MOST PRODUCTIVE ENTREPRENEURS

# Working From Home Shouldn't Mean Working 24/7. Here's Why The smartest move you can make as a leader is mimicking a normal work schedule, even in a remote setup. 🔗

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In the transition to working from an office to working from home, there are many complexities: logistics, habits, systems,

communication, to name a few. But the most pervasive problem is the (mistaken) assumption that 24/7 working is fair game.

Expecting your remote team to work 24/7 can be foolish on many levels. First off, while you may expect that more working hours will lead to more output, that's not the case. Second, creating a sense of work being 24/7 blurs the boundaries between work and home--and that means multi tasking during the real work day too.

## Working more hours does not increase total output--it kills it.

With working hours, as with everything else, there's a point of diminishing returns. Working more hours can, very temporarily, lead to more output from your team, but in the long run (two to three weeks) it is a recipe for disaster. When your employees start working more hours, a number of things happen:

> **Mistakes increase. Studies show that the more hours people work, the more likely they are to make mistakes and have impaired judgement. Stressful times call for people to have better judgement and make fewer mistakes- so if you need your team in tip top shape, don't compromise on giving them a break. Health issues emerge. The more your employees work, the more likely they are to have a number of health issues such as poor sleep, depression, diabetes, heavy drinking, impaired memory and heart disease, amongst others. Not only does that often result in**

**time away from work, it also results in rising health insurance costs, as well as employee morale issues. The sweet spot is <u>40 hours per week</u>.**

**Burnout can result. Working too many hours is a recipe for burnout, which can be hard to recover from with just a few days away. <u>Avoiding burnout is key</u>; recovering can take months, or even years, in some cases.**

The tricky part as a leader is that often employees themselves have a hard time setting boundaries, and work non-stop when they're at home. As a leader, it's up to you to set that tone.

## Publish the team's schedule so that everyone's clear about each other's working hours.

When your team begins to work from home, you should expect that work hours are devoted to working and non work hour times are reserved for personal time. This protects your team from overwork, but also protects the business from a lack of delineation between work and home, which can result in poor productivity and distracted working. I recommend creating a schedule that you publish to the team that outlines each person's work day so it's clear what work hours are- and aren't. As with the office, you may have people occasionally work more, or vary their schedule, but it's best to start with a schedule and then deviate vs. leave open ended.

## Model appropriate working hours.

Ever heard of the saying "Do as I say, not as I do?" Many leaders find themselves working 24/7, then are surprised when their team mimics their approach. If you work on a night or weekend, do deep work that doesn't require communicating with your staff and don't hit "send" until normal working hours. If you have times when you need to work at odd hours, send a message to your direct reports and explain why you're doing that, and that it's an extenuating circumstance.

## Similarly, expect work hours to be completely dedicated to work.

By setting the tone that your team should not be working 24/7, you're also setting the tone that during work hours, all they should be doing is working. This is key for work/life separation- setting the tone that if you respect your team member's need to have that balance and delineation, that they will similarly respect the need for their work time to be fully devoted to work, where possible. While this may be difficult in the current environment, when many people have kids at home, having that expectation and clarity allows your team to be able to set realistic working setups. For example, they may configure their working hours by splitting time with another caregiver at home, or scheduling work when the kids are homeschooling or sleeping.