



How to avoid distractions when working from home

Telecommuting has made great strides over the last decade. U.S. Census Bureau statistics have identified key telecommuting trends, noting that 45 percent of the American workforce holds a job that is compatible with at least part-time work from home. Based on current trends, with no growth acceleration, regular telecommuters will total 4.9 million by 2016, a 69 percent increase from the current level. As more people work from home, more people need to find ways to be productive outside of the office environment. That productivity may hinge on avoiding distractions.

Many people telecommute in an attempt to make their lives easier and more affordable. Working from home carries with it a number of benefits, but also quite a few challenges. Some people who work from home find it more difficult to separate work life from home life, and distractions in the latter can sabotage the former. Recognizing your biggest distractions and remedying them can lead to more productivity and better job performance.

Children

One of the more popular reasons employees work from home is to be more available for child care. Telecommuting gives working parents a schedule that is flexible enough to meet work deadlines while also being able to pick the kids up from school or to attend school-related functions and extracurricular activities. Telecommuting also allows new mothers to nurse longer or stay home with infants for a longer period of time.

However, the same reasons people work from home also can prove to be the biggest distractions. Imagine being several paragraphs into a report when the baby wakes up from a nap and demands to be fed. Conference calls can be disrupted by a child who needs

homework help or a toddler who needs the channel changed on the television. Some trial and error may be required to develop a system in which you can work effectively and be able to pull away to handle child-related issues.

Social media

Social media connects people to the world around them. Smartphones and tablets enable people to check their email, update their status and tweet messages at a moment's notice. Working from home affords unrestricted access to social media sites and other forms of communication that may not be so readily accessible in a traditional working environment. It can be tempting for you to constantly click over to Instagram or LinkedIn during the day. However, telecommuters should set specific times of the day when they use social media and restrict usage to only these times. This way they can more fully immerse themselves in work. This may involve shutting off instant messaging services or logging off personal email until the workday is through.

Friendly interruptions

Friends and family members may not understand that telecommuting is the same as working. Phone calls or texts answered at all hours of the day can be distracting. Working from home does not give friends or family unlimited access to you, so discourage unexpected visits or phone calls. Others should understand that they must respect your work hours, whether those hours are being spent at home or in an office.

Dedicated workspace

It can be difficult to take telecommuting seriously if your work area is a folding table and a laptop stuck in the corner of the living room. Others in the household may infringe on your

workspace, and daily life can produce many distractions. It is best to have an area specifically dedicated to work, and this area should be closed off to others who won't need you during the day (children should be able to reach you in case of emergency). Your work desk shouldn't be a place that the children do their homework.

Try to set up your desk in an area that doesn't get much foot traffic or inspire you to daydream. If you are close to a television or facing an open window, you may spend too many hours gazing aimlessly instead of focused on the tasks at hand. Very often you can be your own worst enemy when it comes to distractions. Buckling down and paying attention requires effort.

Know your limits

Taking breaks from time to time can quell boredom and refresh your level of concentration. Periodically step away from your desk to grab a snack or drink, just like you would at the office. Go outdoors for a few minutes and breathe some fresh air. These tactics can keep your head clear.

Resolve problems before logging on

Attempt to handle any concerns or tasks related to your personal life before you start your work for the day. Otherwise, you may be focused on tackling one problem when your mind should be on something else. While home and work issues will inevitably cross paths, do not use work hours to pay bills, schedule medical appointments or run house errands.

Reducing distractions is a key to telecommuting successfully. As more companies recognize the benefits of allowing employees to work from home, workers should step up to the challenge with dedication and focus.

Make sure your resume doesn't cost you a job

Many a night's sleep has been lost worrying about an upcoming job interview. Questions like "Will I make a good impression?" or "Am I qualified for the job?" can make for a restless night's sleep on the eve before a job interview. Writing a resume is another aspect of the job hunt that can stoke your nerves. Men and women may pour over job timelines and skill summaries for hours in an effort to ensure they have included the right mix of information to get noticed.

Though resume writing has changed considerably over the years, some conventional wisdom about resumes still prevails, and how closely potential applicants adhere to these rules goes a long way toward determining if they earn a chance at an interview.

- * **Me, myself and I:** While the resume should showcase your professional accomplishments, it also should show case how your skills relate to the job you're applying for. This way the company understands you have researched the position and are in tune with what they're looking for in an applicant.
- * **One document for all responses:** A resume is not a static document. It needs to change depending on the job you're applying to. Although there will be certain information that can remain the same, update the skills and other information based on each position.
- * **One page is best:** Applicants were long told to keep their resumes concise, limiting the document to just one page. However, if your experience is extensive or one page cannot contain a long job history, don't be afraid to submit a two-page resume.
- * **Failing to be selective:** You need not include your entire job history on a resume, especially if certain past positions you have held are completely irrelevant to the position for which you are applying. Don't be afraid of job gaps, either. Many of today's recruiters understand that the changing economy can make it challenging to maintain steady employment.
- * **Overembellishment:** Do not embellish your skills. Always be open and honest on your resume. You may be asked to prove you can perform certain tasks, and if you cannot back up what is included on a resume, you will have wasted your time and the time the interviewer spent discussing his company's opening with you.
- * **Imperfections:** A resume is a reflection of you, so one with typographical errors or a poor layout is never acceptable. Ensure your resume is as professional and error-free as possible. Have a friend or a proofreader look it over before distributing.
- * **Paid positions:** Internships or volunteer work are perfectly acceptable to include on a resume, particularly for younger applicants who may not have a wealth of professional experience. Include a mix of information on the resume that will reflect your versatility.

Learn by **DOING** through our partnerships with various local businesses.

Benefit from internships and mentors that put you ahead of your competition.

Find flexibility and personal attention to help you achieve your goals.

Experience national-level research projects.

FIND YOURSELF, YOUR PASSION, YOUR PURPOSE, AND ULTIMATELY, YOUR CAREER THROUGH OUR WELCOMING AND SUPPORTIVE, YET CHALLENGING EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE.

MOUNT MARTY
COLLEGE

1105 WEST 8TH STREET, YANKTON, SD | 1-855-MTMARTY (686-2789) | MTMC.EDU