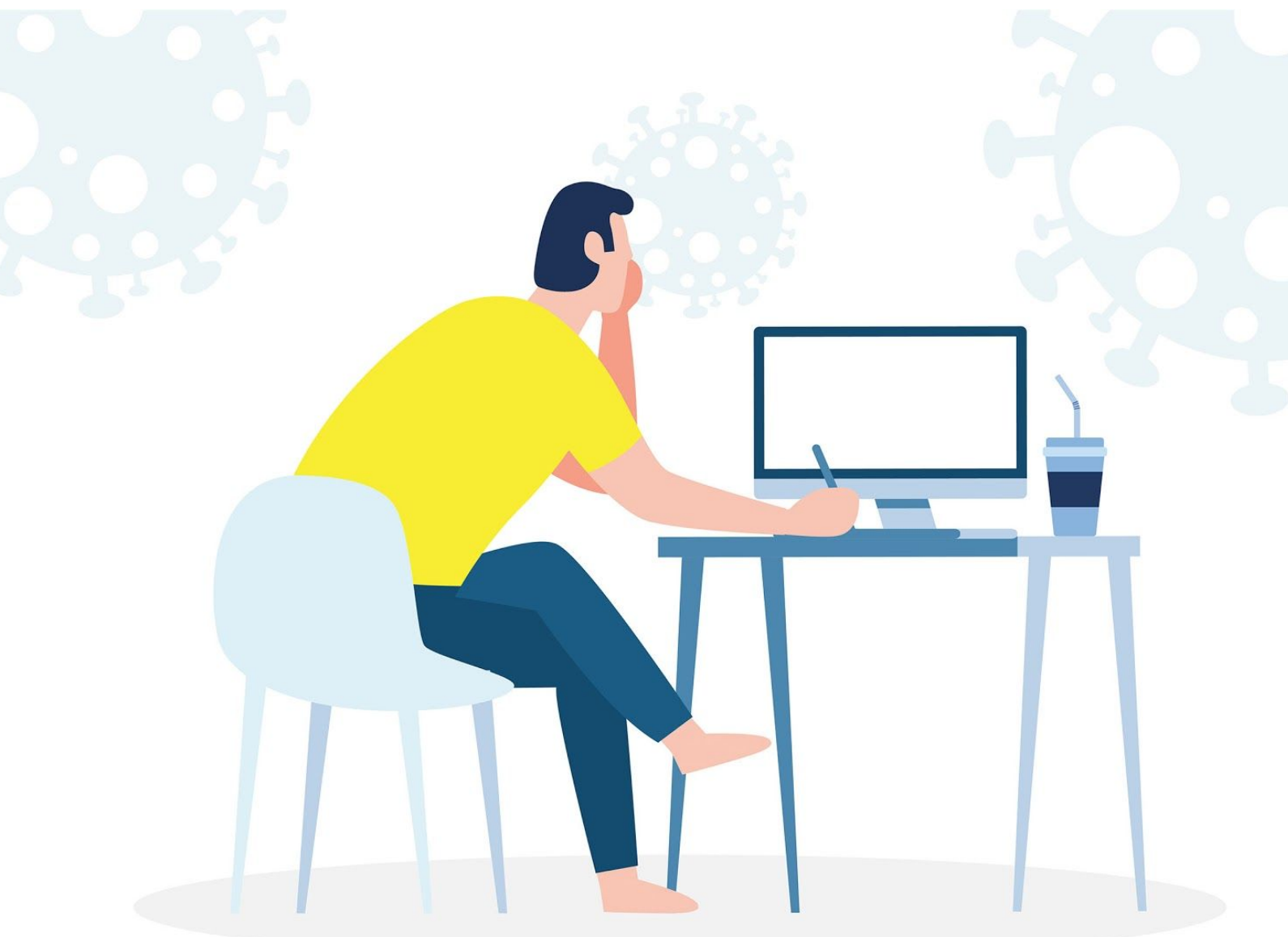


The entrepreneur's guide on surviving and thriving during isolation





Welcome

With many of us forced to run our businesses from home at the moment, we put together this helpful guide with our top suggestions on how you can not only survive running your business from home, but thrive too, in ways you might not expect.

Our team of more than 600 experienced remote assistants have worked for our clients from home for the past 10 years - not because they have to, but by choice. They'll tell you that working from home can be an excellent way to see your family, grow your creativity and run your business at the same time.

Working from home is not without its challenges though, especially if you're not used to it. We hope this guide will help you smooth over the challenges and see the advantages of running your business from home during these difficult times.



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It's not all bad...

So, you're working from home. For a lot of people that's terrible news. It's uncertainty and isolation. But there are actually a lot more benefits than you think.

Working from home saves you time spent commuting, making decisions and on meetings. All of this saved time means you have even more hours to spend doing the tasks that really matter.

You see, working from home saves you hours of time that you normally waste every day. Did you know that working from home leads to an increase in performance? And higher productivity?

A 2015 Stanford University study monitored a massive 16,000 employees over the course of several months and found that employees who work from home see a 13% performance increase, including more minutes worked and more work done per minute. Plus, in one self-reported survey, 77% of remote workers reported higher productivity and efficiency. Now, while I'm sure, like me, you hope this lockdown doesn't last for seven more months, the stats are a compelling reason to work from home more long after this is all over.

I know some people reading this though might think these stats are completely untrue because working from home when you have kids is impossible! How are you meant to be a mean, green productivity machine when you have screaming children around you interrupting your catch-ups and complaining that they don't want pasta again for dinner? Of course the easy answer is to simply give your children away, but if you don't want to be arrested, you need to start getting into a routine.

THE SCOOP

- **Working from home offers so many benefits, including more time for the tasks that really matter, increased focus and higher productivity.**

How to own working from home

The hardest but most important thing you need to do if you want to own working from home is getting into a routine. When the place you sleep, eat and work is the same, it can make it hard to separate work and home time. There's a complete lack of boundaries. Which is why I almost began painting my fence the other day before realizing I was meant to be working. And why my relatives think it's fine to call me in the middle of the day now because I'm not

technically at work. Without boundaries and routine, everything will crumble.



You need to be getting up at the same time you normally would every day, having your breakfast and lunch at the same time and having regular breaks. Too much freedom completely derails any sense of urgency you have in terms of hitting deadlines and getting things done. Set your own work from home deadlines to keep yourself on track. Like telling yourself if you hit your goals for the day by 4pm, you can enjoy a nice walk with your kids. Alternatively, if spending even more time with your kids doesn't

motivate you, tell yourself if you hit your goals for the day by 4pm, you can enjoy a nice cold beer. These small incentives should make you more focussed because you have something to aim towards.

Also, while we're on the topic of children, if both you and your partner are at home make sure you take it in turns looking after them. Split the time evenly between you, working around calls and meetings. This will not only give you a good amount of breaks for your brain throughout the day, but a feel-good boost too.

Some people think that if they're not working enough hours, then they're falling behind. But this couldn't be further from the truth. In our book, [The Hard Work Myth](#), we explain how working longer hours doesn't mean you get more done - quite the opposite in fact! As long as you're delegating effectively, working on the things that really matter and staying focussed, you're actually being a lot more productive and a lot less likely to burn out. If you're interested in finding out more, you can grab a copy [here](#).

THE SCOOP

- **The most important part about working from home is establishing a routine.**
- **Set your own deadlines to keep you motivated and take regular breaks.**

To keep sane, mix things up

We all know the famous proverb: "Variety is the spice of life". And it couldn't be more true! Changing things up does wonders not only for your mood, but your energy levels too.



If you're working in the same room everyday, staring at the same four walls, chances are you're going to slowly become insane.

If you can work in different rooms in your home, then do it! Many people resist doing this, because they don't want to work in their bedroom, kitchen or living room, but even a small change of scenery every day or two will keep you energized and your brain stimulated.

You should also make sure you make clear distinctions between working time and eating and sleeping time. If you mix all of these events together, you'll find yourself slipping into bad habits. Eating more. Sleeping later. Leaving crumbs in your keyboard. By making sure there's clear time for working, eating and sleeping, it'll be easier to stick to your routine and enjoy the time you do spend working.

The key takeaway is that working from home shouldn't feel like you're in prison. As long as you stick to a routine, mixing up your working environment gives your brain a boost and keeps things interesting. No one wants to look at the same things every day, it's boring. Mixing things up will make every day that bit more exciting.

THE SCOOP

- **If possible, mix up your working environment.**
- **A change of scenery will improve your motivation and energy levels.**



Counter isolation with communication

In November 2018, a professional US poker player called Rich Alati bet \$100,000 that he could survive 30 days alone and in total darkness. Long story short: he failed. He had all the resources he needed to survive but he couldn't last the full duration because of the effects isolation was having on his mental and physical health.

Humans are social creatures. We thrive being around others, which is why we find it so hard being alone - our brains aren't equipped for it. It's not surprising then that a 2019 State of Remote Work report produced by Buffer, found that 49% of remote workers note that their biggest struggle is wellness-related. 22% said that they can't unplug after work, 19% feel lonely and 8% can't stay motivated. The disconnectedness working from home brings is a huge challenge for many, but there are tons of ways you can overcome these feelings.

It's absolutely vital to stay in touch with your team when you're running your business from home. It's also important just to spend time communicating with people, even if there isn't a strong business-related purpose for doing so.

At Time etc, our teams are connecting via video conferencing at least twice a day purely to stay in touch and have a chat, so that they feel together and connected. We're also running an all-team-huddle at 12pm every day on video conferencing platform whereby.com, to allow our team to share their feedback, exchange ideas and discuss their workload.

If you can, working alongside another person in your house will keep you focussed and make you feel less alone. You should also make sure you're setting aside enough time every day to talk to your favorite people. Doing this is an instant mood booster and it's been shown that support from your peers is just as effective as cognitive behavior therapy when you're feeling down. So, jump on a call with your friends and family as regularly as you can.

You should also go for a walk in nature (as wild as your kid's rooms may be, a walk around them doesn't count). Exercising 20-30 mins a day can significantly lower anxiety levels and boosts endorphin and serotonin, which will make your brain feel a lot happier.

THE SCOOP

- **When working from home, you need to communicate more, not less**
- **Try to make connecting with others a priority when possible**



When it comes to tools, don't forget the basics

If the coronavirus had happened in 2005, we'd have been so much more isolated than we are now - no smart phones, poor broadband and hardly any online video communication tools. We're very lucky to have all the tools we have at our disposal - many of them free or low cost.

Things don't always go to plan though. By now, you've probably had at least one of the following things happen to you:

- 1) Your internet connection has failed or your wifi has been sloooooow
- 2) Your video calls keep freezing
- 3) Your laptop's microphone refuses to cooperate

If none of these things have happened, then congratulations - you're well ahead of me. For most of us though, technology fails are about to become even more commonplace.

With so many people working from home, it's inevitable that there are more outages, slower speeds and more disruptions. Which is why I want to take this time to remind you to pick up your phone and call people. If faced with tech issues, a good old-fashioned phone call will work just as well and you don't have to waste time looking presentable too - win-win!

In all seriousness though, there are so many tools now that mean staying connected with your colleagues isn't a problem. Some of my favourites include: Zoom, Whereby.com, Slack and WhatsApp. Working from home doesn't have to be a formal process. Just because you may be using more relaxed communication tools like WhatsApp, doesn't mean productivity will suffer.

If you don't have the right tools in place to work effectively, set some time aside to research which ones would be best for staying in touch with your team. Make sure they're also easy to download and use. The sooner you have the right tools in place, the faster your productivity will increase and the more connected you'll feel.

THE SCOOP

- **If you want to own working from home, you need to have the right tools in place. I'd recommend: Zoom, Whereby, Slack and WhatsApp.**

Use isolation to build a stronger, better business

Working from home, especially when forced to do so, is a disorientating experience for many. Daily routines go out the window, the boundary between work and home life disappears and even staying in touch with your team and wider network gets much harder.



Most of the tips in this guide are about trying to counter those things by communicating more and forcing yourself into a strict routine, but there's also another side to the disorientation you might feel when you're plunged into working from home.

As your brain adapts around new routines, challenges, sights, sounds and experiences, it opens you up to something very exciting - creativity and change.

Your normal reference points, anchors and routines are gone, leaving your brain free to think more creatively, consider problems in a different way and gain a powerful new perspective.

Because of this, there's a unique opportunity for you to take advantage of the creative space your brain is likely to be in and use this time to build a stronger and better business.

How? Take the time to plan for the future and sketch out how you're going to re-ignite and grow your business once all this is over. Delve into your marketing and customer acquisition and give yourself the time to think creatively about how to boost it in the coming months.

Reconnect with your original vision, goals and plans for your business and consider where you are against them. Start researching, reading and learning on topics that'll help you to achieve your goals and start putting things in place that you're going to need to hit the ground running once we come out of the other side of coronavirus.

THE SCOOP

- **Use this unique time of disorientation and pause to make your business stronger and better**
- **One thing is for sure - this will soon be over and, once it is, you'll need to hit the ground running**

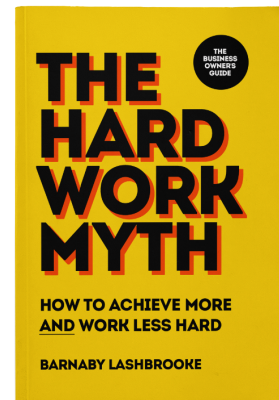


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Read our book, *The Hard Work Myth*, and discover how to achieve more and work less hard.

The Hard Work Myth explains how to get much more done in the same amount of time and it's an essential read for all entrepreneurs and leaders - more so now than ever.

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