



## March 31, 2020 Newsletter



### Working from Home and Remotely with Teams

The COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing shelter-in-place orders have thrown countless individuals into unplanned work-from-home situations. Like many of our clients, you are probably feeling challenged and overwhelmed as you attempt to navigate a new norm for your families and your work.



## A Full House

In the past, you may have fantasized about working from home, imagining yourself rolling out of bed to a freshly brewed pot of coffee, padding down the hall to a comfy home office and enjoying a peaceful, blissfully productive workday.

Then came the reality of pandemic-induced working from home: 24/7 togetherness with your partner, tireless young kids and/or cranky teens and pets; homeschooling demands; lagging wi-fi; constant disruptions and temptations; and a seemingly endless cycle of alarming news.

It's time for a plan! Leap Solutions has put together some strategies for tackling this big shift in the way you live and work.

## At-Home Negotiations

Start with setting up your home office and establishing household agreements.

- **Workspace:** Anyone working from home—including children doing schoolwork from home for the foreseeable future—needs a workspace that is practical and comfortable. Be it an unclaimed bedroom or just a thoughtfully planned corner of a family or living room, the area must be conducive to your working style (away from the television if you're easily distracted, near the family's common areas for easy supervision of kids, with a garden view if you prefer quiet inspiration...). Your space should have enough desk or table surface to hold your computer/laptop/Chromebook and papers/books; access to power, chargers and wi-fi; decent lighting; and an appropriate, uncluttered, neat background for video conferencing (perhaps somewhere you can sequester yourself from nosy, noisy pets!).
- **Technology:** If you haven't already, set yourself up with video conferencing tools such as Zoom, Skype, Webex or Google Hangout. These, along with instant messaging and collaborative web-based applications, allow workers to be productive anywhere, anytime. Assuming you aren't alone in the house, you might want to invest in a noise-canceling headset.
- **Scheduling:** You've probably heard some version of the phrase "you can do it all...just not all at the same time." It's especially true when you work from home. Experiment to find a schedule that works best for you, your working style, your projects and your family. Aim for at least one or two daily chunks of focused, uninterrupted work time per family member.

Before a new week begins, discuss one another's commitments and demands, and map out how to meet them all. Then, each evening, make a rough calendar for the following day: take into account what's top of mind for each family member, include priorities and deadlines, engagement timelines, etc. Then negotiate: "How about I take the kids and dog for an early morning walk and make breakfast while you do those conference calls with the east coast? Then I can interact with my local team between 10:00 and 1:00 while you oversee the kids' classwork and lunch?"

- **Teamwork:** Shared households require teamwork, but never more so than when you're all home all the time. Divvy up household obligations so no one family member feels overburdened. Think about meals and snacks (there's a lot more work involved when three meals a day are prepared, served, consumed and cleaned-up-after on the premises!), food and supply shopping, cleaning and extended family obligations. With kids in the house, you'll want to coordinate shifts monitoring screen time, helping with distance learning and schoolwork, guiding "after school" entertainment and exercise, and so much more.
- **Sustainability:** However you manage your days together, check in often and look after one another. With so little delineation between home and work, you may well find yourself working harder and longer hours than ever. You think you'll just check your email after the kids go down, and before you know it you're ringing in a new day. Don't let sleep or emotional wellness suffer. Burnout doesn't serve your family *or* your work.
- **Grace:** Though you're likely to become a master multi-tasker during these shelter-in-place times, you can't do it all—and shouldn't be expected to. Be realistic about what's possible (hint: there probably *will* be too much screen time, and there probably *won't* be a perfectly tidy home!), be open to revisiting what isn't working well, and, above all, extend yourself some grace.
- **Downtime:** Minimize inevitable stress with intentional, regular diversions. Buy yourself some downtime by setting the kids up with snacks and a movie. Binge a Netflix series with your partner. Give yourself and your families a periodic change of scenery with a walk or a short drive. But know that you don't even have to leave your house to be transported: during COVID-19, authors are streaming read-alouds and musicians are streaming concerts from their living rooms; Broadway shows and opera houses around the world are presenting video performances; and museums are offering virtual walking tours. For activities, look to daily

workout videos; follow-along STEM projects; and drawing, music and dance tutorials—all free and accessible anytime.

- **Connection:** Practicing good “social distancing,” doesn’t mean losing contact with friends and loved ones. Get creative! Embrace the same technologies you use at work to schedule regular get-togethers. Try a virtual happy hour with friends, a shared meal with extended family, or a recipe bake-off for the kids. Launch a Netflix Party to watch and chat about shows and movies together in real time. You may well feel more connected to friends and loved ones than ever before!



### Work Communication

With everyone working remotely, it’s especially important to maintain that same connectedness with your team, colleagues and clients by implementing an intentional, proactive communication strategy.

- **Tools:** Make sure everyone you work with has access to the aforementioned technologies, and build in time and provide resources for learning them. Take advantage of project maps and online project management tools, such as Smartsheet or Zoho Projects, so everyone is always on the same page.
- **Engagement:** Demonstrate your ongoing commitment to your team and their wellbeing by keeping them abreast of any developments in company operations as well as any updates to government programs in support of them and their families. Schedule connection points with everyone at least once a week and daily check-ins for employees you directly manage.
- **Flexibility:** Establish clear guidelines and realistic expectations for how objectives will be met and essential duties will be fulfilled, but recognize

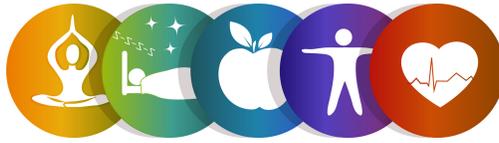
that flexibility is key. Don't expect everyone to be on a conventional 40-hour, nine-to-five workweek. Prevent misunderstandings and avoid resentments by being reasonable and honest about your availability and capabilities, and encourage the same from others as they, too, learn to manage their at-home workdays.

- **Adaptability:** These are unprecedented times. Know there will be glitches, situations can change rapidly, new issues will arise, and plenty of things will go differently than planned. Be ready to adapt, revisit agreements and adjust next steps and deadlines accordingly. Most importantly, impart confidence by maintaining transparency, open communication and respect throughout.
- **Status quo:** Even when there's nothing to report, check-in. Listen to how your employees are feeling and how they're adjusting; ask what's working well and what's been challenging. Hear their anxieties and empathize with their struggles, and share your own experience, perspective and solutions.
- **Inspiration:** Focus on what matters now. Your humanity and compassion create a sense of caring and belonging among your team. Listen to one another and be inspired by one another's thoughts, hopes and triumphs.
- **Celebration:** Provide positive feedback and express gratitude to your team members for their contributions and accomplishments during these trying times. Help them feel recognized, appreciated and valued.

## A Balanced Life

Even in the midst of a worldwide crisis, Leap Solutions Group is here to support you, guide you and help you thrive, both professionally and personally. As you learn to successfully blend your work life and your home life in ways you never have before, you may just find yourself feeling more balanced than ever!





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