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Well, here we are, deep into 2020, and the pandemic is forcing us all to start thinking about home offices as a more-or-less permanent fixture in our lives. By now, most capable employees have probably proven their ability to work from home and get their jobs done, and we are at least under the impression that employers are coming around to the idea as well.

So we wanted to connect with our *CPA Practice Advisor* community to get some tips on best practices for setting up a real (as opposed to a corner of the kitchen table) office in their homes. In particular, we'd like to learn about apps and other online solutions that are helping make the work-from-home environment more, well, workable.

Ken Healy, CPA, partner at Diversified Financial Solutions, told us, “When I work

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filtering out background noise (so the person on the other end of the call only hears your voice). Moreover, it is easy to use and also has an app that can be programmed with different functions and commands.

Rick Richardson, CPA.CITP, CGMA, managing partner at Richardson Media & Technologies, recommends **Grammarly** for writing content. “I now only use it as a plug-in to Microsoft Word. It is a wonderful second check on diction – based on the type of audience I’m writing for, punctuation, style and word selection.” And he also suggests we try **Text Soap**, which provides, “All sorts of automated ways to clean up text,” including removing extra spaces and tabs, converting to uppercase, or lowercase, resetting smart or straight quotes, and on and on – there are lots of tools here for setting rules and then applying them to create your finish product.

Blake Oliver, director of marketing at Jirav, suggests that, “Good lighting is essential in any home office. I use the **Phillips Hue** app paired with eponymous light bulbs to easily change the brightness and color of the light in my home office to match my mood, whether I want to concentrate or relax, or something in between. You can even pair the app with **Alexa** to control it all by voice command.”

Dawn Brolin, CPA, CFE. CEO of Powerful Accounting, said, “For communications I would definitely say **Slack**. Not that it is the only app for this purpose but just having an app like that allows you to communicate with your team without having to email or call. It saves us a lot of time and allows us to communicate without disruption.”

Richard Roppa-Roberts, owner of Quasar Cowboy, uses **SnagIt** from Techsmith. “Multifunction screen snipper. Easy to use, easy to share, annotate and save to a whole suite of other productivity apps.”

Chris Frederiksen, CPA, co-founder of Frederiksen-Crawford CPAs, has these tips for using the **Zoom** app:

- **Lighting** – sit facing a window so that you maximize the natural light hitting your

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Arianna Campbell, director at Boomer Consulting, suggests **Houzz**, “A helpful app for getting inspiration for design and decorations. They have such a wide variety of ideas and great photos! I also of course love **Amazon**. That is my go to spot after getting great ideas from Houzz.”

Geni Whitehouse, countess of communication at Brotemarkle, Davis & Co, said, “**TSheets** is my favorite for keeping track of time on my phone. It is convenient and makes my entire billing process so much easier thanks to integration with QBO.”

Caleb Jenkins, EA, CQP, RLJ Financial Services, Inc., told us, “I just purchased a house last month and moved in last month so this is a fitting app request for me right now.... I used the app **Modsy** to layout my home and home office and then started designing from there. It was helpful to transform an empty room into something that was workable with my design likes. I still have some work to finish setting up the home office but this was helpful to get over the initial mental block.”

Randy Johnston, executive vice president and owner at K2 Enterprises, recommends **Microsoft Teams**, “because of the file integrations and communications capabilities.”

Some others we would like to add to the list include these:

- **Doodle** for setting up meetings
- **White Noise Lite** for blocking out household noises when you're trying to concentrate
- **Remente** if you're looking for a personal business coach
- **Seven** for home workouts
- **Skitch** for brainstorming team sessions
- **TechSmith Capture** for recording yourself and your computer in order to make video training sessions

- **TomatoTimer** will remind you to take quick breaks between work tasks

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