10 TIPS FOR WORKING VIRTUALLY

1. **Get comfortable with technology.** Using virtual systems requires a certain level of technological savvy; however, most systems are relatively intuitive once you have some practice. Don't be scared to jump in. If you aren't sure how to get started, have a consultant or support staff handle the set up. Refer to online tutorials / training to ease the transition.

2. **Be strategic.** With so many systems available, it's hard to know what to use and when. Reflect on what you (and your team) need to accomplish and select systems to meet those needs, avoiding redundancy. Familiar solutions (e.g., text messaging, Skype, phone calls, or email) will likely remain your "go tos" for everyday tasks and urgent communications. More comprehensive systems (e.g., Moodle, OmniJoin, Google Drive) may be helpful for collaborative projects, training platforms, or team meetings.

3. **Start small.** Little changes in how you use technology can have a big impact. Consider sharing your web cam during virtual team meetings or providing "office hours" with e-conferencing for online courses you're instructing. Don't take on too much; keep technology manageable by introducing one system at a time, mastering each one before incorporating something new.

4. **Be flexible and planful.** Virtual systems can allow you to work wherever you are, whenever you want. However, working outside of traditional work hours and settings does have its challenges. Will you have access to power and/or the Internet? What time zones will you be working across? What are the implications for your clients / colleagues of you appearing to work 24/7?

5. **Make use of small moments.** Some tasks you can complete while waiting to board a plane or for a meeting to start. Break large projects into smaller tasks to keep things moving forward. Keep a list of tasks you can accomplish in 15 minutes or less to maximize use of otherwise wasted time.

6. **Create a home-base.** Although you may be working on-the-go, set up a work environment you can thrive in at home. Be thoughtful about what will make it conducive to work, considering use of space, privacy, lighting, storage, Internet access, and general ambience.

7. **Build a cohesive team.** Virtual project-based work may require collaboration amongst colleagues from different organizations or with diverse skill sets. Ensure each team member is equipped with the appropriate hardware, software, and training to be successful. Also take time to ensure a shared understanding of tasks, timelines, and preferred methods of communication.

8. **Blend face-to-face with online.** Face-to-face collaboration still plays a vital role in business and learning success. The aim is not to transition your entire business or service to an online model but rather to extend your reach by incorporating appropriate online systems. Technology can help bring international teams together, maintain long-distance connections (e.g., after meeting at conferences or in courses), or minimize the commute, even for local team members.

9. **Have a back-up plan.** Be prepared to work through challenges if things don't go perfectly (e.g., Skype calls can be unclear, background noise could interfere, your power could go out). A combination of readily available solutions such as your cell phone or a land line, combined with more sophisticated "Plan Bs" will help ensure your ability to fulfill professional obligations even when technology lets you down. For example, consider asking a colleague in another location to be ready to jump in to facilitate a webinar; purchase a battery pack or generator to keep your computers and phones charged during a power outage. You may never need these alternatives but it's comforting to know they're there!

10. **Reflect, learn, and grow.** Critically evaluate your systems and strategies, reflecting on what's working and what's not. Juggling multiple contracts can be challenging − but rewarding!

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