Tip Sheet: Employees Working Remotely and Flexibly

General Guidelines for Employees working flexibly:

1. Establish a daily routine. For example, grabbing a coffee before you start your day, or taking a short walk over lunch.

2. Create daily goals. This will help you to create structure to your day. Use sticky notes as reminders for deadlines. Setting goals is critical to feeling accomplished when completing them, and to staying motivated.

3. Take breaks. Taking short (2-5 min.) breaks is important when working from home to boost your productivity and focus.

4. Let colleagues, managers, and clients know where and when you are working. It is important that others know how to reach you, and when you are available for meetings.

5. Share your calendar with your team members. On your calendar include where you will be working from, and the best way to reach you on that given day.

6. Include your schedule in your e-mail signature. For example, "I am on-site on Mondays and Wednesdays; and off-site on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays."

7. Use daily modifications to your voicemail to alert others to how and when they can reach you.

8. Know that you will need to adjust to business needs. If you usually work from home on Wednesdays but there is a company-wide meeting on a Wednesday, know that you will need to adjust your schedule that week.

9. Communicate effectively with your manager and colleagues. Address miscommunications and misunderstandings immediately in order to avoid problems down the road. Use regular check-ins to update others on your progress, and to elicit feedback.

10. Choose the most effective communication channels based on the context. For a complex or potentially difficult conversation, have it in person or using a webcam.

11. Be an active listener on conference calls by verbally acknowledging that you are listening, by using short statements to paraphrase the main takeaways, and by asking for permission to ask questions.

12. Regularly give and receive feedback. When giving feedback to your colleagues, ensure it is specific, constructive, and empathetic. Use your feedback to discuss outcomes and actions.

13. Use e-mail effectively. Use the subject line to alert the reader to the topic, the level of urgency, and the required action. Cover only one subject per e-mail. Only CC those individuals who need to see the email.

14. Use IM as a tool for quick questions and answers. Despite the informal nature of IM, always begin with a greeting, and remain courteous and professional.

General Guidelines for Employees working remotely:

1. Evaluate whether you prefer to integrate or segment your work and life. You may find Glen Kreiner's "Boundaries Between Home and Work self-assessment" a helpful tool.

2. To reduce work-life conflict, you may consider the following:

a. Set aside specific times when work does not interfere with family, such as dinnertime, and when family does not interfere with work, such as a block of time in the morning.

b. Set working hours and try to stick to them.

c. Disconnect after work. Taking time off from work will keep you more engaged and productive in the long run. For example, do not answer calls after a certain time or turn e-mail notifications off.

d. Designate a distraction-free work-space. Inform your family and friends that during work hours, you are unavailable to take phone calls (except in cases of emergency).

e. Telework is not to be used as a substitute for dependent care. You need to arrange dependent care coverage during regular working hours.

3. To increase performance and productivity, you may consider the following:

a. Get dressed for work. This will help you to get into a working mindset.

b. On conference calls, minimize background noise and distractions. Use the mute function if there is background noise. Avoid multi-tasking.

c. Limit distractions and interruptions. Buy noise-cancelling headphones. Practice grouping similar activities, such as phone calls, emails and filing, so that you do not bounce from one kind of action to another kind where you interrupt yourself.

d. Use the Pareto Principle or the 80/20 rule of time management. Research has shown that about 20% of our work produces 80% of our best output. Block off 20% (96 minutes) of an 8-hour workday to concentrate on your priority projects.

e. Use technology to help you stay on track. Utilize sites such as Rescuetime.com to help you keep track of your hours at and away from the computer and to block distracting sites, such as Facebook.

f. At the end of the work day, prepare for the next day. Tidy up your work space, review your accomplishments of the day, and create a to-do list for tomorrow.

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   g. Use the 1-3-5 Rule. Every day focus on 1 big project that is a priority for you to complete, 3 medium things that need to be done, and 5 small tasks to finish.

   h. Find time to exercise. Exercise combats stress and boosts productivity.

4. To stay connected to your workplace and team members:

   a. Maintain relationships with team members and managers through Skype, Google Hangouts and IM.

   b. Agree to communication guidelines with your manager and team members, to establish a common expectation for responding to queries.

   c. Decide with your manager and team whether it would be helpful to designate core hours or days when team members are in the office or available for meetings or conference calls.

Boston College Center for Work and Family