

## TALKING TO YOUR BOSS ABOUT REMOTE WORK

To quote Bob Dylan, “the times they are a-changing”. With the advent of new technologies, jobs that were once relegated as office-only are now able to be done from anywhere. Evaluating a credential is no exception.

I realize not everyone has the same experience and set-up as I do. So, in the interest of fairness, I want to disclose my working conditions. Transcript Research is 100% remote work. I use my personal computer, but with company-provided software. We have collaboration software and a file sharing service, we message each other in group and individual chats, and we have a weekly teleconference staff meeting. With regard to documents, we provide a post office box that I check daily, and documents are inspected, scanned and logged. We have an online database that we use to log and track file progression. Every evaluator has access to our substantial resource library and an internal wiki that has been built over the years.

Before you talk to your boss about remote work, you need to have an honest introspection. Are you motivated enough to work, or will the lure of movies and the couch be too much temptation? Can you handle most of your workday interactions being via chat, or will you become a person who orders pizza for lunch everyday just so you can have human interaction? For those who have kids, when they are home from school for a break are you able to maintain your productivity?

When approaching your boss, I suggest you have an honest and open conversation about all aspects of working from home. The two most important topics you must cover and make sure all parties involved have clear expectations on, are productivity/performance and security. You should also discuss resources and scheduling. It is vital that you and your boss are in agreement on every aspect.

### **Productivity / Performance.**



Many opponents to remote work think the only way to monitor employee productivity is to have everyone in the same building. With technology available today, that simply isn't true. Logins and created reports easily show when an employee was working and what work they completed. I am of the opinion that as long as everyone has everything done before or on the day it is due, I see no reason to put any importance on where it was done. However, your boss may have a different opinion.

### **Security.**

Every device you own, regardless of its intended use, should be protected. However, it is wise to discuss what additional measures you will need to take for securing the data we handle. This is especially important given the amount of international websites for legitimate research. I cannot recall how many times I have been unable to reach a school website because something in that site has made my security protocols trigger an alert.



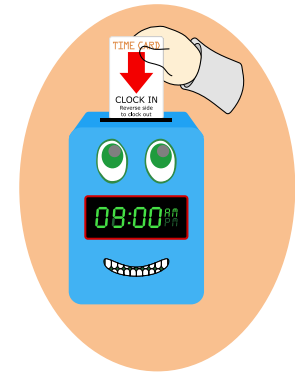
## Resources.



This is a particular point that must be addressed. Your company probably has already determined where they stand on access to resources, and that should be a part of your conversation about working remotely. If your office has determined that a remote employee must have access to their own physical copy of print resources, this may be an issue that you, and your boss, will need to address. However, if your company provides resources in digital form and has no issue with you accessing those files remotely, this is already handled.

## Scheduling.

Talking about when you are expected to be working may seem obvious, but you and your boss should discuss this at length. In our office, everyone is allowed to set their own schedule, and everyone is aware of each other's schedule. Since no one is truly dependent on anyone else to complete their daily tasks, this allows for unexpected days off or handling of emergencies without disrupting the work flow of the office. There needs to be a clear understanding of when you are expected to work and what protocols are in place for unexpected illness, internet and power outages, and any other issues that may arise.



It would be disingenuous of me to imply that remote work only has a positive side. There are some pitfalls that should also be talked about.

## Questions.



Questions are not necessarily a downside, but they are something you should consider. For example, if I have a question that I need to have answered, I ask a person in chat, and then I have to wait for their reply. Normally, this is not a problem, but sometimes I cannot continue with the evaluation I am working on until I get the answer. If that person is unavailable to answer me, I have to stop what I am doing until they are available. To be fair, this is no different from emailing the person or coming by their cubicle and seeing they are not available. However, in both of those situations, there is no expectation of an immediate answer. Fair or not, you do expect an answer right away when you message someone. This can lead to frustration. You have to retrain your brain to not expect an instant response.

## Isolation.



Remote work can lead to isolation. There is no denying that fact. You will miss out on birthday cakes in the break room, donuts because a co-worker felt like being nice, or random interactions with others. However, you will also miss out on that cold someone brought to the office, the chatty co-worker who stays too long at your desk, and judgment on how loud you are you playing music while you work. No one likes being lonely. You should have activities outside the home if only for your mental well-being. I personally have a fitness class that I take daily. Usually.

**Shutting it off.**

For some people, myself included, it is hard to turn the work day off when you don't change your surroundings. Right now, I have a built-in stopping point in my day: picking up my kids from school. I set a reminder 10 minutes before I have to leave because I am prone to getting wrapped up in my work and losing track of time. I also have timers set every two hours to remind me to get up and walk around, do some squats, or stretch out my legs and arms. Even if you work in a cubicle at an office, you should do this as well.



In summary, when you approach your boss about working remotely, whether it be full time or a few days a week, be honest with yourself about your ability to self-motivate and manage your time, a clear understanding of expectations from your boss, and a plan in place to avoid pitfalls.

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