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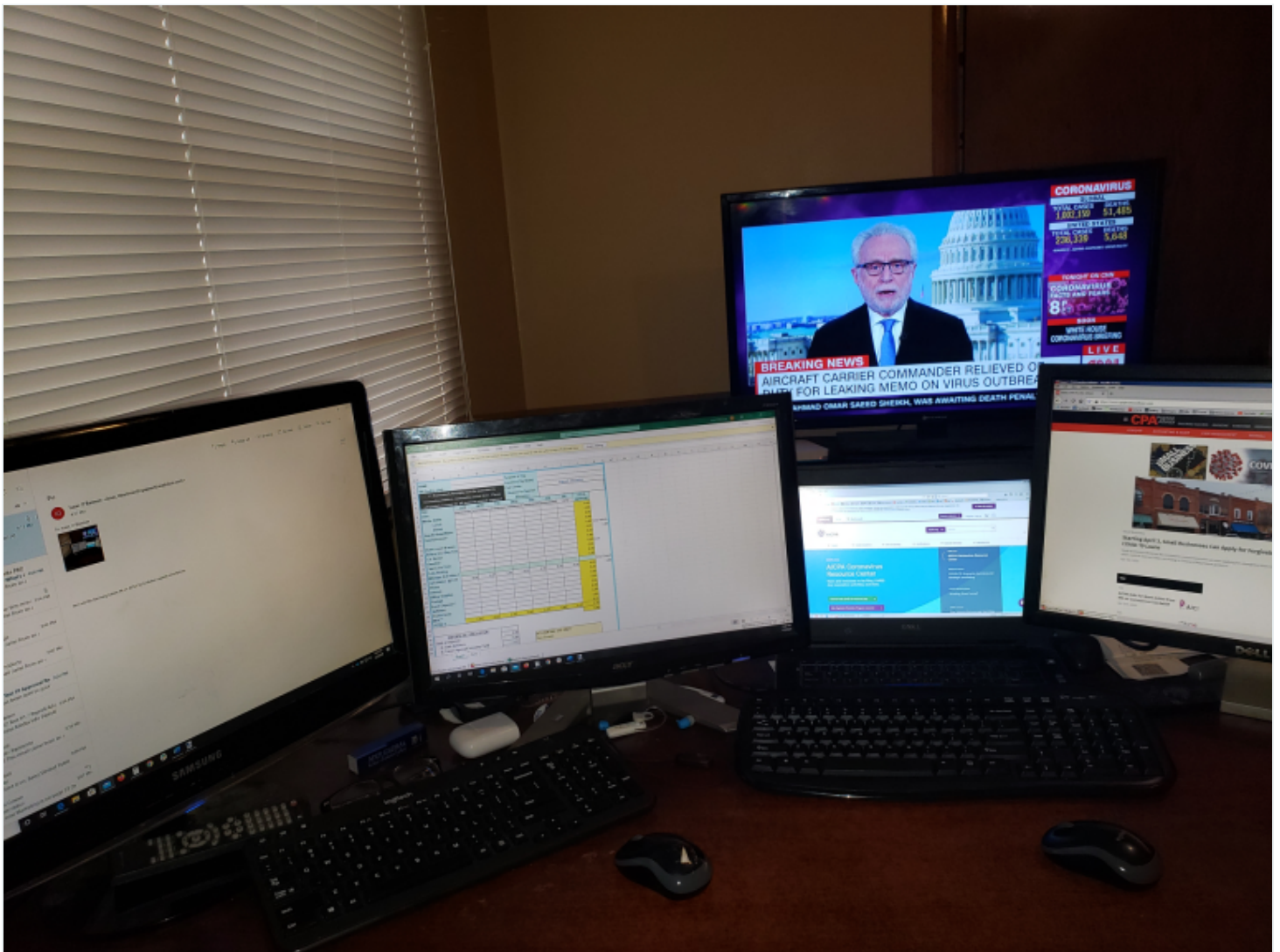
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## COVID-19

# Office Space: You're Not Home Alone

If you can learn how to become the emperor of your home's workspace, you may find new levels of productivity and success working from home. Many Americans report they never want to go back to life under those fluorescent tubes.

Garrett Wagner, CPA • Jul. 08, 2020



Wandering into the breakroom for a chat around the water cooler. Grabbing a snack from the honor-system basket of candies and granola bars. Filling the copier with more paper, emptying the wastebasket into the recycling bin. These were the joys of office life. From your cubicle or office, by the light of florescent bulbs, love it or hate it, office ambience went hand in hand with being an accountant—no matter your title or function.

Alas, the familiar comforts have suddenly vaporized. Instead of office chats, a couple of children are running around your kitchen table as you file tax returns or close another month-end. The old office comforts...how did we take them for granted?

As we struggle with the new shift to working remotely. Now may be a good time to dive deeper into this topic and examine how we can make the most out of it. Across this great country, it isn't going away anytime soon.

If you can learn how to become the emperor of your home's workspace, you may find new levels of productivity and success working from home. Many Americans report they never want to go back to life under those fluorescent tubes. If you're not quite there yet, the transformation may be that life things around the house need a bit of tweaking, to allow you to truly get in a full day's work.

### **From playground to worksite**

If you are going to make your home into your home office, that means accepting the fact that you will be spending 40 hours a week in a dedicated area. It needs to be your palace of work.

This means you cannot work full time on your couch. Sorry.

You need a work area, be it large or small, that looks and feels both comfortable and work-like. Nearby will be the power sources, tools and equipment you find in any office environment. So, set aside some time and perhaps a sheet of paper to think through and jot down what it will take to take your worksite (and yourself) seriously.

Again, this is not changing anytime soon.

### **Workspace and ground rules**

Creating your ideal home office isn't just a longer power strip, extra USB adaptors and a spare phone charger.

The home office is about being able to sit down and tune into getting down to work. That means not only tuning into your regular “office hours” and work schedule—it means turning off Netflix and your housemates respecting some boundaries. The fact is that professionals who work from home have been found they are able to get more accomplished at home, once they set the ground rules.

By having a well-known, scheduled set of office hours, the kids and the significant other can respect your boundaries. Maybe you tape a little “Stop” sign to your door or the back of your chair—and it signals that you are in the “zone.”

Communicating ahead of time is better than getting all red in the face with embarrassment later, when your spouse walks by a Zoom call in a bath towel.

Explain your system at mealtime, and show-and-tell the signs or calendar you have prepared to post outside your office space. Involve them and use it as an opportunity to create appreciation for what you do for a living to support and show your love.

For many, one benefit of remote work is having a flexible schedule. But this doesn't mean each day is an open book. It does mean you can set Wednesdays at 10 a.m. to go grocery shopping when the aisles aren't so crowded.

If you can be clear with those at home about some simple rules, and a process for how and when to bend them, this may be one of the greatest periods for families in human history.

Well, at least in as long as we can remember.

### **Co-workers? Who are they?**

Last but not least, the key to working from home successfully is to remember that you have co-workers.

When you commit to working from home full-time, plan on doubling up your efforts to communicate often and regularly with your co-workers. Having lost time around the water cooler and the copy machine, it is easy to forget how much business and bonding get accomplished through informal brokering.

You must be diligent to create new conversations on the phone, texting and chat to rebuild ways to maintain those bonds. You will need new channels that invite people to have creative exchanges and share ideas or news about the business that were lost when the breakroom went away.

Bottom line? Working at home has proven to be for many more productive and healthier than office life. It starts with creating a real workspace inside the home, then inviting your household to understand how they all fit and function within that new business that operates inside their home.

Next, double down on communication channels with your team and your supervisor. Make sure you are connecting more than you think you used to do. When you worked in physical proximity, so much informal communicating took place, you may not realize how much got lost when everyone disbanded. Be the one who tries new channels, like chat and texting, to introduce ways for people to engage one another, share what is happening and just stay in touch the way you did back in the old days.

Learn how to embrace remote work and strive in a virtual world. Set up your sweet spot, create a schedule you can live with, and above plan on over-communicating with your inner—and your outer—circle at work. If you do those three things, you and your organization will be among those who have this remote work truly “figured out.”

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