



Organizing Tips...

Eight ways to improve home office productivity

- By Lorena Prime -



Lorena Prime

Many of my clients have both work and home offices but they sometimes don't feel as productive in their informal home setting. They cite lack of focus, distractions by loved ones or chores, feeling as if they have all day (i.e., more hours than they actually have), lack of motivation, limited office space, and other dilemmas.

With some conscious habit changes and alterations in your space, you can dramatically increase your productivity at home. The goal of working from home is to complete your job in less time giving you more time to spend with family, friends, and activities. We need to take advantage of a zero-mile commute! Hone your home office skills with these best practices:

- **Separate your space.** Differentiate your office space from the rest of your home even if it's just with a screen and some plants. You need to separate work and home in order to maintain a healthy work/life balance, and it's hard to be productive if you're lounging on your bed.
- **Organize your office space.** While we automatically have the right tools at work, we forget that similar equipment is needed at home in order to complete tasks quickly. Remember the point of working at home is to shorten the workday. Having a multi-function printer (with print, scan, fax and copy capabilities), phone headset, file cabinet, office supplies, ergonomic office chair, and desk of the appropriate height will help us get the job done.
- **Set office hours.** Don't get lured into doing the laundry, taking the kids for a walk, or playing with the dog thinking that it will just take a few minutes. If you don't keep to some kind of routine, then you'll still be working late nights and weekends.
- **Learn to focus.** You have to be a little more disciplined in this new work environment, so shut your door, ban the kids from your office during certain hours, and turn the bell off on your email (which is a huge distraction). Make sure to communicate your office hours to your family so they can support you. Let them know you *want* to spend time with them, but just because you're home doesn't mean you're available for fun or handyman jobs *during your office hours*.
- **Stay motivated.** You can begin to lose your desire to work because things around the house beckon to you. Stay energized by keeping some kind of schedule. Our routines keep us on track to get the job done in a timely fashion.
- **Keep in touch.** Communicating with your colleagues and customers is key. Talking with people helps you accomplish your tasks and keeps you from feeling too isolated. Make sure that you aren't *only* communicating via email because you'll lose that personal touch. Also, keeping in touch with your boss is essential. If he or she doesn't know what you're working on, then you could be the next candidate for a layoff.
- **Meet with people face-to-face.** Have lunch or a cup of coffee at least once or twice a week with a colleague, neighbor, or customer. We all need to connect with people. Short on companions? Consider joining an organization, such as the Chamber of Commerce, to give you opportunities to see people for socializing and networking.
- **Appreciate the opportunity.** Working from home can be fabulous so you don't want to ruin it for everyone else by letting your deadlines slide or by not being available during work hours. If you're lucky, you'll learn how to do your job in fewer hours so you have more time to relax.

Staying in your pajamas and fuzzy slippers never felt so good. You're getting your job done and have the luxury of being at home. Here's to not being trapped in a cubicle!

Lorena Prime, Owner of Clearly Organized, speaks at companies and organizations on Time Management and other productivity issues. She uses a 5-stage process to help people shorten routine office work and save 1-2 hours every day. What could you do with an extra 1-2 hours? For more information, visit www.ClearlyOrganizedLife.com or call 617-633-2199.

