



**Making the Move to a Virtual Office**  
**Tips and Tech Tools**  
**CFMSE Retreat – Roundtable Discussion**  
**Friday, May 17, 2019**

# The Virtual or Home Office

## Pros

More cost efficient

No long-term commitments

More flexible (daily schedule)

Shorter/No Commute

## Cons

Less/No social contact

No physical location

Technology issues (phones, etc.)

Distraction

# The Traditional Office

## Pros

Brick and Mortar/Physical business address

Easier to meet with clients

## Cons

Location (not central etc.)/Commute time and costs

Cost (lease increases, etc.)

Office “headaches” that come with maintaining a physical location

# 5 Rules for Working from Home

1. Set boundaries.
2. Interact with other humans!
3. Accept the fact that you really do get more work done in half the time.
4. Integrate life and work time during the day—it is all about balance.
5. Make sure you have an established work area.



<https://www.bluesteps.com/blog/executives-working-from-home>

## Working Remotely – If Not Best, Then Really Good, Practices!

- Stay connected! Pick up the phone; Skype; Make it a point to meet with co-workers at least once a week OR better yet, schedule an in-person meeting. Thirty minutes today can save you hours over the long run PLUS it gets you up and out of your chair!
- Find an accountability buddy (you remember those!) and use them to help you stay on track and task (they'll use you as well!)
- Don't rely solely on email or texting – although many times an efficient and effective use of time, email and text are extremely impersonal and your tone/intent can be misconstrued (and ALL CAPS WON'T FIX IT!).
- Share accomplishments – including your own!
- Volunteer! Volunteers are needed everywhere – in the schools, organizations, and companies – find something that makes sense (even personal passions help you professionally!)
- Develop and commit to a schedule – really...you have to commit!!
  - Follow the two-minute rule – if it is going to take less than two minutes, get it done and out of the way!
- Travel (if possible) when opportunities arise.
- Have a dedicated office space and make it nice – too much clutter is too distracting and can get overwhelming!
- Greet every work day prepared to walk out the door at a moment's notice.
- Either stock healthy snacks or learn not to snack
- The laundry or grass will be there when you're not on the clock. Leave it alone!
- If you're a social media junkie (for personal use), keep that interaction for AFTER business hours or while you're on a break.
- Batch like tasks (whether behind the desk or on the road)
- Figure out a schedule that works for YOU!!! If you're more productive in the morning, then capitalize on that productivity! Figure out times when you'll experience fewer interruptions and use those to crank out work. Use other times (like around lunch time or after school) to run your errands, go to the Post Office, do a load of laundry, mow the lawn, etc. and remember to batch like tasks!

There are many great articles on working virtually or from home- this is one that come up today –

**Aimee Tariq, Guest Writer, Entrepreneur**  
**Founder and CEO of A Life With Health May 15, 2019**  
**<https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/333559>**

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For many, working from a home office is the ultimate dream. But as many entrepreneurs discover, it's not always easy to stay focused and productive when you're working in the same place where you spend time with family or friends, or unwind on the couch watching Netflix.

In fact, it's all too easy for the distractions of home to keep you from delivering the results you need to launch a successful entrepreneurial career. Thankfully, though, there are strategies you can use to improve your focus and productivity. These science-backed tricks will keep you on track throughout the work day:

### **1. Maintain a dress code.**

People who work from home often imagine that they will be able to go to work dressed in their pajamas. However, research has consistently shown that dressing up as though you're going into the office will help you perform better.

A study from the Journal of Experimental Social Psychology noted that all clothing has symbolic meaning. In other words, when you wear certain types of clothing, you tend to adopt the behaviors associated with those who wear that clothing.

In the study, participants who wore a lab coat performed better at "attention-related tasks" because, the researchers explained, the coat had a symbolic meaning of attentiveness and care. Similarly, wearing the attire you associate with a successful workplace -- be it formal or casual businesswear -- can subconsciously put you in the right frame of mind for work.

### **2. 'Green up' your office.**

You have total control over how your home office looks -- but certain kinds of decor will be more beneficial to your productivity than others. A study published in Science Daily found that offices with plant decorations had 15 percent higher productivity than those without. Interestingly, the presence of plant life was also associated with greater satisfaction with one's work.

Even a single decorative plant on your desk can improve indoor air quality and help you remain better focused on your work. Keeping your plants healthy through exposure to natural sunlight can also improve your own energy levels.

For best results, place your plant in an area easily visible from where you work. Make sure you account for whether a particular plant grows better in sunlight or shade, so it will stay healthy in its selected space.

### **3. Use music to help you focus.**

As Eric Stensvaag wrote in a blog post for music platform Feed.fm, "Over the past half-century, countless studies have shown the positive correlation between music and activities as diverse as exercise and shopping. Music's ability to help us perform better and 'stick it out' is a behavioral result ... Listening to

(and making) music has been proven to reduce garden-variety stress and treat specific mental health illnesses.”

So what is it that causes music to make such a difference?

Listening to music helps release dopamine in the brain, relieving stress and helping us feel more motivated, even happy, while we work. Studies have further shown that listening to music can help us work faster and generate new ideas.

In a blog article published on Medium, Melissa Chu noted that music without lyrics, such as classical music or music from a film soundtrack, is generally better at improving mood and concentration. It’s your home office -- so you can experiment to find the music that works best for you!

#### **4. Avoid distractions, but not rest breaks.**

Smartphones can be a significant (and debilitating) distraction in a home office. However, by exercising greater self-control, time spent not focused on work can be of great benefit. Breaks are essential because they help your prefrontal cortex rest and recharge so you can stay focused on what matters most.

As Meg Selig wrote in Psychology Today, “Prolonged attention to a single task actually hinders performance ... Working for long stretches without breaks leads to stress and exhaustion. Taking breaks refreshes the mind, replenishes your mental resources, and helps you become more creative.”

When you work from a home office, you have greater control over when and how you spend your breaks. Whether you need to go for a brief walk, read a chapter from your favorite novel or simply watch a few YouTube videos, you can rest your brain in a manner that works best for you, and ensure that you return to your task rejuvenated and mentally focused.

#### **5. Stay warm.**

Working from a home office, you have much greater control over the thermostat, allowing you to create a more comfortable environment. However, in addition to general comfort and your utility expenses, you may also wish to consider how your thermostat settings affect your productivity.

A study by Cornell University found that in offices that kept temperatures at 68 degrees Fahrenheit, “Employees committed 44 percent more errors and were less than half as productive” in comparison to those working in offices kept at 77 degrees.

Turning up the heat during the winter and dialing back the air-conditioner in the summer will help your body devote less energy to trying to stay warm and more energy to focusing on the work-related tasks at hand.

Working from home certainly comes with its fair share of challenges -- but it can also be extremely rewarding. As you use these simple science-backed methods to improve your productivity, your home office will become the right kind of space for fueling success.

# Resources (and there are a TON!)

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These resources represent just the tip of the iceberg for individuals or small groups venturing into the virtual working world. This list is provided as a resource only – any use is strictly at your discretion! If you have great resources, please share them!

<https://basecamp.com/> - work management platform to keep people on task. \$

<https://www.computerhope.com/shortcut.htm> - Provides a handy list of computer shortcuts for all sorts of systems.

<https://brain.fm/> - While other music is primarily made to sound good and evoke feelings, Brain.fm works with teams of scientists and composers to engineer music specifically designed to help you achieve and sustain deep focus. \$

<https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/news-feed-eradicator-for/fjcldmjmhkklehbacihaioipklhlhg?hl=en> - Eradicate distractions by replacing your entire news feed with an inspiring quote (easier to search News Feed Eradicator)

<https://selfcontrolapp.com/> - for MAC users. SelfControl is a free and open-source application for macOS that lets you block your own access to distracting websites, your mail servers, or anything else on the Internet.

<https://asana.com/> - work management platform teams use to stay focused on the goals, projects, and daily tasks that grow business. \$

<https://www.one-tab.com/> - Convert all your tabs to a list (for Firefox and Google Chrome).

<https://www.rescuetime.com/> - learn your habits so you can be more productive in the long term. \$

<https://www.lastpass.com/> - store your passwords for easy retrieval and other benefits. Free and \$

<https://www.zendesk.com/product/pricing/> - customer support. \$

<https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/my-drive> - Google Drive - allows online sharing/collaboration

<https://www.amazon.com/b2b/info/amazon-business?layout=landing> - It's Amazon ☺

<https://www.davincivirtual.com/virtual-offices> - a little bit of everything from phone systems to catering...\$

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