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A Happy Home Office. Photo: Paige Cody

5 Simple Habits to Work from Home Like a Pro

Carrie McKeegan's firm, Greenback Tax, is a fully remote global business – here's her advice for working from home like a pro

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Why do some people thrive on remote work while others struggle? Due to their love of travel, many US expats living in the UK explore remote job opportunities. Unfortunately, some expats have trouble feeling comfortable in a home office. If you want your remote work to become highly productive and to feel at ease with your work-life balance, you'll need to develop certain skills. Remote workers and teams of all sizes can use these five habits to supercharge productivity, nix burnout, and strengthen relationships in a virtual environment.

1. Embrace structure and set a routine

The first thing many new remote workers learn is that, without **proper structure** (<https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/241087>), you can easily lose control. Keeping goals, deadlines, and quality on track becomes much easier when systems and routines help guide you to the finish line. Structure also protects work-life balance for those who live and work in the same space. For starters, be sure to set regular working hours to maximize productivity and avoid cutting into your free time.

The structure you create doesn't have to fit the traditional mold, so long as it works for you. For instance, parents may choose to schedule work hours when kids are homeschooling, sleeping, or spending time with another caregiver. The key is to make sure team members know each other's schedules and have enough overlap to collaborate effectively.

2. Find a great tool to track your projects and time

Project management tools are often the lifeblood of a virtual business or team. This software is typically the hub of daily operations for remote workers, housing project updates, tasks, and internal communications. To ensure success, choose an easy-to-use platform that includes all your must-have features. While there are several free project management tools available, most remote teams will benefit from investing in higher-quality paid software.

Make sure to pair your project management software with a time tracking solution. Time tracking tools reveal where your time and focus go, allowing you to keep important projects at the top of your list. Remember, the **purpose of time tracking** (<https://www.inc.com/carrie-mckeegan/why-you-need-to-start-tracking-your-time-every-day.html>) is not to catch employees surfing the web or spending time on social media. Instead, focus on finding ways to remove roadblocks and create more time for your team to do important work.

You'll also want to avoid working too many hours. While putting in extra time can increase output in the short-term, it's a recipe for burnout in the long run.

3. Create a dedicated workspace

The wrong remote work environment can make it impossible to focus. If possible, designate a specific place in your home for work. Ideally, your home office should be separate from common living areas. Having to transform your kitchen into an office and back again during the day is a sure way to interfere with your work-life balance.

4. Trust your team

Trust is vital in a virtual environment. Systems, project management software, and communication tools will only take you so far. From there, you'll need to have faith that your teammates — whether they are direct reports, colleagues, or contractors — are doing the job they were hired to do. Meanwhile, keep an eye on your results; the outcomes will tell you if you need to step in.

5. Make plans for after work

At brick-and-mortar businesses, the day has a natural end: employees leave the office and commute home. Remote employees have to be more purposeful about shutting down the computer and logging off for the day. Making a plan to exercise, spend time with the kids, or start dinner after work will help ensure you get the downtime you need to relax and recharge.

These five habits will help you create a foundation for remote work that is both productive and rewarding. Once you've mastered these skills, you can continue to hone your work-from-home routine for better results.

Carrie McKeegan, MBA is CEO and co-founder of Greenback Expat Tax Services, a fully-remote 40+ person global business, specializing in the expert preparation of US expat tax returns for Americans living in the UK (https://www.greenbacktaxservices.com/us-citizen-working-uk-taxes/?utm_source=The%20American&utm_medium=LockdownEdition&utm_campaign=2020) and around in the world. Learn more at [greenbacktaxservices.com \(https://www.greenbacktaxservices.com/?utm_source=The%20American&utm_medium=LockdownEdition&utm_campaign=2020\)](https://www.greenbacktaxservices.com/?utm_source=The%20American&utm_medium=LockdownEdition&utm_campaign=2020).

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