10 TIPS FOR WORKING FROM HOME

1. **Designate an office space.** It doesn't have to be a whole room; it could be a rolling tote or box which has your work essentials. Choose a location to do your job that is away from distractions, allows you to focus on work, and keeps your files and documents organized and confidential.

2. **Become a master scheduler.** In some home-based jobs, you will be in control of what work you do and when you do it. Employ a good scheduling system that addresses the need for writing your to do list, scheduling appointments, and allocating when you are going to accomplish those "insignificant" tasks that sometimes get forgotten.

3. **Set office hours.** It can be hard to tell when you're working and not, leading you to be pulled in two directions (i.e., feeling you should be working when you're not or feeling you should be doing household tasks when you're working). Minimize the blurred lines by establishing "office hours" so everyone can respect your time.

4. **Have the required resources and equipment.** Make a list of things you need to be efficient and effective in your work (e.g., computer/laptop, Internet, planner, printer). If you don't yet have them, figure out a way to get them; consider borrowing or leasing items to get you started.

5. **Get the support you need.** If you're self-employed, consider the many roles you need to juggle that would normally be handled by other staff (e.g., receptionist, bookkeeper, supervisor). Identify areas that eat away at your time, keeping you away from billable work, and explore creative ways to delegate, outsource, or remove these tasks from your plate.

6. **Stay connected.** Working from home can quickly lead to feelings of isolation if you don't make a plan to stay connected with colleagues and supervisors. Strategically identify who you need to keep in contact with (i.e., your network). Consider joining local professional associations, social media groups (e.g., LinkedIn, MeetUp), and/or attending conferences, workshops, and webinars.

7. **Take care of yourself.** When you're not feeling well, not much gets done; this could mean a potential cash flow problem when you're a team of one. Consequently, it's extremely important to understand what contributes to your emotional, mental, and spiritual health and wellness. Be sure to schedule time to address your work-life balance needs.

8. **Get dressed for success.** Some boast that they can work from home in their pajamas, but it's really hard to get to work when you feel like curling up in bed. Get ready to accomplish something by getting dressed and putting yourself together – sometimes that means putting on your shoes, even if it's just to sit at your desk.

9. **Minimize the "noise."** Emails, social media, and newsletters can lead to hours of reading – hours that aren't productive billable time. Although beneficial to keep you connected and knowledgeable, schedule specific time for reading and social media rather than keeping it open and on continuously.

10. **Learn to say "no."** It's extremely important to know your limits, when it comes to work and non-work activities. Just because someone asks you to do something (e.g., take on a new project, volunteer for a great new initiative), doesn't mean you should say "yes" right away. Evaluate whether the new opportunity fits into your schedule and, in the long term, will enhance your life and work.

Complied by Miranda Van de Kuyt