

Work From Home Tips

Bird Communications was built on a work-from-home model. Many of our Bird Associates are freelancers because of family circumstances – they have young children or they are caregivers themselves.

Here is some friendly wisdom that we have accumulated over the past few years.

Thoughts on Working During a Pandemic

First, you are not working from home; you are trying to work during a pandemic. Please do not minimize the added stress of working when you are worried about your loved ones, your own health and all of humanity. These are not normal times.

We generally do not work from home with partners around, families together in small spaces and children underfoot. Generally, partners are at their own worksites and children are in school or at daycare. Our families come with their own collection of emotional and physical needs that are heightened right now.

Pre-COVID, when we worked from home, we scheduled coffee and lunch meet-ups with colleagues to maintain social connections. These in-person opportunities are now gone.

You will spend a lot more time setting up technology platforms, appeasing bored kids, helping with school assignments, planning for groceries, making meals and cleaning up. These needs do not align with a typical 9-5 workday.

Philosophy for Working from Home

- **Give yourself a break.**
- **Adjust the concept of what ‘work’ looks like.** It is not simply a matter of transferring all your work meetings to home-based meetings.
- Before automatically booking regular meetings, consider: **Do we need this meeting?** Who really needs to be there? Is there another way to do this work? Being on video calls may be more exhausting than in-person meetings.
- Consider adjusting what productivity looks like: recalibrating from work that is meeting-based to more **deliverable focused approaches**. This means giving people a clear idea of what work needs to be done along with a deadline – and leaving them to do the work at whatever time works for them.
- Check-in meetings are important, but do not force people to share their feelings in group settings. **One-on-one calls are better** for those types of conversations.
- Video is nice to have, but always give people to option to call in if they are uncomfortable with video. **Give choices**, like having video for the first two minutes and then switch to audio only.

Practical Work from Home Tips

1. **Keep your phone on you.** Put your cell number in your email footer.
2. Schedule a quick daily or weekly **stand-up call** for each team or people who normally work closely together.
3. Email thread rule: five or six messages in a thread between team members **triggers a video call** immediately.
4. Try to jump on a call **two minutes** before the start. Five minutes before if you are the chair and need to gather thoughts.
5. **Share PowerPoints** before meeting (ideally attached to invite). That way if screen sharing gets messed up everyone has the material.
6. If performance on a call drops, ask all that are using their laptop for audio to hang up and call in on their phones.
7. Have a **backup meeting option** – know what to do if your connection goes bad: re-boot, reschedule, alternate conference line, etc.
8. Establish a good home setup, if you can, such as a **quiet workspace** (closed door).
9. **Mute** when not talking in order to minimize household noises (kids! dogs! vacuums!).
10. Use **good headphone/microphone** gear.
11. Use the **messaging feature** when in video calls – useful for those who aren't big talkers.
12. Encourage more **screen take-overs** during calls by various members, not just the chair, to share documents or visuals and to increase your team engagement.
13. If you are chairing a teleconference, **be active**: establish that you are running the call up front, confirm who is on the line, do quick round-table introductions (if needed), quickly resolve people talking over each other and draw in people who have been quiet.
14. Outside of meetings, **increase texting** to replace casual conversations – ensure cell numbers are shared.
15. If texting or email is not effective... **phone people!**