PA ENTERPRISE

August/September 2020

How to properly sanitise your workspace

Working from home risks online security and privacy – how to stay protected

10 tips for eating healthily when you're working from home

What are transferable skills?

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As working from home becomes the new normal … know your rights

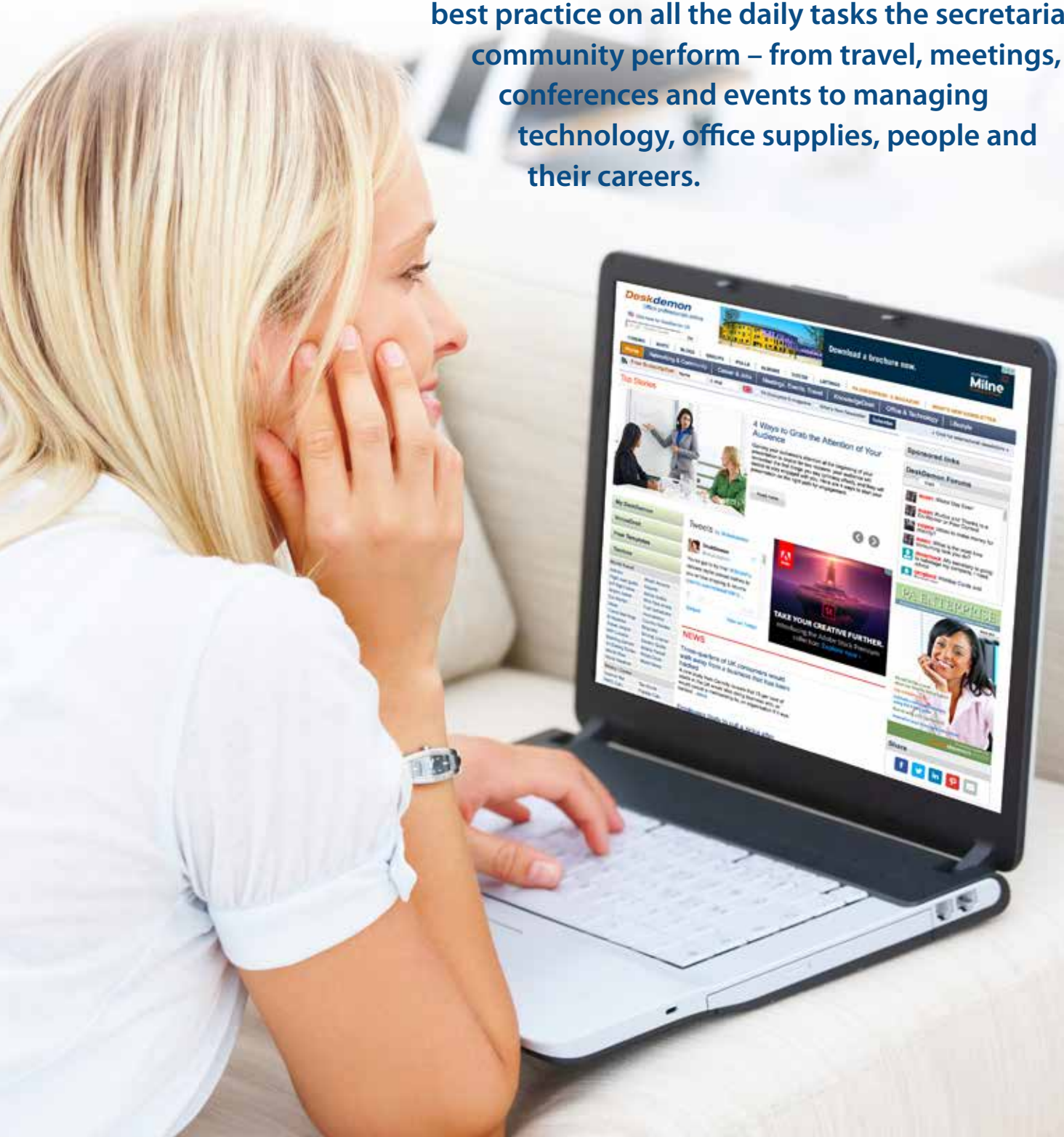Five personal attributes valued by employers

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How to properly sanitise your workspace

Sanitary requirements related to the prevention of coronavirus infections are not only about rigorous hygiene, wearing masks or washing hands. Sanitising workplaces and necessary office equipment that other employees use after us is also a must. What should you know about this?

Workplace Disinfection Applies to Everyone

If you work in an office, it is particularly important to disinfect your workplace, which should be carried out regularly, preferably after each day of work or more often – if necessary. Correctly done workplace disinfection is fast and should not take you too much time. It also doesn't require the use of complicated means. To carry it out, all you need is an antibacterial liquid intended for surface disinfection (special liquids are available in shops and online stores) or isopropyl alcohol (undiluted with water).

For wiping, one can use a soft cotton or microfiber cloth as well as an ordinary handkerchief or paper towel. The employer should take care of these basic hygiene measures. However – even though most offices are generally disinfected by cleaning companies and services – the daily workplace disinfection applies to each employee. Even if it is not imposed as our duty, it is worth treating it as a positive habit and conducting it regularly – also for your own safety.

Disinfecting Workplaces – COVID19

Workplace disinfection should include desk space and office equipment, especially the computer keyboard (or any other equipment that you touch while working). There are a few important rules to keep in mind.

First of all, when sanitising workplaces do not use soapy water – it may flood or damage electronic equipment and even cause a short circuit. Use only disinfectants specially designed for this purpose. In addition, never apply them directly to equipment (do not spray or pour water on the keyboard or monitor screen) – wipe them with a cloth moistened before.

Do not disinfect switched on equipment! Before sanitising workplaces, switch off any devices and disconnect them from the power supply.

Poorly available space (e.g. between keyboard keys) can be cleaned with cosmetic sticks soaked in alcohol or disinfectant. After that, the disinfected keyboard should be left until the alcohol evaporates. Only after that can the equipment be restarted and used.

Disinfecting Workplaces – What Else Should You Remember?

Remember to wash your hands thoroughly and also disinfect them before disinfecting the workplace. If possible, wear a mask and cover your nose and mouth when you sneeze – this will reduce the spread of any germs. Also, avoid eating and drinking near your computer, keyboard, and office equipment. Wash and disinfect your hands after each use of the toilet or visit in office social rooms (e.g. shared kitchen, etc.).

Tip: in the same way – using a cloth soaked with disinfectant liquid or alcohol – you can disinfect

Phone — Clean Daily
Of everything on your desk, the phone is the dirtiest.

1. Turn off or unplug your phone.
2. Wipe it with a microfiber towel that has been lightly sprayed with a solution of 50 per cent rubbing alcohol and 50 per cent water.
3. Dry with a clean microfiber cloth.

Cleaning your phone every day is good for your health. If that's not possible, be sure to clean it at least once a week.

Screen — Clean Weekly
Monitors can be damaged if liquids seep beneath the screen.

1. Instead of using cleaning spray, unplug your monitor and wipe it with a dry microfiber cloth.
2. For tough spots, use a microfiber cloth lightly dampened with distilled water.
3. Do not use paper towels, which can scratch the surface of the screen.

Desk — Clean Weekly
Clean it before lunch or at the end of the day so it can dry while you're away.

1. Remove everything from the surface.
2. Wipe it down with an antibacterial wipe or a cloth and spray.
3. Dry with another cloth.

Spot clean your desk if you spill anything. This is especially important if you eat at your desk.

Keyboard — Clean Weekly
Clean it at the end of the day when you turn off your computer.

1. Shut down your computer and hold your keyboard upside down and shake out loose debris.
2. Use a can of compressed air to remove trapped dirt.
3. Clean individual keys with cotton swabs dipped in rubbing alcohol.
4. Dry with a lint-free cloth.

Mouse — Clean Monthly

1. Turn it off and wipe with a damp cloth or antibacterial wipe, avoiding the areas with openings such as buttons.
2. Use a dry microfiber cloth to remove moisture.
3. Check the wheel for particles, rolling to dislodge them.

Clean your mouse every day it's shared or you're sick.

Most importantly

A clean work area can boost productivity, but if your hands are dirty then it seriously reduces the effects of your effort. Good hand hygiene — wet, lather, scrub, rinse, dry — helps you stay healthy and stops the spread of germs.

STAPLES

the surface of your smartphone! Many of us often forget about the phone, and yet it is an item that we touch frequently during the day. For your own safety and the safety of others, remember to disinfect the workplace regularly – ideally every day after finishing work. Workplace sanitizing should also be performed whenever necessary, for example when other people are going to use the office equipment. If the office has equipment for general use – e.g. a printer – you should also remember to wipe it with a disinfectant after each use.

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Working from home risks online security and privacy – how to stay protected

Remote working can be a blessing. More time with family, less commuting, and meetings from the comfort of your living room. But as millions across the world switch to working from home due to the COVID-19 pandemic, they may be putting the security and privacy of themselves, their families and their employers at risk.

Many will be using online collaboration tools, such as Zoom, Slack, and HouseParty to stay connected to colleagues and friends now that physical contact is restricted.

Zoom, the most popular of the video calling platforms, allows call hosts to track attendee attention, and in particular, whether you are in the Zoom window (as opposed to checking email or playing a game, for instance). Zoom also collects a host of other personal information such as each caller's location data, operating system, IP address, and what kind of device they're using, whether it's an Apple Mac, iPhone, Android or Windows device.

Zoom has had its share of security problems. A now-fixed software bug had allowed anyone to find and join a meeting. There was also a problem with its software which could have resulted in any malicious website turning on your camera and watching you unawares. And Zoom Bombing is now a thing. It involves trolls using Zoom's screensharing feature to display vile content, including violent videos and shocking pornography.

Another popular tool is Slack, which as it states, "is the place for remote work". A core feature of Slack is its channels. These are spaces to share

messages and files with colleagues on particular topics and projects. While paid accounts have some control over how long their channel or private message data is kept by Slack, free accounts are much more limited. This could mean that your messages (including direct messages complaining about your boss or a colleague) are accessible to others, even if they aren't to you.

For many people, working remotely is a completely new experience. Some are celebrating the novelty by using the #WorkFromHome hashtag on social media, and sharing posts that include photos of home office setups, and friends and family members.

This may seem benign, but it can actually expose a variety of sensitive personal information about you and those around you.

For instance, posting photos of homeworking setups, which happen to include letters, post or Amazon packages, can publicise your home address. Sharing photos and names of family members or pets may provide hints about your passwords or even expose your location.

The now popular practice of sharing screenshots of Zoom work group chats or HouseParty video hangouts, also has its privacy risks, given the fact that companies have been known to indiscriminately gather the photos we share online and use them without our permission. This means anyone could match offline photos of us directly to our online profiles on Twitter, Facebook or LinkedIn. Some companies have even been known to use our photos in adverts.

Well-equipped cyber-criminals

Largescale remote working is a security nightmare for employers. As remote access to corporate networks is rolled out, cyber-criminals have their pick of places to attack.

Cyber-criminals are well aware of this, and have already begun to launch targeted attacks. According to the latest statistics, coronavirus-related fraud reports have increased by 400% in March alone. There have been scams for

COVID-19 tax refunds and others impersonating the Centre for Disease Control to request donations.

Criminals have impersonated staff from the World Health Organization (WHO) and there have been extortion emails that threaten to infect recipients with coronavirus unless they pay up. Even coronavirus outbreak and infection-tracking maps are being used to spread malware.

These problems are made worse by the reality that many of us will be using personal, and potentially less secure home devices, such as laptops, phones and USB drives, for work tasks. Most people aren't accustomed to maintaining workplace security practices over long periods in our homes, with kids, distractions and other commitments.

How to stay safe

- Be careful what you post publicly. Check that there is no potentially sensitive information in it. Once it's published online, it's there, forever.

- Check recent security and privacy reports about online collaboration tools before using them, and if in doubt, consult your employer. These tools can have access to details about your devices, your data and your video and audio conversations. The Electronic Frontier Foundation is a good source.

- Protect your devices. Install anti-virus software, update systems and apps, implement multi-factor authentication (so that multiple pieces of evidence are needed for someone to use your login, such as username and password and a text message), and be on the lookout for phishing scams.

- Zoom Bombing and other forms of hijacking meetings can be prevented. Share meeting links with only invited parties. Configure Zoom to only allow the host to share screen, as appropriate. And disable file transfers to stop trolls sharing viruses to all attendees.

By Jason Nurse, Assistant Professor in Cyber Security, University of Kent

5 tips for your employees to stay productive while working remotely

The risk of exposure to coronavirus in the workplace has most of us on house arrest. Having to set the alarm and worrying about making it to work on time is now a thing of the past. The adverse effects of the novel coronavirus have taken its toll on humanity, having forced employees to work from home. The stats may show an increase in the productivity of employees, working remotely has as well brought upon high stress on them.

To ease the strain and minimize the impact of coronavirus on public health and the world economy, organizations around the world are offering pliant policies around work from home that are catering to the requirements of this dire hour.The need to have healthy and productive employees to ensure smooth functioning of organizations is a top priority of employers, here are some tips that can be passed on to your workforce who keep the wheel spinning.

Encrypt Your Staff Network with a VPN

While work from home is a viable option for running a business and maintaining employee health during the pandemic. It is one way most employees may be risking their data because of not having an encrypted network, jeopardizing their data security. And also, when your employees surf the internet, not having an encrypted network makes you a target for online marketing, so pop-ups and auto-play videos will only cause distractions, contributing to the increased unproductive time and cyber threats. However, a VPN offers protection from hackers since it hides your online activity from prying eyes and your ISPs.

Keep in Touch with Your Colleagues

Employees can become less productive when they are feeling lonely; workplace loneliness can affect the best of us; employees are not used to working from home and not having a cubical neighbor feels terrible! Just a simple thing like not having an impromptu discussion with a coworker can be frustrating. This unorthodox method of working sure is working, but taking away some of the best perks of being in an office. Establish scheduled calls every week with employees to understand their bearings, encourage free dialogue throughout your squad to help them distil concerns and inquiries.

Follow a Schedule

Not having regular business hours is a problem, when you don't have fixed working hours you lose track of time, not knowing when you are supposed to work, pursue your hobbies or have time for yourself and give

time to your loved ones. Try to stick to normal working hours, set a timer for the end of the workday, not only does it make you more productive it also allows you time to spend with the people you have around you. Stop yourself from overworking and be more productive.

Be Self-Organized and Disciplined

Sudden transitions can leave people searching for order in chaos. Earlier, you used to wake up to an alarm every morning, have your first cup of coffee, dress up to make an impression, and greet similar enthusiastic faces. All that you now do is sit in your jammies throughout your business hours. Structure your day around objectives and keep yourself disciplined, prioritize and organize workflow.

Take a Break

All work and no play make a man dull and grey. We all have heard this, and it is very evident now that we can't go out and play. Overworking will overwork you. Taking short breaks increases productivity, including short breaks in your routine is the trick, take a break every hour, stretch, walk, freshen up, and get back to work.

Conclusion

All of us are adapting to coronavirus from staying indoors to safe to learning to live with corona. The sudden transitions and different adaptations will test us to the best of our abilities, but you can take this time to bring out the best in you staying productive and vigilant.

hrnews.co.uk

4 in 10 home workers eat just crisps for lunch

A nationwide study of home working Brits has revealed that, despite the perks of remote working, when it comes to our lunch options, things have taken a dramatic turn for the worse.

Latest ONS figures suggest almost half (49%) of British workers have not yet ventured back to the office. And according to the research, released today by Just Eat, 34% of those working from home, have seen a decline in the quality of their lunch, with 39% opting for just a packet of crisps, most days. A further six% have resorted to eating cold baked beans straight from the can.

30% said they usually just make do with a cup of coffee, while a third (36%) rely on instant noodles and 19% simply stick an uninspiring ready meal in the microwave.

Biscuits (27%), bars of chocolate (30%), potato waffles cooked in the toaster (6%) and jam on toast (17%) are other uninspiring midday meals, according to the 1,500 work from home Brits surveyed.

So, it is no surprise that nearly three quarters (70%) miss their office-based lunch options, with 81% saying working from home has meant their lunches are more boring than ever. More than one in ten (13%) of home workers eat the same lunch every day.

The research, commissioned by Just Eat to mark free delivery for Pret A Manger, with no minimum order, from its food delivery platform, found that deli sandwiches top the list of lunches we pine for (38%), along with burritos (23%), sushi (19%) and noodle bowls (22%).

"It's clear that lunchtime enjoyment has taken a hit and so I'm delighted our free London delivery on Pret A Manger is available to bring back some of the joy of an office lunch to our customers' homes."

Andrew Kenn
Managing Director UK at Just Eat

When it comes to what we miss the most about having lunch at the office, 39% said getting a proper break from work away from their desk, while 38% felt having a variety of choices.

According to the study, the average Brit has 12 tedious lunches every month – that is three a week, while 13% of Brits skip lunch every day because they cannot think of anything that takes their fancy.

Six in ten get struck down with lunch envy when they see friends and colleagues post mouth- watering lunch pictures on social media.

19% said having lunch at home was the worst part of home working, while 85% agree having a delicious lunch delivered to their door would make them happy.

When it comes to other downsides of home working, 11% said the worst thing about it was being with their partner all day.

Those looking for food inspiration can head to just-eat.co.uk or the Just Eat app. Just Eat now features office favourite, Pret A Manger, meaning workers can get a freshly prepared lunch with the added bonus of free delivery across select locations until 6th September.

hrnews.co.uk

10 tips for eating healthily when you're working from home

Registered dietitian Anna Taylor discusses strategies and hacks for eating healthily while working from home.

You're on a conference call and somehow wandered into the kitchen. Next thing you know you're eating crackers and dry cereal out of the box. Or maybe you got so caught up in a project that you suddenly realize you haven't eaten a thing all day. Or perhaps the "I'll just have a handful of chips as I work" mentality turned into accidently eating the entire bag.

Keeping your nutrition in check can be tough when your home is your office. You feel comfortable and there's plenty of food available. And unlike in the office, you're free to graze all day and the fridge is all yours. But this habit can wreak havoc on your waistline, sabotage weight loss and halt your productivity.

Don't work in (or near) the kitchen.

Try to set up your desk in an area that's not near the kitchen. You might be tempted to wander over and check the fridge (for the tenth time) if it's constantly in your line of vision. Decide that the only time you'll be in your kitchen during the workday is when you're getting ready to have a planned snack or meal. (More on that below!) If this is hard to follow, hang a sign on your fridge and pantry to remind you that the kitchen is closed until the next scheduled meal or snack.

Plan your snack and meal times.

Just as you schedule and plan out the rest of your day (get up, workout, shower), establish when throughout the day you're going to eat. If you know you like to eat lunch around noon, plan for that. And if you like to have a snack in the late afternoon, plan for that as well. Treat food like you would in the office. You can't be grazing all day long when you're there – so act the same way at home.

Make sure you actually eat.

Once you hit the ground running, err, working, it can be hard to take a break to actually eat. But it's important to know your hunger signs and realize that not eating can affect your alertness and productivity. Plus, eating throughout the day can save you from being a big hangry mess once 5 o'clock rolls around. If needed, set an alarm on your phone to remind you to get up and eat something.

Meal prep your lunches.

There's something freeing about being able to whip up whatever you want to eat for lunch (and not having to stand in line for the work microwave is a huge bonus). But for some people, the freedom is too much, especially when it comes to weekday lunches. If you can, try to meal prep your lunches ahead of time, just like you would on days you physically go to work. It doesn't need to be anything fancy either. A bag of lettuce, precut veggies, grilled chicken and

nuts is a simple form of meal prep that takes out all the guess work. Or maybe you've decided that you're going to make a veggie omelet every day for lunch. Precut the vegetables ahead of time so you can quickly cook up a healthy and delicious lunch.

Focus on real food.

Balanced, nutritious food makes us more productive. It keeps us fuller longer and helps us focus. Understand that what you eat will impact your mood and energy level. Think about this the next time you're feeling hungry and just want to grab a handful of chocolate from the pantry. Focus on protein, fiber, healthy fats, fruits and veggies. Planning a menu ahead of time will make it easier to avoid noshing on whatever looks tastiest and quickest in the moment.

Drink plenty of water.

Dehydration can lead to headaches and fatigue, which are both not good for your productivity.

Just as you'd fill up a water bottle at the office to keep at your desk, keep water next to your work station at home too. If you have water readily available, chances are you're more likely to drink it, helping you reach your goal of at least 64 ounces per day. (And PLEASE stay away from sugar-loaded soda and juice, both of which can cause you to crash later.)

Be careful of too much caffeine.

Having access to endless cups of coffee might seem like a great idea, but tread carefully when it comes to caffeine. Too much is known to cause headaches, anxiety, digestive issues and even fatigue – none of which are ever good, but particularly not good when you're trying to work. Aim for no more than two cups of coffee per day to avoid the jittery feeling and avoid flavored creamers and other high calorie add-ins!

Don't buy junk food.

Don't stock your fridge or pantry like a vending machine. This can lead to eating just because you can! Try you best to keep junk food out of your house, especially foods you know can trigger a binge for you. Out of sight, out of mind.

When you eat, just eat.

You might be tempted to continue working through your lunch break now that your co-workers aren't physically there. Bu don't do it! Being distracted during a meal can lead to over-eating and decreased satiety (satisfaction and fullness) from the meal. Instead, take a break from work to sit down at a table to enjoy your lunch and relax for a few minutes. You'll enjoy the

meal more, and it may even help you feel more prepared for the rest of your work day.

Portion out snacks and meals before eating.

Never eat out of the bag or original container, as it's much harder to control portions that way. Check the serving size on the container if you need extra guidance. For meals, try the healthy plate method: Fill half a 9-inch plate with non-starchy vegetables, one-fourth the plate with a lean protein (poultry, seafood, beans, eggs, tofu, cottage cheese or Greek yogurt) and one-fourth the plate with a high fiber carbohydrate (fruit, whole grains or starchy vegetables).

health.clevelandclinic.org

How do you organise an office or home filing system?

Are you tired of a constant mess in your papers? Are you always looking for important documents or find them in the least expected place? Learn how to organise a home or office filing system so that everything stays in place.

Where to Start

Do you feel that you are not in control of your documents? They get lost and you finally find them in the least expected places? Take a few hours to organise them thoroughly. Start by gathering all the documents you keep at home. The first step of filing should be getting rid of those that are definitely no longer useful or required. There is no point in storing, for example, old receipts and warranty cards for items you no longer have or extensive manuals for electronic devices – if necessary, you can usually find these on the Internet. Prescriptions that are no longer valid or test results from a few years ago will not be useful either. Your home filing system should be transparent and only contain what's necessary.

Tip: If you feel that a document may still be useful – archive it in a digital form. You can take a good quality photo with your phone or use a free document scanning application that immediately saves files, e.g. in PDF format. It is easy to store them in a cloud.

How Do You Organise a Home Filing System?

Not only the simplest but also the handiest way of segregation is to organise documents in categories using envelopes, folders or binders. A home filing system may include the following categories:

- **finances and home budget**
- **health**
- **policies and insurance**

Office Filing System

In the office, there are usually many more documents than at home. Often, you should also comply with the provisions on their secure storage. This is in order to maintain confidentiality and restrict access for unauthorised parties. That is why an office filing system usually requires a lot more attention than a home one.

In a small office, a bookcase or a filing cabinet with a key will do the trick. When using binders, it is worth paying a bit more attention than usual to accurately describing their content, not only in terms of categories, but also in terms of dates which the documents refer to. Every few months it is advisable to check the status of document and archive those currently unnecessary or supply anything that was missing. When it comes to an office filing system, sorting documents regularly to avoid mess is a real key to success.

- **tax settlements**
- **education**
- **work-related documents etc.**

Of course, this system may look slightly different – depending on your needs.

Other Ideas for a Home Filing System

If you're not a fan of piles of folders and binders, you can store documents in decorative cardboard boxes. Nobody will guess what's inside, and you'll be able to label their content easily. One spacious folder with compartments can also come in handy. You can mark important documents or compartments with coloured sticky notes, for example. The same labels might serve as a reminder for things such as upcoming payment dates etc. It is worth selecting a separate colour for each document category.

staples.co.uk

What are transferable skills?

Not sure you have the right skills for a role? You may be surprised… Transferable skills are a great way to show you're a great fit for the role, regardless of previous experience. And the best part? Everyone has them. If you're not sure how to make transferable skills work for you, here are a few things to remember.

What are transferable skills?

Transferable skills are a core set of skills and abilities, which can be applied to a wide range of different jobs and industries.

They're usually picked up over time, and can be gained from previous positions, charity or voluntary work, your hobbies, or even just at home.

Why are transferable skills important?

Although slightly softer skills than those directly related to a position, transferable skills are incredibly valuable to employers.

Not only do they show that you'd be a good fit for the team, they can also demonstrate what a candidate can bring to a role, and how much they've learnt from previous positions or experiences.

So if you're currently lacking experience in the field you're looking for work in, transferable skills can be a great way to highlight why you're right for the role.

What are some examples of transferable skills?

Although this is by no means a comprehensive list, here are some great examples of transferable skills you can use in your CV:

• **Leadership**

This skill is extremely versatile, and whilst it's typically linked to management positions, being a good leader is essential in almost every job – even if only in some situations.

To reference it in your CV, refer to times where you've demonstrated great leadership – whether it's through motivating others in order to achieve a shared goal, leading a project, heading up training and development for a team, or even through your hobbies and interests (e.g. coaching a sports team).

• **Time management**

Time management is a vital skill for any role, that not only proves you can work to deadlines – but also that you're able to complete tasks in the most time-effective way, create to-do-lists, delegate, ask for help, and break up projects accordingly.

Whether it's that you've had experience stacking shelves within a set time in a retail store, you've completed projects within a deadline, or you've carried out construction work that met the time-sensitive needs of a client, you'll have at least one example of time management to reference in your CV.

• Prioritisation

Prioritising tasks effectively is essential if you want to get anything done, on time, and to a high standard. That's why it's a key skill that the vast majority of employers value.

Prove you're able to assess your workload, adjust your schedule, and organise tasks in order of importance by giving tangible examples in your CV. For example, it could be that your ability to be ruthless and say no to certain tasks enabled you to complete others which had a higher level of importance, or you implemented time saving techniques to get small tasks done faster (e.g. spreadsheets, templates).

• Delegation

Whilst delegation is primarily important for managers, supervisors, or anyone in a senior position, that doesn't mean those without a background in management aren't able to demonstrate this skill.

For example, if you've ever mentored or tutored someone (whether it was at work or school), or trained another colleague in a particular system, procedure, or task, you'll be able to prove you could be a good delegator. It's all about how you frame your skills, the examples you give, and how you link back to the criteria specified in the job description.

• **Listening**

Let's face it, everyone is likely to have good listening skills, no matter where your experience lies. This means demonstrating them in your CV should be easy.

Think about times where your ability to listen well resulted in a positive outcome – whether it's that you're great at following instructions (which meant your work was done specifically to a client's requirements), you're able to absorb knowledge quickly when taught (whether it was in a meeting, at university, or anywhere else), or you delivered excellent customer service by listening carefully to a customer's needs.

• **Communication**

Although it's particularly important in customer facing industries, good communication is an extremely versatile skill that's an important part of every role – which contributes to the smooth running of any workplace.

Luckily, that means everyone has it. Examples of communication skills could range from instances where you communicated with a customer or client to fulfil their needs or resolve a problem, to times where you worked together with your colleagues to achieve a joint goal.

• **Research & analysis**

Many roles require some level of research and analysis ability – making it an important skill to make known to employers.

The examples you include may differ depending on the role and what's required (particularly if the vacancy calls for harder skills, e.g. knowledge of Google Analytics), but a basic level of research and analysis skills can be shown in anything from university essays, to any form of gathering, organising, and evaluating information – whether it's sales figures, website visits, or technical reports.

What transferable skills should I include in my CV?

If you're not sure which ones you should include for a particular role – check the job description. Employers will often explicitly state their criteria, and much of this is made up of soft skills.

Simply pick out the words which seem most relevant, and think of ways you may be able to display similar attributes – emphasising to how they could benefit the employer you're applying for a job with.

And remember: always expand on any skills you mention with real-life examples (and, if possible, results).

How do I demonstrate them on my CV?

OK, so everyone has some sort of transferable skills. But how do you show them to employers?

The most important thing to remember is to choose examples that you can practically demonstrate on your CV. Saying you're excellent at analytics is good, but you won't stand out from the crowd unless you can prove it.

So for each one, think of an example of how you've shown this skill. It could be in the workplace, or outside, as long as it effectively backs up your claim. For example:

Don't say: 'Great leadership skills'

Do say: 'Excellent leadership skills, demonstrated when I successfully managed a small team of individuals on a three day hike for a charity event'

Just make sure that you can back it up.

Recruiters will quickly realise if you're not being truthful at the interview stage, so always steer clear of lying if you want to avoid embarrassing situations.

Michael Cheary, reed.co.uk

Five personal attributes valued by employers

Struggling to stand out? It might be time to take it personally…

Although it can seem like work experience, knowledge, and qualifications are the only factors a prospective employer is interested in – your personality also plays a big part in your suitability. And even if you match the job specifications perfectly, not drawing attention to your essential attributes could be holding you back.

To make sure you're highlighting your attributes as well as your skills, here are five personal attributes most valued by employers:

Confidence

Having the right skills and experience for a role is essential – but it isn't always enough.

Employers also want someone who can prove their abilities, know their worth, and actually follow through with their claims. After all, if you're not sure of yourself, how can they be sure of you?

So when it comes to an interview, always exert confidence in your expertise – whether it's by providing unique examples to prove your skills,

maintaining eye contact and a firm handshake, or putting your abilities into practice in roleplays or tests.

And remember: it's not just about what you say, it's also about how you say it.

So prepare your answers in advance, and think before you speak. After all, nothing says uncertainty like repetitive 'umming' and 'ahhing'.

Proactivity

Do you wait to be told what to do, or do you lead by example?

If you veer towards the latter, you're probably the proactive worker that most employers are looking for. After all, they don't always have the time to monitor their employees 24/7, so a team of quick thinkers with a high level of initiative is key to a smooth-running workplace.

Luckily, there are a few ways to demonstrate proactivity in an interview.

Firstly, talk about previous instances that prove you can use your initiative to get things done – whether it's taking the lead on a project, noticing a mistake and fixing it, or prioritising tasks effectively.

Secondly – show an active interest in the role.

Asking about the kind of work you'll be doing and referring back to the job description wherever possible is a great way to demonstrate proactivity. It'll also show you've thoroughly prepared, and are passionate about what the job involves.

Resilience

No matter what the job is, roadblocks will always come up.

This means that employers need someone who's able to deal with them in an optimistic, non-defeatist manner. Not only should they be able to solve problems, they should also be able to learn and grow from failure.

Without employees like this, a business will undoubtedly crumble at the first sign of trouble.

So how can you demonstrate resilience to an employer? Aside from talking about any hurdles you've overcome in the past, it's also key to draw attention to your determination and dedication to doing well.

After all, if you're passionate about your goals, you're more likely to do what it takes to get there.

Adaptability

Change is a natural part of business.

Not only will employers be looking for someone who's open to that, they'll also want someone who can be flexible and adaptable in their work.

Whether this means you help out in different departments (for example, in retail), prioritise your workloads according to the most up and coming projects, or take on extra duties – adaptability is vital in almost every workplace.

This doesn't mean you have to be totally against routine and familiarity. It just means you need to show you're open to new things and willing to expand on your knowledge.

Positivity

Let's face it, your attitude matters.

Even if you're fully qualified for a job, a negative approach to work can put you at the bottom of the candidate list. Not only will you come across unenthusiastic, you could also imply that you'd rather focus on the bad than the good.

And even if you don't think you're being negative – anything from the way you talk about previous mistakes or problems to how you answer competency questions can imply a pessimistic attitude.

So be careful with your wording, and make sure you focus on the positives in every situation – even if the outcome wasn't easy to obtain.

By Amber Rolfe, reed.co.uk

As working from home becomes the new normal … know your rights

Many staff won't be going back into the office until next year. Here we answer the important questions employers and employees face

Working from home looks set to be a part of many people's lives for some time to come. At the beginning of lockdown in March, employees would have been forgiven for thinking that their office moving to their spare room or kitchen table would be a temporary affair. The reality is that many will remain there until next year.

RBS announced that almost 50,000 workers will not go back into the office until 2021, even as the government urged employers to encourage their staff to return. While many people may have been able to deal with a few months at

home, the prospect of many more to come throws up a series of questions for them and their bosses.

Taxing times

HMRC says that some of the cost of working from home may be eligible for tax relief, such as business phone calls or the gas and electricity for your work area. However, expenses that are used for both private and business use cannot be claimed for. Fill out a P87 form if they are less than £2,500 for the year. You will need records and receipts when filling it out.

If more, you will need to complete a self-assessment tax return. However, it can be difficult to apportion costs so you can, instead, claim tax relief on £6 a week. Or your employer is allowed to pay you £6 a week tax-free.

Getting set up

At the start of lockdown computer retailers reported a glut of orders as companies stocked up on laptops needed by staff to work from home. However, not all employers will agree to cover the cost, and many workers can find they have to foot the bill themselves for setting up a home office, or they have to use their own equipment. Conciliation service Acas says both sides should agree beforehand on how they should work and what equipment will be used.

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Employers should carry out risk assessments - if not, they could be found at fault in a future claim for something like repetitive strain injury. The chance of problems arising grow with the amount of time workers are at home, says Caroline Doran Millett, an employment lawyer at Royds Withy King. She expects there to be a series of claims in the coming years as a

result of using incorrect work equipment.

"If someone gets injured because the employer has not done a risk assessment, it falls back to the employer and we are looking at potential personal injury," she says. "Now it is not a short-term thing, there needs to be a lot more thought put into it and this does involve expenses, which is why a lot of employers are trying to punt it down the road."

Rights remain the same

In or out of the office, employers have the same obligations. John Palmer of Acas says there should be good communication between the two sides, especially if there is increased stress.

"If an employee is pregnant… the rules broadly apply like they would in any workplace, for example carrying out a risk assessment," he says. "One possible upside to this is that for some pregnant women, working from home could bring benefits, such as not having to commute and having instant access to everything in their house."

Covering childcare

With children at home the working day is much less coherent for many parents and can lead to unintended interruptions, as witnessed on TV news shows recently. Covering childcare has been a significant stress, and the prospect of children returning to schools will be a relief for many. Legally, you can take time off to look after any dependants, but it is typically unpaid, and really intended to cover short-term emergencies.

"If an employee can't make childcare arrangements that work in harmony with their job, they are likely to be able to take what is called 'time off for dependants', which is generally unpaid leave," says Palmer. "It might also be their situation could qualify for furlough leave, too. What employers need to be careful of, is that they do not end up discriminating against some groups when they could have been a little more flexible."

Insurance implications

The insurance industry has said employees now working from home will continue to be insured under their home policies but this may change.

"If you are an office-based worker and are working from home as a result of the pandemic, your home insurance cover will not be affected. You do not need to contact your insurer to update your documents or extend your cover," says the Association of British Insurers (ABI).

This is to be reviewed on 1 September. It explains: "If you are able to return to work, but are choosing to work from home more often, then you may need to inform your insurer. Check your policy documents or insurer's website, and if you are still unsure, check with your insurer."

Some household policies also allow you to claim legal expenses. This could be necessary if you are involved in a dispute with your employer, a prospect some will be facing as the threat of recession looms. There are checks and balances - some policies say that there has to be a 51% chance of success, but up to £100,000 can be claimed in some instances.

What if I don't want to go back?

While many workers will be spending the rest of the year in their back room, others will be going back to the office. But many will not want to return to the "dead time" of commuting, or face the risk of contracting coronavirus while there. The Law Society, the professional body for solicitors, has said that before coronavirus, employees would have had to return but now they are entitled to ask questions about what safeguards are in place. Under the government's plans to get employees back to work, businesses have a duty to have a risk assessment.

"If you're unsure whether the workplace is safe, ask your employer to explain the measures they're implementing to bring the risks down to an acceptable level," the Law Society recommends.

By Shane Hickey