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## **Reality Check: What You Should Know About Working from Home**

**By: Pamela La Gioia**

If you think telecommuting just means rising late, shuffling to your home office in slippers, and figuring out your schedule over coffee and a box of doughnuts, you might have the wrong idea about working from home. True, such personal freedom is one of the perks of working from home, but it is a benefit only appreciated by those who really understand the realities of working from home.

Are you cut out to telecommute? Before you decide that you are, carefully review some of the not-so-glamorous realities about working from home.

**Reality Check #1:** No one is physically around to offer constructive feedback on the progress of your work or project. You are the only one who can gauge your productivity or the effectiveness of your work.

**Reality Check #2:** When you work from home, very few people consider your work time as actual work time! Family and friends rarely notice if they disturb you when they call, or if they throw you off track when they barge into your office. It's almost as if your telecommuting status means you are there to give them more of your time.

**Reality Check #3:** Peer pressure and support are almost non-existent. Remember good old Joe you used to work with who helped projects flow so much easier because he was supportive and had such a great sense of humor? Well, not any more. You're on your own. If you feel frustrated or stuck, you have to rely on online communication or just deal with it.

**Reality Check #4:** You can't leave your work at the office. In fact, it not only follows you throughout the house, but it often becomes your bed partner. Playing catch up at 2 a.m. is not uncommon because of that telephone call from a family member or a salesperson that came to your door that ate into your valuable work time.

**Reality Check #5:** There is no janitor, no secretary, and no deli. You're on your own to answer and screen phone calls, make your own lunch, and clean the commode – all between your transcription work, your programming, or your grant writing. Isn't that fun?

Of course, not all of these realities will be issues for everyone. The fact that you have no janitor or secretary may not bother you a bit. However, you might find yourself on the brink of insanity because of the lack of respect people seemed to have for your valuable work time; or because you ended up working until 2a.m. (or later), because you've been interrupted so many times.

Take steps now to prepare for problems that will arise. Hire a housekeeper or a child care provider to cut down on the amount of interruptions you'll receive. Sign on with one of those virtual answering services to screen your calls. And above all, learn to develop intrinsic value in your work because your biggest supporter is going to be you.

-Pamela La Gioia, Net-Temps

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