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## How to stay focused while working in the 'new norm'

### Two months on from the initial outbreak of Covid-19 and concentration is becoming an issue for employees. Here are tips on how to stay focused when working.

We are over two months into the Covid-19 lockdown and at times it can be hard to keep the momentum going. Working from home was a very sudden change for many businesses and even now it can still be hard to stay focused and get things done.

Many people are dealing with noise and distractions in busy households. Others are working at home alone, but this can be a distraction too.

#### Getting things done

Staying focused is key to getting things done. But in times of uncertainty, it can be hard to do this. Our minds become distracted and even though we spend time, we don't get much done. One bad day can lead to another and before we know it our productivity has plummeted. This can cause frustration and stress.

Here are some tips to help stay on track so you can maximise the return for your efforts while working from home.

#### Focus on the now

There are lots of things we do not know about the future. When will we return to work? When will we get back to normal? What will that normal look like?

To remain focused, try concentrate on what you do know. Take each week and try to get the most from each day. Identify your priorities. Identify the outcomes you need by Friday.

At the end of each day, make a quick plan for the next day. This helps you tune out and relax in the evening. The next morning you can hit the ground running as you have done the thinking already and you have a clear plan for the day.

A productive day gives you the momentum to have another one again the next day. Before you know it, you are having a productive week.

#### Value your work time

The hours you work are precious so protect them as much as possible. Identify what stops you

staying on track.

Here are some of the most common distractions when working from home:

- No dedicated space to work
- A busy, noisy house
- Home schooling
- Young children to mind
- Technology distractions
- Household jobs
- Blurred lines between home and work
- Too much time to think

Focus your energy on what you can change now. What is within your control? Accept that your house may be noisy and that your family need your attention. Figure out how to work around this. Perhaps you can change your working day. A lot of people have done this by working in focused time blocks when their house is quiet. What would work for you and your business?

Maximise your chance of staying focused by eliminating as many technology distractions as possible. When you get those precious hours at the desk put your phone out of sight.

If you are working in a quiet house, you may be checking your phone a lot for social connection. This is important but too much browsing can eat into your time. It also affects concentration levels. If you find you lose track of time, use a timer for your breaks.

### **'Commute' to work**

The bonus of working from home is no commute and no traffic. But commuting does help to us get into work mode. At home, we may have to deal with a work problem two minutes after finishing our breakfast. Our minds may not be ready to focus.

Separate home from work by creating a short morning 'commute'. This could be: 1) a quick walk around the block, 2) an exercise routine or 3) ten minutes reading a business article. This allows you time to switch your focus and concentrate on the day ahead.

It is equally important to 'commute home' from work in the evening so you can switch off and be available for family. Aim for a set finish time and have something you do each day to wind back down.

You may be tempted to read emails after hours, particularly if your workspace or devices are visible. Try not to let it become a habit as working in the evening can impact your ability to be productive the following day.

## **Be Productive**

Getting things done feels good. It can also help reduce stress and we all need that right now. Take control of your time and productivity by making some changes to your routine.

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