

How can remote workers best manage work-home conflict?

April 6 2021, by Jeanne Hedden Gallagher



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What are the secrets to maintaining a productive home office? Run a white-noise machine to mask household clatter, make sure your noisy neighbors know your work schedule, and resist the temptation to check

work-related technology after logging off at the end of the workday. These are some of the tips that Timothy D. Golden, a professor in the Lally School of Management at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, has gleaned through more than two decades of research.

More than a year into the COVID-19 pandemic, millions of remote workers are still struggling to find an efficient work-life balance. In an article recently published in *Organizational Dynamics*, Golden offered these workers and their managers research-based solutions and [best practices](#) for addressing and managing common issues that impede success while working from [home](#).

"A key challenge most people face when they work from home is how to effectively navigate the boundaries between their [work life](#) and home life, all while continuing to be efficient and productive in their job," said Golden, a leading expert on remote work. "The need to be able to adeptly manage the boundaries between work and family is absolutely critical today."

There are two types of remote workers: "segmentors" work best by keeping a rigid distinction between their personal life and job, while "integrators" are at ease mixing together their work and home responsibilities. To work successfully at home, Golden said, individuals of both types must erect and maintain boundaries to match their desired comfort level.

In the article, Golden identified four areas—physical, behavioral, temporal, and communication—that must be considered in order for employees and managers to successfully set and manage boundaries between work and home life.

Among other tactics, Golden recommended setting allowable limits on household noise, starting and ending your day at consistent and regular

times, and—importantly—having expectation-setting conversations with family members or those living in the home.

He also identified common pitfalls that cause boundaries created by remote workers to crumble, including being unpredictable in routines and avoiding confronting boundary violators.

"You're in a different physical and mental space when you're working remotely or in the home domain," Golden said. "Communication becomes particularly crucial when you're immersed in the home environment to balance everything successfully."

Provided by Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

Citation: How can remote workers best manage work-home conflict? (2021, April 6) retrieved 4 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2021-04-remote-workers-work-home-conflict.html>

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