

For over 10 years, I worked from home, so I thought I'd share a few tips that I learnt along the way. I hope you find them useful, and if you have any too, please feel free to share. Thank you.

- Keep to a schedule, if possible. Have a set working day, with breaks throughout.
- What can you do that is similar to what you do in the office? One example is have a virtual cup of coffee in the morning with a friend via Zoom, or WhatsApp etc.
- Know what your tasks/objectives are. Talk to your manager, and decide on a list of tasks together
- Communicate often with your colleagues, both informally and formally. Send photos of cute animals, pictures taken when you were on a nature walk, etc.
- Focus on outcomes rather than presenteeism. Without the usual interruptions that are part of the normal hubbub of working life, you'll be able to focus and get things done.
- Make sure to stretch and move whilst at your desk (or even ironing board!). Keep an eye out for TeamHud's activities via social media, where they have movement and stretching exercises.
- Take regular breaks away from screens. Stretch, walk round and talk to the fish. Stick a load of washing in and vac the sitting room. Make sure you get a lunch break.
- If the sun shines, run outside quickly and soak it in. We all need vitamin D, a change of scenery and some outside space. Doesn't have to be fancy. My grotty back yard does the trick.
- Exercise! Try to do the recommended 10,000 steps. If you are fit, do more; if you struggle to do the 10,000, just do what you can. The latest research shows that doing something is better than doing nothing. If you like a more rigorous class, see what is happening virtually. My Strong by Zumba teacher is running an online class via Zoom, every Saturday morning if you fancy it. (I might need to ask for commission!) And it's not Zumba, which is great. More like Body Combat.
- Get into nature. Take photos and share with your team. They will never tire of the flowers, birds, shopping trolleys and dead fish that you have snapped down by the River Mersey.
- Be kind to one another. Focus on solutions and different ways of working. It's a great opportunity to try something new, learn a new piece of technology, or do some research you've always fancied doing.
- Enjoy being with your pets. They will be really helpful in the office - not. Cats love a keyboard to relax on and dogs love to gaze up at you sending a quiet message of love (or "walk me right now, human").

- And now on to snacks...all I can say is just don't buy them if you are, like me, partial to a haribo or a malteser. If someone in your family is stockpiling, ask them to hide the damn Twirls out of your sight (you know full well you can sniff them out if an emergency arises - usually technology related). And you can also utilise the 10 second rule. This is where you put the delicious treats 10 seconds walk away from you, and out of sight. In my case, it's 60 seconds away and buried in concrete.
- Know when to stop, log off and shut the door to your office - physically or metaphorically.
- Don't feel guilty if you don't respond to emails at all hours of the day or night. We will all be working differently because our lives have been disrupted, e.g. with childcare, home schooling, looking after dependents and also our own work rhythms. Regular virtual meetings, communication and completion of tasks and objectives is all you need to focus on. Make sure you stop at the weekend. How do you know it is Friday? Introduce an event, a board game or a significant slam of the office door, just so you know. For me, I find that a large gin and tonic alerts me really well to a Friday evening. I can nearly hear the chink of ice, the squeeze of a fresh lime, and the fizz of a tonic as I write this. Focusing incessantly on your phone or email means you aren't working on other pieces of work, and can also make you anxious. So step away.
- If you are feeling jaded, or unable to motivate, be kind to yourself. We all have days like these. Talk to a colleague, see what they are up to. Can you help them? Do one tiny thing to get back on track. Even better, why not work with a colleague on a joint project? That way you can both support one another, and keep each other motivated.

Don't forget to have fun wherever possible, especially in these tough times.
Take good care of yourselves, and keep strong. Now pass me the gin...