Photo by Kate Max Stock

OCTOBER 2020: 12 Tips for Working from Home

A colleague of mine was asked to interview with a media outlet and present her organizing tips while working from home. She turned to our National Association of Productivity and Organizing Professionals (NAPO) community for crowdsharing ideas.

I sent her the following notes based on my experience as a virtual leader these past fourteen years, leading cross-organizational teams in developing client solutions while working from home. She told me I should write a blog about my best work from home (WFH) leader practices, so I did... here it is!

You do not have to be a team lead or group leader to use these tips. These are for everyone, whether you are in business, education, telemedicine, customer service, or non-profit.

1. Collaborate, collaborate, collaborate. Don't let anyone slip into their own bubble and isolate, make sure others' voices are being heard and their talents are valued.

2. Spend time on team development as a critical component each week, and plan and present engaging working sessions to brainstorm, role play, and connect through creating solutions.

3. Schedule 15-minute Get Started sessions with teams or co-workers 30-minutes after work starts, giving folks time for coffee and e-mail catch-up

4. Practice compassion leadership and ensure you are meeting your employees'/colleagues' scheduling needs and integrating them easily into a common schedule.

5. Ensure your teams are using a common digital calendar like Google or Outlook and ensure your teams are actively working through platforms such as Microsoft Teams and Slack. Give them the gift of training on these platforms. While these platforms are designed to be intuitive, good performers get frustrated easily if they are not trained on advanced functionality that can optimize their work.

6. Ensure Brain Breaks and Body Breaks are scheduled for all. Our bodies are not build for sitting 3+ hours at a time. Make sure your people are stretching, moving, taking time out to reflect, rejuvenate, and to restore. Sitting can lead to a variety of health issues. I can attest to this and one of the major reasons I "retired" from Corporate.

7. Plan virtual networking events that work in a common calendar. Ensure social connections are sustained and new ones are made. No work talk, just team bonding time, mission driven.

8. Being virtual creates an out-of-the-box environment and can be an optimal time to revisit workflows, processes, and cultural norms.

9. Frequently talk to your employees or colleagues and figure out what is working best for them and where they need help. Then act on improvements.

10. Ensure your IT department is skillfully staffed for a greater demand in virtual support. Beware of IT burnout and use modern learning techniques to help employees self-serve - quick cards, infographics, videos.

11. The simple truth is employees who are suited for WFH will work even harder than they do in the office. Recognize that instead of trying to get more with less, respect colleagues' boundaries and invest in personalizing what works best for the team's productivity and how to best utilize talents and strengths for the good of the whole

12. Many employees that have children at home or virtual learning will require a different flexibility. Find ways to ease the pressure and work together on a schedule. An employee is not more or less on how well they can WFH. All adults have several accountabilities, taking a community approach will go a long way for a committed, loyal workforce.