

Your Workspace and Tools

We know that creating a home office under emergency circumstances is far from ideal. Here are some tips to do what you can with what you have, or where you might need to invest a little to make your space more comfortable and productive.



Create your Workspace

The environment you create will make a big difference in your productivity.

- If at all possible, define a space that can be put aside for just work and have some separation from noise.
- Avoid working from a couch or bed for proper ergonomics. Set up a station with a desk and a supportive chair.
- Try to allow for some natural light and incorporate some comfort items, like a plant or a place for your pet to snuggle up.
- Consider getting a sit/stand style desk or rigging your own sit/stand desk area.
Check out: [Jarvis](#), [Uplift](#), [Edge Desk](#) or [Varidesk](#)



Invest in Hardware

Optimize your connectivity, audio and visual experience.

- **Second monitor** – This will help you facilitate meetings even better since you'll be able to see the participants on one screen and your documents on another. It will also help to improve your ergonomics and keep you comfortable.
Check out: [Acer](#), [Dell](#), [LG](#), [Apple](#)
- **Web camera** – If you have a second monitor, you'll need an external web camera to mount on the monitor.
Check out: [HP](#), [Logitech](#), [Microsoft](#)
- **Speaker or Headphones** – Often the sound quality coming directly in to and out of your computer can be unreliable. If you have a quiet area to work from, you can use a hands free external speaker/microphone. If you are in a noisy environment, consider getting a pair of noise canceling headphones with a microphone capability.
Check out: [Jabra](#), [Plantronics](#), [Yealink](#), [Cowin](#), [Apple AirPods](#)



Drive Connectivity with Technology Tools

Have the right tools in place, but ensure that everyone knows how to use and troubleshoot them

- **Broadband** – Call your internet provider to ensure you have enough broadband capacity to handle multiple people using the internet simultaneously.
 - 300 mbps down/10 mbps at a minimum
 - If video conferencing, consider hardwiring your computer to the router with an ethernet cord
- **Communication & Collaboration Tools** – Consider the types of work that you need to transition from “off-line” to “on-line” and decide which type of tools are needed.
 - Video Conferencing
Check out: Microsoft Teams, Zoom, Webex, BlueJeans, Google Hangouts
 - Instant Messaging/Chat
Check out: Slack, Microsoft Teams, Whatsapp
 - Video Messaging
Check out: Loom
 - Document collaboration
Check out: Microsoft Teams, Google Drive, Box, Sharepoint
 - Virtual Brainstorming
Check out: Mural, Groupmap, Batterii, Box Notes
 - Virtual Office
Check out: Remo.co, Sococo, Walkabout Workplace
 - Workflow
Check out: Asana, Monday, Kanbantool
 - Scheduling
Check out: calendly

Prepare the Foundation

Follow these principles to enable your team to work together successfully, while working remotely.



Allow for Flexibility

Lead with empathy. Each team members will adapt differently to this new normal and their unique situation.

- **Managers** – Meet with your direct reports individually to understand what their unique needs are and how you and the rest of the team can support them.
- **Employees** – Assess your work and home priorities and get clear on your needs. Be empowered to ask your manager for some accommodations, like changing a meeting time or adjusting due dates.



Set Communication Norms

Establish expectations and norms to enable successful virtual work.

- **Set Core Meeting hours** – Establish times when team members are expected to be available during the day to have synchronous communication and meetings. There should be some common times to hold meetings, despite the varied work hours required by each team member.
- **Create Communication Norms** – Establish how you and your direct reports will communicate - what tools your team will use for different types of communication.
- **Make a Personal Plan** – If you have family or friends you need to take care of, decide what window of time they need your attention and when you can switch that attention to work (naptime, bedtime, screentime). If you have a partner at home, decide how you can divide up the household duties.



Establish a New Routine

Be Proactive. Days are going to feel very different than your usual routine in the office.

- **Stay nourished** – It's easy to forget to fuel yourself while juggling business meetings and the needs of your family. Put a daily reminder on your calendar to take breaks for meals and hydration.
- **Move around** – Give yourself frequent breaks from sitting too long at your desk. Take a walk outside while taking a work call. Take a stretch break - even in the middle of a meeting. You can have everyone get up and stretch together.

Adapt your skills to be able to lead effectively.



Top 10 critical skills needed for virtual leadership

Use this survey to assess yourself and your team. It will help you recognize who has the expertise to teach your team, and also where there are opportunity areas for skill development.

Skill Area	Not Comfortable	I Know a Bit	Good Enough	Expert (could teach others)	N/A
1. How to lead efficient and effective virtual meetings					
2. How to effectively influence key internal stakeholders and customers/clients across distance					
3. How to gain trust & drive performance when Managing a Remote Direct Report					
4. How to gain trust & work effectively with a Remote Manager					
5. How to know which virtual collaboration software tool to use for each situation without wasting time in system set up					
6. How to set communication norms and availability expectations with my team					
7. How to drive a culture of inclusion, trust, & fun in a distributed team					
8. How to present remotely to inspire & influence your audience					
9. How to build ideas & brainstorm when everyone can't be in the same room					
10. How to set up my workspace and my day for effective virtual work					



Skill Workshop Preview: Leading Effective Virtual Meetings

Facilitating a good virtual meeting requires a few different skills than huddling in a room together physically and letting the meeting evolve organically. More importantly, you will need to be really efficient with people's time right now as they are juggling work and life like never before.

Before the meeting:

Top Tip: Prepare a thorough agenda

Try out our version of the 5 P's Framework to help develop the agenda. Be sure to communicate the agenda 24 hours in advance of the meeting.

Top 5 P's Framework	
Type	Critical Questions
Purpose	Why are we meeting? Do you really need a meeting or can it be handled in a different manner?
Process	How will we facilitate the discussion or get to a decision remotely?
Product	What is the specific intended outcome?
Pre-Work	What preparation is needed? What work can get done asynchronously to expedite the meeting?
People	Who needs to attend? Narrow the invite list to the smallest group of the right people.

During the meeting:

Top Tip: Active facilitation

The meeting leader needs strategies for how to make the virtual meeting inclusive of all viewpoints from participants. Allow space for everyone to contribute by having a pregnant pause when asking for input. Remember it can feel 10x harder for introverts to speak up on virtual meetings as it is for in person meetings.

After the meeting:

Top Tip: Send a recap

Summarize decisions and next steps to get everyone literally on the same page.

To bring the full Leading Effective Virtual Meetings Workshop to your organization, please [Contact Us](#).

Other workshops: Virtual Leadership Foundations, Influencing Across Distance, Successful Remote Reporting Relationships, Driving Culture in Distributed Teams

Today's leaders need to evolve their skills and strategies to thrive in a geographically distributed world. Virtual Work Insider™ can help.

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sacha@virtualworkinsider.com



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