

Effective Hybrid Working: Working From Home

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It's time to work on YOU. So sit back and listen to practical, actionable advice to accelerate your progress.

Adjusting to the specific challenges of dividing your working time between the office and home can be tough. Location plays an important role in how you work, who you work alongside, and what issues might crop up. It's always tricky to adapt to a new way of working, and particularly challenging when your week is divided into two distinct settings.

If you're looking to make the most of a hybrid working model and improve your productivity but are unsure where to start, this track is for you.

After listening, you'll understand precisely what the benefits of hybrid working are. You'll be familiar with the factors that can get in the way of reaping those benefits and know how you can move past them to improve your personal workflow and productivity.

Let's get going.

For the longest time, the way that we worked was something we tended to take for granted. You would likely be in the office full-time, and that was just the way things were. Then, the COVID-19 pandemic happened and the world suddenly had to change. Everything about how we lived and worked altered, and suddenly, going into the office was no longer the default. In fact, it wasn't even safe. In 2020, the number of people working exclusively from home went from 5.7% to 43.1% [in a matter of months](#).

A lot of employers continued to offer the option to work from home, even after it became safe to return to the office. Data from the CIPD suggests that over [three-quarters](#) of organisations continued to allow hybrid working once lockdowns and social distancing had ended.

Hybrid working can be quite a challenge if you don't feel like you have a grip on how to make the most of it. It can feel tiring, chaotic, and confusing. It can feel unsettling and unpredictable.

These are emotions marketing manager Alex has certainly felt. They described feeling powerless and lost at times. Alex works three days at home and two days in the office each week. We'll explore the challenges Alex faced and how they overcame them.

When Alex first started at a company that allowed hybrid working, it felt like a dream come true. The flexibility helped them achieve an incredible sense of control over their life that 9-5 in the office just didn't provide. A white paper commissioned by [Cigna](#) backs up this view and concludes, "Well-being is now strongly linked with the rise in more flexible work policies."

At first, Alex loved the ability to get up and start working without worrying about dealing with a long commute. They felt glad to be in an environment they were entirely comfortable. They thought that the contrast between the office and home would be helpful for their mental well-being, that when they did go into the office, they could appreciate the benefits of that environment more than before.

But as more time passed, they started to run into serious roadblocks.

1. Burnout

For a while, Alex enjoyed an increased physical distance from colleagues. They appreciated having space to be able to determine how they prioritised their work and valued being trusted to work at their own pace.

However, as time went on, they started to worry that management couldn't see the work that they were doing. They were worried someone might assume they were just slacking off all day. This led to Alex working twice as much as they normally would, just to make sure that they were *seen* to be working. They felt worried about taking breaks and consequently cut their lunch hour short. An article in [Harvard Business Review](#) examined how remote working can harm trust between colleagues:

Heidi K. Gardner researched more than 3,000 senior knowledge workers and identified two distinct kinds of trust that are essential for people to work together effectively. First, they need to believe that others will deliver and that the work will be high quality ([labelled] competence trust). Second, they need to believe that others have good intentions and high integrity ([termed] interpersonal trust). To trust colleagues in both of these ways, people need clear and easily discernible signals about them — what they're doing ([their] actions), why they're doing it ([their] motivations), and whether they'll continue to do it ([their] reliability).

Things felt uncomfortable for Alex in this regard. They weren't sure how they could prove their intentions and trustworthiness. They had been so used to demonstrating this simply by being present in the office.

Since Alex was at home where no one could see them, they started to worry that people would assume they were just putting their feet up. This led to them

working [longer hours](#) and always making themselves available. They spent more time on tasks than was necessary and would send long emails justifying how they had spent their day. They were tired and working well beyond their remit. Before long, Alex felt burnt out beyond anything they had experienced before hybrid working.

2. Losing focus

Working at home has a lot of benefits. It can be a more comfortable and familiar environment which lets you feel more relaxed. But what happens when that comfort starts to get in the way? Most offices might not be the most entertaining places in the world, but that's by design. It's a way to eliminate distractions. It didn't take long before Alex's focus started to get pulled away by all the fun things they could do at home. There was a personal project they'd been working on and a new TV show they wanted to catch up on. Suddenly, they'd completely lost focus, and their productivity tanked.

3. Work/life balance

When Alex was going into the office, all they had to worry about was working. At home, work could be interrupted by their screaming toddler, a burst pipe, or a noisy neighbour. Alex began to find it harder and harder to separate their work life and their home life.

This is something a lot of people have felt, especially if their office is also their bedroom. According to many [studies](#), "poor work-life balance leads to poor health later in life". The boundaries are particularly blurred when working from home. Working an extra few hours, checking your emails just before bed, or working in your pyjamas can be tempting. It can be difficult to switch between work and leisure mode.

What did Alex do?

Alex started to feel that the only solution was to head back into the office five days a week, but they are now glad they didn't choose that option. The truth is that there *are* a whole lot of benefits to hybrid working. It might just be a case of making some changes to get the most out of it.

The first thing that Alex did was improve their communication with the rest of the company. Rather than sending endless emails and being on call at all hours, Alex lets their colleagues know what they will be working on and provides necessary updates. Communication is so helpful for developing trust in the workplace. Alex makes sure to talk with colleagues about their well-being too. It's easy for messages to become entirely work-focused, but keeping team morale high is essential.

Alex takes breaks, stays hydrated, and makes sure to get up from their desk frequently. The [Health and Safety Executive](#) advises PC, laptop, tablet or smartphone users to "take short breaks often, rather than longer ones less

often. For example, 5 to 10 minutes every hour is better than 20 minutes every 2 hours.”

Next, Alex took a look at their working environment. They decided that maybe working in bed in their PJs isn't exactly conducive to staying focused. Instead, they set out a dedicated space at home for work activities, and they don't let the other parts of their life spill into it. This helps them deal with the challenge of a healthy work/life balance. That way, their personal life isn't invading their work. “[Get everything you need in one place, before you start work – chargers, pens, paper and anything else – and shut the door if you can. Even in a small or shared space, try to designate an area for work.](#)” They also make sure to get enough sleep and turn their work laptop and phone off at the end of their working day.

Routine is crucial for Alex, too. As the [NHS](#) highlights, “without steady schedules, the lines between work and personal time can get blurred and be stressful to get right.”

Alex also researched ways of staying focused. They're currently testing out timeboxing to see how well that works for them. They plan [nutritious lunches](#) that promote better concentration.

The reality of hybrid working is that it gives you more control of your day, and you are responsible for deciding how you spend your time. As we've seen, that can be refreshing and stressful in equal parts. There's no magic formula for mastering hybrid working. Instead, it's about seeing what works for you and having the confidence to try new methods. There's a balance to be found, and you undoubtedly have the skills you need to create an environment that works successfully for you.