, not everyone is fully prepared for working outside the more traditional work spaces.

The concept of working from home is certainly not new; but it might be new to you.

I've been a home office worker for more than 25 years. We asked a few professionals — all of whom work in the commercial furnishings industry — for their advice about establishing your first home office or how you can make your current one even better.

Here is some of what they told us:

### **Schedule**

Try to keep your hours the same as when you went into the office only without the commute. Arrange coast-to-coast or intercontinental calls to be within your normal workday. Establish a schedule of hours for work each day, and stick to it.

Be a self-motivator with your work schedule and home life. Remember to take regular breaks to stretch and move or take a quick walk (get a coffee, say "hi" to the kids and pets).

Most of the people you called and talked to from



work — customers, suppliers, off-site associates, support teams or professional services — were not in your building. Calling them from home is no different. Organizing your in-house team is only a matter of planning. Can it be done by phone one-on-one or in groups via video conferencing? At the end of the week you're more efficient and in many less meetings where your presence was marginal.

### What to wear

The cliché that “you can work at home in your pajamas or your bathroom” is true until you need to do an on-camera video call. Wear what you would normally wear each day when you go to work. Don't wear exercise shorts along with a jacket and a nice shirt or top. You will get busted eventually.

### Teleconferencing

Whether you participate through an in-house video conference system or other available venues, behave like you are in your regular workplace or the corporate boardroom.

If you normally bring coffee, tea, water or a soda/pop to a meeting, then it's OK. Don't eat a snack, a sandwich, dessert or anything you wouldn't bring to a meeting with your CEO. Without your knowledge, he or she might enter the video conference unannounced and unbeknownst to you.

### Work Hours and Discipline

Follow your normal routine. Shower, dress, eat breakfast and get to work on time. Don't forget to eat lunch during your normal time frame.

When you are home, you are still at work. Whether you normally arrive at 8 a.m. and go home at 5 p.m., or another routine, follow the same pattern as you would

normally work if you can.

If your work activities involve international clients, it's often necessary to work during unusual hours.

### Work Space – Where?

Choose your home space carefully to avoid interfering with others who work at home. Find a space away from normal traffic and insist family members respect that as a quiet space when you are working there. Maybe it's a guest room or your basement. Try a different floor in a space that you can make yours.

Designate space that permits easy access to materials and resources you need, such as a large surface to spread out your work. Stay clutter-free.

### Furniture

Since you are reading Workplaces magazine, you are probably working in the commercial furniture industry in some capacity, so the following recommendations are simply common sense and should be readily available from your employer, online or factory discount store.

### Experts prioritize

- Chair: Great ergonomics don't equate to brand or price. Test drive before you buy.
- Work surface: Bigger isn't always better, but it helps.
- Adjustability: A sit-to-stand work surface is ideal, either with an adjustable table or with two tables with different heights.
- Lighting: Good lighting is often overlooked. Good LED work lamps are very affordable.
- Visual display: Pick the best resolution you can afford. Yes, it will go easier with more screen real estate.
- Storage: Organize your copier/printer/scanner and the

myriad of office-related supplies so they're not cluttering up your work surfaces.

- Equipment: Phone, video, printer, copier, scanner.
- Consider adding a separate landline or mobile phone solely for business. A separate wireless keyboard and mouse can also create better ergonomics as opposed to the tiny laptop keyboard.
- Get a dongle so you can add one or two more monitors to augment that tiny laptop screen. Dongles/cables are cheap, and even old monitors can be paired up. Working with virtual teams means you are going to have a lot of tasks open throughout the day.

### Balance with Family

Let your family, especially young ones, know it is OK to interrupt if necessary, and that the interruption should be done in a mannerly fashion — especially if you're talking with someone on the phone or computer. Otherwise your day and evening should be family time.

If you're working, and there are other people in your home, plan times to get together. Lunch time is good. You need a break from solitary working and time for non-work discussion.

Parents trying to work from home for the first time have kids from preschoolers to university age are sources of distractions. Try to create a barrier from those distractions, like being able to shut the office door and being clear as well: “Mom is on a conference call until 2. Don't interrupt me unless it's an emergency.”

I recall a coworker tell the story of her then 4-year old who called 911 when she couldn't find her doll one day — that was her definition of an emergency!

### Advice, Quotes and Wisdom

“If you didn't have TV or music in your current office, it shouldn't be on at home.”

“If you didn't eat at your desk in the office, don't eat in your home office either.”

“You're not ‘getting some stuff done at home;’ you're at work!”

“Becoming an effective home worker takes practice and conditioning. In a way, it's like taking up a new sport.”

“I was on a Zoom call with one veteran home office worker who loves it and a rookie who thus far hates it. The rookie lamented that her coworkers and clients expect her to reply to emails at all hours of the day. No, we advised, you need to draw your boundary, e.g., ‘I'm not going to reply to emails between 6 p.m. and 8 a.m.’”

“Remember you are now the cleaning service!”

“Once you get used to working remotely you find you are equally or more efficient, and you have the opportunity to share in more family activities.”

I offer my special thanks to Alan Morse (alanmorse@gmail.com), Gretchen Gscheidle (gm.gscheidle@gmail.com), John Shuler (johnashuler@aol.com), Norman Chambers (nchambers@sdi clarity.com), Ron Hainer (rhainer@comcast.net) and Tom Leslie (tom@tmlassoc.com) for sharing their advice and experience about working from home.

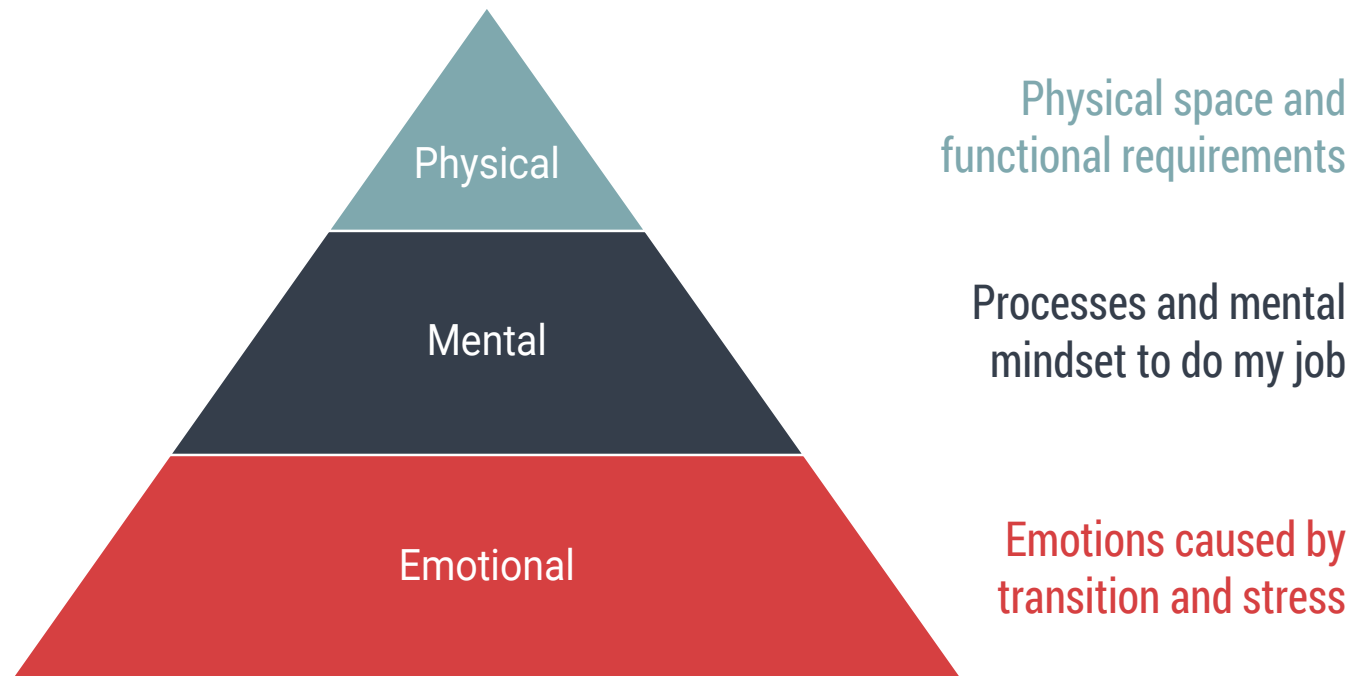
That's how I see it, From Where I Sit!

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## HEIRARCHY OF WFH NEEDS



ThinkLab.design | Managing the remote transition

## When Working from Home, Physical Transition is Just the Tip of the Iceberg

by Amanda Schneider

WE BEGAN 2020 WITH THE SAME UNBRIDLED OPTIMISM WITH WHICH MOST NEW YEARS START. Then our world was unexpectedly turned upside down by coronavirus. In a matter of weeks, we went from a thriving economy, and record low unemployment and vacancy rates in the U.S., to a world nearly shut down by a global pandemic. At the time this article was written, there were more than 450,000 confirmed cases globally, with the numbers increasing daily by the thousands and a world marked by social distancing and quarantines.

And still, the story is not one of all doom and gloom — nitrogen dioxide levels over China have dropped since the mandated quarantine, marine life is returning to the waterways in Italy, and families across the world are forced to slow down and enjoy family dinners, game nights in and more quality time together.

On the A&D front, business is anything but usual. As an industry that thrives on creative inspiration and human interaction, we've been forced almost overnight to transition to a near-complete remote existence.



As we tread forward, ThinkLab would like to share insights to help your team transition. Much like our typical research approach, we couple our firsthand knowledge of the topic with crowdsourced information to distill succinct insights as to how to make this easier on you and your team. Here are some thoughts and newfound silver linings in our current scenario from a team that has been 100% remote since its inception in 2015.

### Recognize the physical and emotional adjustments

While it is natural to focus on things like ergonomics, lighting for our newfound affinity for video calls and other tools to do our job, the physical transition is just the tip of the iceberg. There's also a mental adjustment when you have to completely (and quickly) reframe your workflow from in person to digital as well as — in this instance — a very real, underlying emotional one.

While our team has always worked remotely (and thus the physical and mental transition is near nonexistent for us), we have had to recognize and acknowledge intense emotions caused by this rapid transition. But after seeing your CMO call in from his daughter's "Frozen 2" bedroom, interruptions from 2-year-old "coworkers" and the joy of "furry roommates" now on work calls, perhaps this will serve to rehumanize the work experience.

### Remote work for designers: Actually, we can!

As part of humanizing, we are also hopeful this makes more room for flexibility for the dual-working families, hobbyists and empty nesters that love to travel but also love to work. In the past, we were told our industry couldn't exist remotely. After all, the creative process feeds on interaction with peers. But in a few short weeks, we're proving the naysayers wrong, and in a very positive, productive way.

As one designer shares, "Management's typical excuse for not allowing work from home is that the work needs to be done in the office because of team collaboration, software availability and keeping an eye on people working. I'm happy to say that we are blowing all of those misconceptions out of the water! Now they don't have a leg to stand on, and I'm hoping it will lead to more flexibility industrywide."

While the thought of a digital product preview or an online client presentation may have been unheard of in the past, today it's the only way we can keep business moving. And we are taking notes along the way, with the hopes of implementing some real change for our industry's method of working after the dust settles. We just hope the immersive part of this transition doesn't scare people away from the idea of flexible remote work.

### The biggest shift in remote working is transitioning from owning your time to owning your results.

While many focus on where time is spent, we suggest instead focusing on agreed-upon deadlines and timelines, then ensuring those deliverables are hit.

And while it's natural for employers to be worried about the underperformers getting their work done when they are not physically seen, our advice is to instead worry about burnout. In scenarios like these, it's oftentimes your type A's you may want to worry about most. In this uncertain time, these workers often resort to their job as a sense of relief and forward progress as a reprieve from their feeling of helplessness, and the burnout factor can become prevalent. Whether they are facing the many newfound distractions of kids/spouses/roommates at home, deafening silence of a N.Y. studio apartment in quarantine or simply the lack of marked starts and ends to the days with commutes to the office, our surveys suggest many employees are feeling the constant overhead guilt of "Am I doing enough?" Management's desire to stay in touch and over-communicate can add to the guilt factor by making employees feel the need to respond day and night. Work "anytime, anywhere" can become work "all the time, everywhere."

Fortunately, our research shows the industry is responding well — 72% found the transition to be easy or very easy and only 7% found it difficult or very difficult. Many of the biggest difficulties are coming from factors that don't relate well to what typical work-from-home scenarios look like. This transition was rapid, immersive and had the distraction of children at home to boot.

For more tips on how to use this new remote transition to empower your introverts through virtual brainstorming, how to streamline (over) communication and tips and tricks to get through this crazy phase with the kids (or roommates or [surprising discoveries about our spouses' work habits](#)) at home, we invite you to watch the recording of our full webinar, [which can be found here](#). **WPM**

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*Amanda Schneider is President of ThinkLab, the research division of SANDOW. At ThinkLab, we combine Interior Design Media's incredible reach within the architecture and design community with proven market research techniques to uncover relevant trends and opportunities that connect back to brand and business goals in a thought-provoking, creative, and actionable way. Join in to know what's next at [thinklab.design/join-in](http://thinklab.design/join-in).*





## In Uncertain Times, Ease Your Emotions at Work and at Home

LIVING IN SPAIN AND BEING HUNDREDS OF MILES AWAY FROM MY FAMILY HAS MADE IT HARDER, ESPECIALLY AFTER THEY IMPOSED THE NATIONAL LOCKDOWN.

by Eva Lin

**ANXIETY, FEAR, ISOLATION AND LOSS OF CONTROL WERE BOILING OUT OF CONTROL LAST WEEK.** It took me a while to realize those feelings were making me unhealthy. I have decided to take real actions to look after my mental health.

It is so easy to drown into those overwhelming emotions. I guess if you are reading this it is because you've realized those feelings are consuming you, and you want to do something about them. And I congratulate you, the first step is always being aware of the emotions.

Living in Spain and being hundreds of miles away from my family has made it harder, especially after they imposed the national lockdown. I was fortunate I had already started taking preventive actions to ease those emotions. Little things made a huge difference in my mental health during this time

This post is about the actions I've taken to ease those emotions, and I hope they are helpful for you, too.

I am no mental health professional, and I understand everyone will react differently to the situation based on their backgrounds. I am also very aware not everyone can adapt the same strategies, but the goal is to get you thinking about the things you can do.

### **Acknowledge the Feelings and Act**

It is OK to feel scared. It is OK to feel overwhelmed. It is OK to feel anxious or stressed.

With all the news, it also is reasonable to feel a lack of control.

I felt a massive disconnect from my intentions due to everything happening in the world. The sense of anxiety became so bad I was literally feeling all the symptoms. The more I read, the worst they got. I knew then I had to stop.

I had to put considerable effort into switching my mind from reactive to proactive.

Tell yourself it is OK to feel the way you feel and then desire to improve your mood.

I did a helpful meditation, too. One that makes you shake your entire body and scream out your tensions by Kim Eng on YouTube.

### **Activate Screen Time Control**

I was already using my screen time settings to control the amount of time I spend on certain apps. Now I have extended the time limit to news apps, too.

Aside from that, I have added a rule that turns all non-essential apps off from 11:15 p.m. until 8:45 a.m.

This allows the hour before I go to bed and after I wake to be silent. A way to forcefully disconnect.



I wake up, make my coffee, meditate and do some writing before connecting back every morning. This way, the information doesn't take me by surprise, and I am mentally ready to tackle the day.

I've seen an enormous difference in how I feel the rest of the day with this simple adjustment. <https://medium.com/@evaita2/support-your-mental-health-during-covid-19-cb8a20ef1d59>

Here is how to do it in iPhone and Android. <https://www.dummies.com/consumer-electronics/smartphones/iphone/how-to-use-the-iphone-screen-time-feature-to-set-downtime-and-restrictions/>

Android: <https://www.androidcentral.com/how-use-android-pies-digital-wellbeing-tools>

### Keep Routines (with minor modifications)

Do you make yourself a cup of coffee every morning? Keep doing it.

Is your team used to having face-to-face Monday meetings? Keep doing it (online). At the same time, with the same rules.

Did you exercise at the gym three times a week for one hour? Keep doing it (with home routines). Call your gym partner and ask him/her if they want to continue the routines.

### Help build communities and initiate the online community.

For people who had weekly social gatherings (religious, language exchange, writing clubs, etc.), consider keeping those habits active by proposing online gatherings. Social distancing doesn't need to mean social isolation!

You can be the person who starts gatherings or motivates people to do it.

### Place some rules on keeping the virus topic to a minimum.

Take a break from the news, and tell your friends and family about your break.

Intentionally take a break from the reading and watching the news and social media. Tell your family and friends you are taking a break so they can help you by not sending you more news.

### Set a time during the day you want to keep updated

Stay away from conspiracy theories and toxic media who are feeding panic instead of keeping us informed. Choose channels and news sources you feel are more moderate.

### Start Journaling or Writing

I believe there is no better time to journal. Write down all the feelings you have about the situation, let the words pour down without guilt of upsetting others.

It was journaling — my lifetime habit — that brought me back to my sanity last week. I realized I was becoming a reactive person rather than a proactive person. I was allowing the news, fear and anger to consume me. Journaling helped me bring back my mind tone into my intentions. <https://medium.com/@evaita2/support-your-mental-health-during-covid-19-cb8a20ef1d59>

I have also started using my journal to record what my thoughts are about the situation. You know, in case my future grandchildren ask me what happened in 2020.

### Reflections of Journaling for 15 years and How to Get Started

The earliest journals I can find written by my younger self date back to 2004 when I was still in elementary school. <https://medium.com/present-pineapples/reflections-of-journaling-for-15-years-and-how-to-get-started-3ff89f5ec6ff>

### FaceTime — Hangout — Zoom — Skype over Texting

Social interaction will become critical. Consider using video chats and voice calls over texting. Call those who you think might be in isolation. Actively reach out for your circle of friends and family.

Some of these online services can even allow people to call in for free. So, give everyone the numbers to call in and join the family calls.

Here in Spain, there are even groups of young people giving out their numbers and receiving requests to call people who feel lonely.

### Spread positive vibes. Stop negative messages.

I decided to stop sending anything negative (not the same as informative) to my family and friends.

I made a huge mistake last week of sending a voice message that I came across. The message sent terror and panic to everyone. Even though the message had positive intentions, it only added unnecessary fear.

I ask myself: "Is this information useful? Can they do anything about it? Will it bring anything positive?"

If the answers are no, there is no need to pass it on.

Now I am proactively passing on only informative information that is helpful for all of us in society, including a lot of positive vibes.

### Donate Time, Resources or Creativity

Do you have creative talents you can share with others? Help those in isolation get some entertainment?

Do you have time to call people who might be feeling disconnected?

Donate to groups and foundations bringing help to those we often forget about in our community. Think of unusual things to share, such as access to the internet.

Think outside the box of the positive things you can possibly do for others.

### A Final Message

Some of the things I have been actively doing have made an enormous difference and helped me get back on track. The number one source of my stress came from thinking I couldn't do much to help. Realizing everyone plays a role and there is something we can do makes a huge difference.

Even before they announced a national lockdown here in Spain, I knew the least I could do for everyone was to stay home. One less person in the street is one less virus carrier. Stay home if you have the choice.

Help people understand the faster we work together, the faster we will defeat the virus. Don't let selfishness win.

Try to keep it simple and focus on the things you can proactively do rather than the things that are out of our control. Together we will make a difference.



## Focusmate – Virtual Coworking to Get Things Done

**LET'S FACE IT, WHEN WE WORK REMOTELY, WE CAN BECOME EASILY DISTRACTED OR STRUGGLE WITH PROCRASTINATION.** Lots of strategies and tools are out there to help us stay on track, but sometimes books, systems and apps contribute to the distraction factor. Focusmate aims to change all that.

Focusmate is a website that promises to help users — remote workers, solopreneurs, freelancers, students or side gig hustlers — stop procrastinating by having another human being to hold you to account, just like your coworkers might in a real office. Developed by Taylor Jacobson, a former corporate employee turned professional entrepreneur coach, Jacobson created Focusmate to help independent workers break free of the shame and anxiety caused by chronic procrastination and to enjoy the same benefits of accountability as clients paying thousands of dollars for coaching.

Here's how it works:

**Focusmate – Virtual  
Coworking to Get  
Things Done**

Free or \$5 per month

[focusmate.com](https://focusmate.com)



Focusmate provides an online platform for people to meet and work together in 50-minute increments. You choose a time you want to be productive, and you'll then be matched with another person wanting to work at the same time. When you show up for your video meeting, you say hello to your coworker, you each share what you'll be working on, then you both get to work. You work quietly in tandem with your mate until the session is done. You aren't hanging out or collaborating with your partner: You say hello at the beginning, declare your tasks, and say goodbye at the end.

Research shows people perform better when they need to complete a task in the presence of someone else. If you commit to another person that you are going to do something, it is highly likely you will complete it. You are also likely to increase productivity if you reflect on your work afterward. You know you are going to have to review the job that you did, so in the moment of work, your actual focus becomes stronger.



We tried a few sessions, and the first one was a little awkward. Letting a random stranger into your life to work together for a while feels kind of weird, but we were paired up with a man named Mike — who had several sessions under his belt — and he took the lead. We told each other what we were working on — Mike was doing a script, and we were doing some emails.

Mates are encouraged to keep the mics on, but Mike turned his off, which disappointed us a bit because hearing the other person is part of the awareness you're working in the company of someone else. We wanted to feel like we were in the same room with the other person. We learned later many Focusmate participants mute their mics because they have music on in the background.

It was also hard to settle in at first. Since we were both looking at our computers to do our work, it seemed like we were looking at each other, which was kind of distracting at first. But, after a few minutes of thinking about how weird the scenario was, there wasn't anything else to do except get to work — and that's the whole point of Focusmate — to keep your behind in the seat and stay focused. You just can't get up and walk away from your work or turn the TV on when you're working with a mate, so your only choice is to just complete the task at hand. We participated in a second session, and it was way less awkward and a little more fun because we knew what to expect and how to make the best of the session.

Focusmate is free for three sessions (50 minutes each) every week. For unlimited sessions, you can upgrade to Turbo for \$5 per month. To give it a whirl, visit [www.focusmate.com](https://www.focusmate.com).



## Nekteck Shiatsu Neck and Back

**BEFORE SOCIAL DISTANCING AND QUARANTINES BECAME THE NORM, MANY OF US ROMANTICIZED ABOUT WORKING FROM HOME.** How great would it be to roll out of bed and hit the office? The reality of work from home is much different than this utopian view of things.

Many of those forced to work from home don't have the proper tools to do it effectively we've found. And when your place to relax becomes your place of work, well, it gets awfully hard to actually relax when we check out of work mode. Trips to the local day spa for a massage are out. So what is the over-taxed home office worker to do to relax?

We decided to test one of the many home massage products on the market and found the model helps some but will never replace the vice-like grip of our regular masseuse. The Nekteck Shiatsu neck and back massager is a welcome relief after a day filled with Zoom meetings, but it still leaves a lot to be desired.

The Nekteck massager sits on your neck and has two sets of roller balls that turn, creating what the company calls a "Shiatsu" massage. Yes, it feels pretty good when the rollers are turning, but it takes some time to get it positioned properly for it to actually work. Three speeds are offered, but we can't imagine using it on any but the slowest setting. It is hard to know if the heat function works at all. We can't tell if it is actually heating up or if the friction caused by the tuning of

the rollers is creating the heat.

The device itself is rather bulky with two large straps that hang from each side with loops for your arms. The controls are on the front of the left strap. The bulkiness of the massager makes it hard to store. It takes up a lot of room and can't be folded up and away. Still, it isn't so large that it would be embarrassing to use in an office setting.

The instructions that come with the messenger are sparse, which is a surprise since using it in the wrong way could cause discomfort or injury. The build seems fairly substantial, and it should last a long time.

Still, massage is a very personal thing. What feels good to one person does not feel good to another. There really is no way to adjust the Nekteck massager to personalize the massage. For most of us though, the massager felt pretty good to use. It definitely worked some of the knots out of our stressed necks.

Few of us have the budget for the high-end Asian massage chairs, which can cost thousands of dollars. So the Nekteck massager is definitely a bargain for the work-from-home workforce that needs to blow off a little steam.

Purchase the Nekteck Shiatsu massager from amazon.com for \$42.99.

### Nekteck Shiatsu Neck and Back

\$42.99

Amazon.com



## INSIGHTS FROM 140+ REMOTE TEAMS AND COMPANIES ON HOW TO INTEGRATE, MANAGE AND COMMUNICATE REMOTELY

To help contain the spread of COVID-19, [remote work has been advised by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) and companies worldwide across all industries and sizes have implemented working from home as a temporary workplace policy. [Remote.co offers advice on challenges businesses transitioning some or all of its workforce to a remote environment may face.](#)

"Whether you're a leader at an organization in the midst of implementing remote work due to coronavirus and looking for resources, or if you're an employee who's been suddenly sent home to work and want more guidance, Remote.co and FlexJobs want to be here to support you," said Sara Sutton, founder and CEO of Remote.co and FlexJobs. "[Remote work policies are incredibly important during emergency situations](#) such as this, and it can be the difference between keeping team members safe and organizations in business. Remote.co is an extremely comprehensive, thoughtful and free remote work resource for any organization trying to figure this out right now," Sutton said.

[Remote.co's Q&A section](#) features direct feedback from 140-plus remote teams and companies on key topics impacting virtual work environments. Each section listed below is elaborated on using extensive interviews from fully virtual companies or teams.

[Visit their webpage](#) and click on a header for more information on best practices regarding remote work management.

- What is the hardest part about managing a remote workforce?
- What advice would you give to a team considering to go remote?
- What challenges have you encountered building a remote team?
- What are the most effective tools for remote team communication?
- What were your biggest fears in managing remote workers?
- How do you measure the productivity of remote workers?
- What elements are key to successful working relationships with remote teams?
- How do you nurture your company's culture in a remote work environment?
- Do you have remote communication protocols for your remote workers?
- How do you keep remote employees engaged and feeling part of the bigger picture?
- How does your team address different time zone challenges?

Remote.co's section featuring [insights from remote workers](#) themselves may also be useful to employees who are new to working from home. **WPM**



[Haworth] Boise, Idaho

[Steelcase] New York City

[Herman Miller] New York City

[Steelcase] Atlanta, Birmingham, Nashville