

6 pieces of advice from the Web Summit team for remote working

Like many across the world, we've changed the way we work - our whole team is working remotely. We've been lucky: many of our team at Web Summit have decades' experience working from home, while others are based in offices away from our Dublin, Ireland headquarters. We'd like to share some of the things that have made our transition to remote work as painless as possible. The first section deals with how our teams have adapted to working from home: the nuts and bolts of working remotely. The second deals with the broader, structural changes we've gone through as a company. We hope some of it helps.

Temps de lecture : minute

18 March 2020

1: The nuts and bolts of remote working

The three unbreakable rules

1. You lose the information you don't write down
2. Discipline and environment beat motivation
3. Support yourself and your teammates - keep each other accountable

Your workspace

- Quality headphones are a must - You're going to have a lot of calls, so you're going to need comfortable headphones. If you're using Bluetooth headphones, keep an eye on your battery levels.
- If you are sharing a space, set some boundaries - Help your family,

friends and housemates know when you're working and not to be disturbed with clear signals: headphones, post-its and closed doors usually work.

- Watch your energy levels - Keep some healthy snacks and drinks nearby, and don't miss any meals.

Your mental health

- Isolation may hit you unexpectedly - You'll miss your usual face-to-face interactions, so try to schedule video calls with colleagues and clients - You'll find you communicate better. Make an effort to stay connected with the outside world - small talk, even if it's online, can be a big help.
- Routines will help you stay focused - When you're on your own, it's easy to get distracted. Setting yourself a routine will help keep your day on track.
- Cabin fever is real - Let's be clear: working remotely is hard to cope with at first. With no commute to your office, it can be easy to let a day pass without leaving your home. If possible and appropriate, try to get some fresh air, even if it's just for a solitary walk around your garden or block.

The etiquette for dial-in meetings

- If you're not talking, keep your microphone muted - Like when using a walkie-talkie, keep the channel open for whoever is talking. Be strict about this rule! If a teammate isn't abiding by it, mute them - it cuts down on interruptions.
- Unless you have connection problems, keep your camera on - This helps maintain a level of body language - critical for effective communication. When on video calls, don't check your email or do other work. The face-to-face video call should be your sole focus.
- Make sure all your teammates are heard - It can be easy to miss the

body language cue indicating a teammate wants to speak on a video call. Make an extra effort to ensure everyone gets their points across. Pro tip: unmuting yourself is a clear signal that “I want to speak next”.

How to hold meetings

- Think of meetings as virtual conferences - Allow for everyone to connect from wherever they are in the world. Your scheduling needs to answer the five Ws: what, why, when, where and with whom.
- Add an agenda and follow-up with minutes - If a meeting doesn't have an agenda, feel free to ask for one. After the meeting, sum up decisions and key information over email or Slack.
- Be prepared to share your screen often - When doing so, review the information you need to and then immediately stop sharing. When you jump on a call, mute your other apps, like Slack or Whatsapp.

Collaborating with your team

- See each other every day - It's important for everyone to see each other regularly. Be sure to sync each day to keep everyone up-to-date with what you're all working on.
- Look back and discuss - Set a recurring virtual meeting to review how you're working together. Be honest and blameless. Decide on how the team will work on improving specific points.
- Make time for chat and conversation - Chatting with your teammates about anything but work is important. Try setting aside time to check-in and chat about how your day is going. Maybe set up a permanent “team pod” hangout, where people can jump in and talk when the time suits. Finding the right fit for your team is crucial.

One-to-one communication

- Don't expect immediate answers - Remote work can often be about one-sided communication - that's just the nature of this way of working. Be understanding of your teammates. Something that helps: structure your communication - whether it be a Slack message or email or otherwise - as a single question or update, rather than a conversation.
- Set availability expectations - Starting a big piece of work? Set your Slack status accordingly (or close it). Are you going to be away from your desk for a while? Let your team know.
- What is your backup for when things break? - Things break all the time - the internet fails or you need to reboot your laptop mid-meeting. Communicate early that you're facing issues and set clear expectations for when you'll be back online.

2: The broad and structural

How to move to remote work as a result of Covid-19

The three unbreakable rules

1. Enact your business continuity plan
2. Find the right tools
3. Enable your people

Business continuity

- First things first: realign priorities - How does your business need to change given the current global uncertainty? Consider immediate and future disruptions of resources and availability.
- Assess, decide and broadcast - Make the best decisions you can with

(often) incomplete information, then let your team and customers know.

- Plan for contingencies - Uncertainty reigns across industries and across the world - are you prepared to adjust course quickly?

The right tools

- Conferencing - A quality conferencing tool will be crucial for holding meetings. Does your conferencing tool of choice work for both one-to-one and company-wide meetings?
- Instant messaging - Give your staff ways to communicate about anything and everything.

Don't forget to enable spaces for relaxed chatter.

People

- Adjustment period - Working From Home will be a new experience for a lot of people.

Businesses are adapting roles and workflows to better support their clients.

- Family - A lot of people will have family members in their immediate surroundings.

Expect the occasional disruption and don't forget a smile. We're all in this together.

- Time management - Schedules are essential to keep everyone on track but don't micromanage them.

Trust towards your peers and direct reports is essential.

- Anxiety and Stress - Uncertainty and change sweeping the world. Keep an eye on anxiety and stress levels. Be kind.

Tomé Duarte, Senior Engineering Manager, has 10+ years experience working remotely, as well as managing remote teams.

Article écrit par Tomé Duarte