



WORKING FROM HOME

YOUR COMPLETE GUIDE TO STAYING CONNECTED OUTSIDE THE NORMAL WORKING ENVIRONMENT

IS WORKING FROM HOME YOUR NEW NORMAL?

It's safe to say that in the past month we have seen a seismic shift in our regular office environment as the Coronavirus makes working from our home office, bedroom or even kitchen table our new normal. Businesses worldwide have been thrust into embracing remote working and all of our teams have to adapt to working in a very different way.

Whilst there are some serious perks in working from home such as eliminating commute time, (potentially) better lunch options and the removal of the need for wearing business attire, at least from the waist down, for some adapting quickly to a new routine has been exciting and for others more difficult.

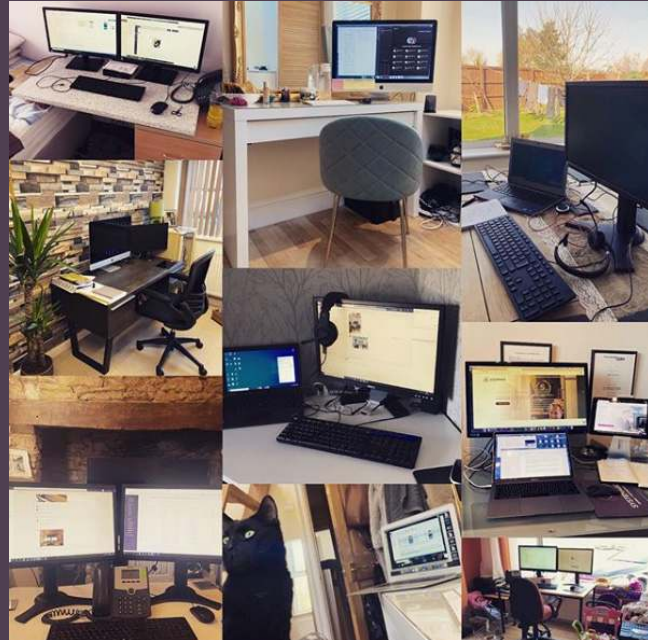
Quite aside from the obvious factors such as no longer having physical contact with your colleagues, there has been a range of challenges from finding space to work at home through to developing new ways to operate or the more basic issues such as strain on broadband connectivity.

As stressful and overwhelming as our new norm may feel, the team at Systemagic have put together a guide so that you can feel confident in the tools you have on hand and some tips in how to operate during these times of uncertainty!

We asked our team for their absolute necessities to allow clients to work fully operationally whilst outside of their normal office environment, which is why we've created a 6-step guide and checklist to help you on your way.

For the team at Systemagic we continue to deliver our award-winning helpdesk service to our customers despite working from 12 remote locations across Bath, Somerset, Wiltshire and London. As you can see some of our home setups are better than others!

If you're having trouble adapting to working from home this guide might just become your new best friend. Be sure to check it out and pass on to your colleagues!



STEP 1:



CAN YOU WORK REMOTELY?

Step one, highlighted by our Senior Technician, Rhys!

“First and foremost, it’s vital everyone in your organisation has full access to the everyday tools which allow them to work.

If you aren’t using SharePoint but need to connect into your office server, we can check users have compatible devices to enable a Virtual Private Network (“VPN”) connection. Having a VPN in place enables your network to be accessed remotely, ensuring users have everything all the tools and information they need to continue working effectively.”

Chances are you’re probably reading this from home, in order for our techies to set up a seamless VPN connection we strongly recommend that the user calls us when they are in the home environment so we can check that everything is working as expected and troubleshoot issues which invariably come up.

Key point to note: VPN’s usually provide all the functionality required but some software packages, particularly accounting or design, often require additional set up procedures when working on personal laptops or when switching from Apple to Windows based machines (or vice versa).

STEP 2:



DO YOU KNOW HOW TO CONNECT?

Apprentice Technician, Emily says "lots of our clients have transitioned to SharePoint or have a VPN connection to allow them to access their servers as if on site, but we have found that outside of the office many users are not as confident on how to use these, particularly if using their own machines and the files are not in their usual place on their computer."

As such, we've been spending a lot of time recently helping our clients to familiarise themselves with the process, to ensure minimal downtime and maximum effectiveness. If you or your teams would like to be brought up to speed with the process our technicians are happy to walk you through connecting with confidence or for larger groups are happy to organise a short online training session to provide general guidance or tips.

Key point to note: Working outside the office, particularly on personal machines, can mean that information is not in the same place as usual or will be visually different especially if using different versions of software which can often need updating or new versions of Office 365 installing.



STEP 3:

IS YOUR DEVICE FIT FOR PURPOSE?

Field Engineer Will, who normally spends his time working from anywhere but the office, suggests that “the shift from office to home working whilst relatively simple does not come without its challenges. Advances in technology have enabled us to transition quite simply from our offices to our homes however, it’s critical users have a reliable and secure device to work on whilst in their new work environment.”

The key question to ask is whether users can perform at 100% given the device they’re currently using. We have found a range our clients teams have varied equipment including some that are just not able to cope, being more suited to web-browsing or retirement than working hard.

Despite the shortage of some kit, such as webcams and microphones, we have been able to supply most of our clients’ needs during this time. So, if you need extra kit to enable your business to continue to operate at its maximum we’ve been supplying and preparing hundreds of laptops for customers in recent weeks, just give us a shout!

Key point to note: Older machines with lower performing processors can really struggle especially when working remotely with slower broadband speeds or information stored remotely and can be extremely frustrating as well as lowering efficiency.

STEP 4:



CAN YOU COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR TEAM?

Working from home can be pretty isolating, which is why Technician and Apple Specialist James B advises that “taking the time to keep in touch with the rest of your team is super important.”

At Systemagic, we use and are big fans of Microsoft Teams, a collaborative group software tool allowing users to communicate with one another through a variety of formats from video chat through to whiteboards, polling, document sharing and much more. We’re particularly fond of their new background feature for video chats that has just been rolled out and the wide selection of GIF’s that always spice up a group chat.

If you’re using Office 365 then, most likely, it is already in your subscription so please shout if you want help to configure the platform or would benefit from an online 121’s so you can embrace Microsoft Teams as, let’s face it, there’s really no time like the present!

Key point to note: Being out of the office and not being able to see who is doing what means that over communication is key for a range of tasks, even simple ones such as answering the phones when people are on lunch. Agreeing and putting in place guides to how to do things is key to ensuring continued performance

STEP 5:

IS YOUR BANDWIDTH SUFFICIENT?



One of the clear challenges of everyone working from home is the impact on the infrastructure which has seen unprecedented demand as everyone fights for bandwidth. We have seen a lot of our client's team members raise issues about accessing systems or data which are often linked directly to their ability to gain access via their home networks even if the warning message from the software says otherwise. Our Senior Technician, Scott recommends users improve performance where broadband is slow by:

- ☑ **Checking your broadband speeds and consider rebooting router to refresh connection**
- ☑ **Downloading films or educational pieces for children in advance rather than streaming**
- ☑ **Disconnect unnecessary devices like tablets or phones if not in use**
- ☑ **Placing router on shelf not floor to give maximum reach**
- ☑ **Using a cable if necessary, to give maximum performance and stability**
- ☑ **Switching off the video and using audio only**
- ☑ **Timing your meeting for a less busy time when less people will be vying for the broadband space**



STEP 6:

ARE YOU FULLY SECURE?

Finally, with hundreds of thousands of people now working remotely, our Helpdesk Technician, Adam stresses the importance in understanding online hackers are now looking for new ways to exploit vulnerable users.

Adam advises "now workers are out of their regular office environment it's really important to stay secure. Ensuring you have an effective antivirus solution in place to protect your network is vital, enabling multi-factor authentication when possible and not clicking on any suspect emails or links are all factors to be considered which will tighten security and keep users and more importantly their data protected."

Not only have we seen an influx of Coronavirus related phishing scams in recent weeks, but the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau suggests there have already been nearly £1m lost to scams since February 2020 and this is only set to increase therefore ensuring you're secure in your home environment is key!

Key point to note: Don't ever click on links that do not appear to be genuine and ensure that you call and confirm instructions to pay people or buy things. Particularly if they are outside of the normal day to day such as purchasing online vouchers which appears to be one preferred option we have seen a lot of.



WORKING FROM HOME CHECKLIST..

The following considerations highlight key areas in which we believe will help your team work outside your normal office environment with zero downtime or disruption!

We have broken these considerations down into a check list format so you are able to share across your organisation.



INFRASTRUCTURE CONSIDERATIONS

- Do you have a fast, reliable broadband connection? You can check via - www.speedtest.net
- Does your plan limit downloads or reduce speed? You'll need to check this with your provider
- Will you require a VPN to access information or will you do it via cloud online?
- If your bandwidth or speed is low, ensure you plan to mitigate for key meetings.
- Do you have a backup option should this fail such as phone or 4G hub available?



TECHNICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Are you utilising a work or personal device and have you considered settings required for both to operate on a different network?
- Do you have adequate virus protection software on personal device(s)?
- Can a personal device handle workload of working from home?
- Do you have camera and microphone and / or headset to enable working from home?
- Do you use specific software which may need to be installed or alternatives to VPN found?
- Is the device a different style e.g. Mac instead of Windows or Windows instead of Mac and will all software work?



OPERATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Do you have protocols in place to facilitate communication?
- Have you considered adopting rules or norms to establish boundaries?
- Review need to adopt project based approach with clear priorities and agreed outcomes on appropriate basis
- Establish regular meeting schedule including social breaks
- Consider need for a buddy system to support staff
- Review options for ensuring compliance with standards and also ensure health and safety remains paramount
- Consider insurance cover for devices being used out of the office



PERSONAL CONSIDERATIONS

- ✓ Consider need for personal work regime whilst at home
- ✓ Create plan to stay in regular touch with a range of people
- ✓ Remember to reciprocate and reach out to others
- ✓ Ensure you speak up if you are finding things difficult and reach out to managers or team for support
- ✓ Discuss with others in household and need for quiet / professionalism at particular times
- ✓ Avoid distractions, and put plan in place so not distracted but take regular planned breaks
- ✓ Don't stay in your PJs all day!



PHYSICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Review options from where to work in home
- Consider need to make as comfortable as possible
- Think about whether the location is a quiet as you will need, or whether need noise cancelling headphones
- Consider how to ensure quiet time during key meetings
- Review backdrop or consider need for online filters to ensure professionalism



IN
ANY
DOUBT?

GIVE US A
SHOUT..

So, there you have it, our go-to steps and work from home checklist ensuring you and your team are fully functional out of the daily office environment!

Final thoughts from our Customer Experience Manager, Fiona who says "at Systemagic, we really do believe it's more important than ever to crank up the internal communications with the rest of your team, not only to boost morale but to ensure your team are reaching their best levels of productivity too."

She also advises that "having the appropriate tools at your disposal, keeping spirits high by communicating regularly and having the peace of mind you're operating with confidence in a secure environment are vital factors that can help you and your team ride that working from home wave safe and sound."

If you have any questions about the above steps, would like to order some more kit or would like a little more guidance on getting your team set up from home, we want to hear from you!



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WWW.SYSTEMAGIC.CO.UK | 01225 426 800 | INFO@SYSTEMAGIC.CO.UK

