

# Maximise the advantages of remote working

by GAYNOR PARKIN

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*The flexibility of working outside the office is often talked about as a major factor in improving employee productivity, managing teams adaptively and in helping people to better integrate work and life.*

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While there are documented [benefits for employers](#), the advantages for employees are less clear. Potential employee wellbeing benefits include less commuting time and greater flexibility to attend to issues in our personal or family lives on our schedule. However, research investigating remote working has found employees regular work additional hours and find it more difficult to “switch off” from work.

We recently posted a [thought piece](#) about wellbeing and remote working to help leaders develop more strategies for better supporting teams who are working out of the office.

In this post, we focus on how we can maximise the benefits of remote working, and minimise the downsides.

1. To avoid the gradual creep of more and more time spent working, have a set-up conversation with your manager and your team about what you and they expect from the remote working arrangement, as well as how this will look in practice:
  - Will your work hours be fixed or variable – who will decide that and how will your availability be communicated?
  - What are expectations around more urgent or time-sensitive tasks?
  - How will you communicate and keep good communications going? Weekly or daily check-ins, via some form of face-to-face technology or phone – is it better to “see” one another or is that not important?
  - Discuss and agree on planned in-person catch-ups – will these be focused on work and/or is some social or non-task focused time important – for example, brainstorming and planning sessions?
2. If you work from home, consider creating a separate zone for work in the part or parts of the house where you work, and protect some complete work-free zones such as your bedroom or kitchen. Ideally, having a designated workspace that you can leave and shut the door on, so that you are less likely to drift back to it, helps to create a mental as well as physical boundary between work and home.



3. Consider signing up to a shared commercial or community co-working space. Many have flexible arrangements and provide various hot desking options where you can also access shared social and meeting spaces. This is a good option if you like working around other people, want to keep your work away from your personal living space, or just want to mix it up sometimes and enjoy a variety of places to work.
4. Keep track of how much you are working and how productive you are. Apps such as [Toggl](#) make this tracking simple and illuminating! Again, you may want to loop back to have another conversation with your manager and team once you have a clear picture from your tracking data – “I get the most done in the mornings and from mid-afternoon, so I am going to schedule longer lunch breaks for my personal priorities and I’ll be working and able to talk with you during these other times”.
5. Include your use of technology in your tracking. Clients tell us they are often making calls while driving, or returning emails while cooking dinner, and are therefore spending more time working than they were aware of.
6. Designate switch-off and unplug times. These might be times when you want to focus on other things that are important to you, such as setting aside uninterrupted times with loved ones. It is also important to have a switch-off period before you plan to go to sleep, ideally at least 2 hours. Having clear boundaries about these times, and developing good habits are so important to our ability to unwind, recover, reduce overload and maintain psychological resilience.

#### AN INTERESTING WATCH:

In this [TED talk](#), psychologist Adam Alter talks about how much time we really spend on our screens and why it makes us less happy. He is the author of *Irresistible: The rise of addictive technology and the business of keeping us hooked*.