



A Shirt, A Tie, and Pajama Bottoms

Finding balance between the benefits and drawbacks of remote working.

“Have Wi-Fi, will work”

As technology continues to reshape how we job search, communicate, and interact professionally, it's also redefining how and *where* we work. Instead of a cubicle or corporate environment, more and more job seekers and employees are seeking to work remotely out of their homes or from locations of their own choosing.

According to studies, over 40% of the U.S. workforce engages in some form of remote working. For many millennials and digital nomads, the opportunity for greater flexibility, mobility, autonomy, and adventure is no longer a company perk but an expected benefit. Remote working can mean less commuting and costs for gas and parking, more time with family, plus freedom to travel and work from anywhere. With the Internet, IM, teleconferencing, file sharing, and project tracking software, employees can work outside of the office and stay connected locally and globally, interfacing from coffee shops to campsites. Plus, services like ClickMeeting, Skype, JoinMe, and GoToMeeting mean you can conference and look professional from the waist up while still wearing comfy slippers and pj bottoms.

For companies, remote working can be a smart business decision. It can help reduce costs, attract talent, span multiple generations, keep everyone current, and create a more dynamic sense of purpose and wellbeing among employees.

Requirements for remote working

Remote workers need the following in order to be successful: connectivity (obviously); strong time management, digital communication, and organizational skills; as well as familiarity with technology, including computer, file sharing, and teleconferencing capabilities. Employees need to be reachable, and discipline is essential; since no one is looking over your shoulder, it can be easy to procrastinate—and deadlines don't go away. Remember, the company is trusting you to get your work done well, and on time, just as you trust you'll be paid for your work, and on time. There are plenty of industries suitable for remote working, including programming, copywriting, blogging, design,

customer support (think computer help desks!), accounting, online teaching, and medical marketing, just to name a few. Those who enjoy and are successful working remotely are able to adapt to its challenges and find a work-life balance.

Remote working vs remotely working

For all its upsides, remote working is not for everyone. Or, it may seem ideal for a while before a person realizes that they need a more conventional set up. Some are not comfortable working virtually, even from an off-premise space they know. It's easy to be distracted by non-work related issues, and lack of a traditional 9-to-5 structure can leave employees feeling lost. Over time, with limited physical human interaction and no colleagues around to foster a sense of collaboration and teamwork, individuals can experience a sense of loneliness, lack of focus and discipline, reduced efficiency and productivity, even a decline in mental security and wellbeing. Depending on personalities, preferences, and projects, those who work regularly in isolation can sacrifice social ties and skills. Also, since you can never really “leave your work at the office,” there's always the risk of under- or overworking yourself.

Therefore, self-assessment, transparency, clear communication, plus an ability to see the bigger picture and ask appropriate questions are critical for remote workers. Those who experience difficulties can opt for less regular remote work, take on more gig assignments as freelancers, or join co-working spaces. The latter has office services in a shared public space and provides both independence and a sense of community. Keep in mind, while employers who offer remote working may be less concerned with *number* of hours worked, they do still require performance that generates positive, tangible results. Ultimately, it's up to *you* to find a healthy balance regardless of where you work.



i n a nutshell:

If working virtually interests you, understand what's involved:

- **Job flexibility, autonomy, and mobility necessitate time management, planning, and digital communication skills**
- **Expect to stay in touch and be reachable; flexibility doesn't mean unlimited freedom**
- **Take advantage of relaxed, uninterrupted blocks of time for greater productivity**
- **Be self-aware; understand how remote working affects you**
- **It can be an ideal arrangement, but it's not for everyone**

For many, remote working is a rewarding situation. In the end, it depends on the individual, the company culture, and whether or not collective goals are met.