



Working Remotely During COVID-19: Technology-Focused Tips to Boost Your Productivity

The recent impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic have resulted in a predominantly virtual workforce. Remote working is not a new concept—it’s been steadily on the rise as regular work-at-home has grown by 173% since 2005, according to [globalworkplaceanalytics.com](https://www.globalworkplaceanalytics.com). Even though this has been the trend, we understand that many firms have not made this transition.

Those who already work from home are likely familiar with traditional work remote best practices, such as creating a personal workspace, following a daily routine, and taking frequent breaks to promote mental and physical well-being, to name just a few. However, there

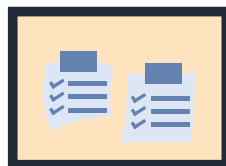
are also several best practices that leverage data and technology to help create a more effective, digitally-driven work-from-home experience.

VHB is here to help! The following provides a new series of easy-to-follow tips and tools—beyond traditional best practices—that you can start implementing today. Know that a [VHB IT Partner](#) can help you directly navigate challenges, if needed. **From helping to trouble-shoot a technology or digital document review issue, to selecting the right technology to use at home...these are unprecedented times!** Ask the question and we’ll provide a solution.

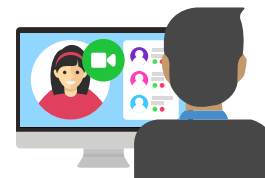
Working Remotely: Three Technology-Focused Tips for Productivity



Make use of available tools and resources



Embrace the to-do list



Stay connected



Make Use of Available Tools and Resources

As a virtual workforce, we need to think beyond traditional means of communication like phone, email, and instant messaging. There are a number of amazing tools available to support working remotely. For many, simply navigating which one to use and how to operate it can be a daunting task. Below are a few tried and true digital platforms and tools to consider using during remote work.

Video Conferencing

- » [Microsoft Teams](#)
- » [Skype](#)
- » [Zoom](#)
- » [GoToMeeting](#)
- » [join.me](#)

Live Chat

- » [Microsoft Teams](#)
- » [Skype](#)
- » [Yammer](#)
- » [Slack](#)
- » [Google Hangouts](#)

Digital Tools and Apps

- » [Microsoft Planner](#)
- » [Trello](#)
- » [Microsoft Whiteboard](#)
- » [Rocketbook Notebooks](#)
- » [Rocketbook Beacons](#)
- » [OneNote](#)
- » [Evernote](#)
- » [LogMeIn](#)
- » [Pomodoro \(tomato timer\)](#)
- » [YouTube](#)
- » [DocuSign](#)

Remember! Test technology in advance so meetings can start on time and glitches are minimized. When it comes to video conferencing, show your face! It enhances communication when people can see facial expressions. Follow these tips from leading communications firm, [Duarte](#), and view the full webinar on [Virtual Communication: Presenting with Empathy](#) for more details. Additional tips include:

Connect with the audience.

Use posture, body language, and gestures to connect with the audience and portray both warmth and confidence.

Use technology in an optimal way.

Audio and visual elements matter—microphone quality, camera placement, and muting etiquette are all important for successful virtual meetings.

Work on delivery.

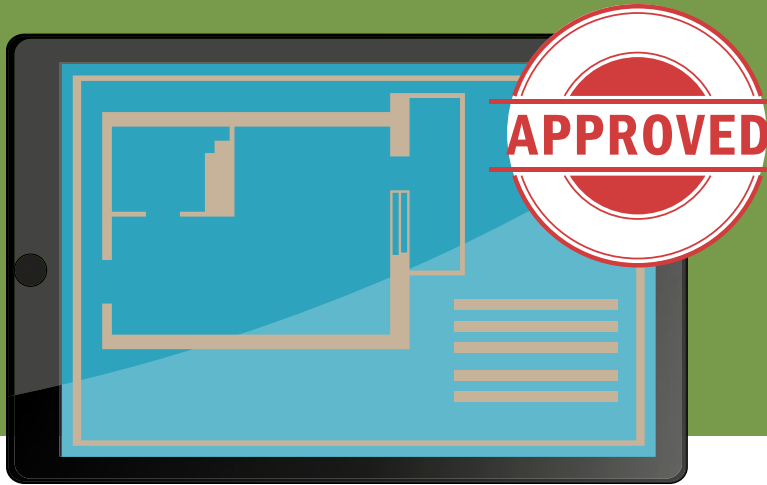
Maximize vocal quality, tone, intonation, and projection to get buy-in.

Aim to integrate video conferencing, webinars, podcasts, and virtual meetings into your daily routine. Make technology part of your culture. By embracing it, innovation and connectivity will follow.



Does your project require a public meeting? Do you need to facilitate a formal vote or poll for public record?

Check out [VHB's recent Innovative Approaches and Best Practices to Virtual Meetings Resource Document](#).



Digital Review and Mark-up

Did you know that you can still provide an effective review and mark-up of plan sets, drawings, and other documents from home—helping to keep your projects moving forward?

Digital tools, such as [Bluebeam](#) and [BIM 360](#), provide effective review and mark-up resources for digital documents and drawings, maintaining project workflow.

Phishing

As a result of COVID-19, phishing (attempts to obtain information such as usernames, passwords, or credit card information) is on the rise. Hackers are capitalizing on this time of intense disruption and using the coronavirus as bait, and putting systems, people, and organizations at risk. The U.S. Secret Service has warned, “Coronavirus is a prime opportunity for enterprising criminals because it plays on one of the basic human conditions...fear.”

It is important to be on the lookout for malicious emails posing as information about COVID-19. Check sources and links carefully before taking any action. Read this helpful [blog post by KnowBe4](#) with examples of phishing emails that may appear authentic at first glance. Remember! Make sure you are getting your information from reliable sources, such as [The Center for Disease Control and Prevention](#), and think before you click.

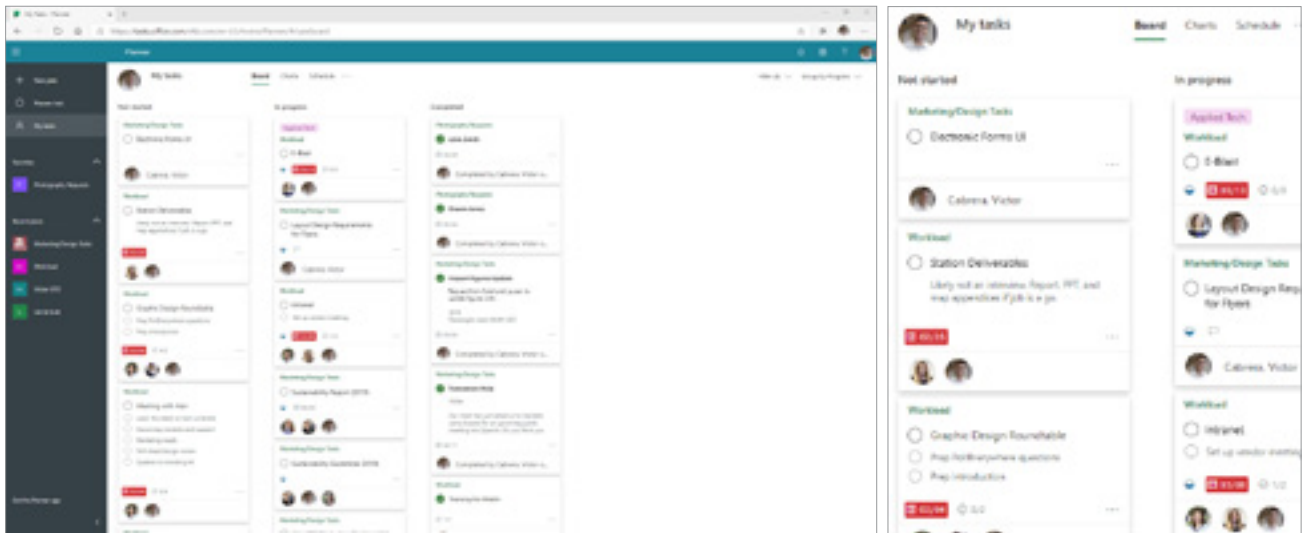
Cyber-security is important to client and consultant operations alike! VHB will have further cyber-security best practices and tips in a forthcoming white paper.



Embrace the To-Do List

Staying organized is essential for today’s workforce, particularly for those working remotely. Make an electronic or written list of tasks, prioritize the items, and set realistic goals for completion.

Who knew that old dry erase board would be useful anymore? Check out [Microsoft Planner](#), part of the Microsoft Office 365 Suite, if you are looking for a completely digital option. Planner makes it easy to plan, organize and assign tasks (for you or the team), and track progress online. Remember to check-off tasks as completed, recognize accomplishments, and take a quick break to center and refocus. A clear direction of where and when you’re headed will help your work—and motivation—move forward productively.



Microsoft Planner makes it easy to plan, organize, and assign tasks using a digital platform.



Stay Connected

With so many working remotely, it's important to stay in touch with your team. Make time for regular phone calls, video chats, and frequent check-ins. Consider scheduling virtual coffee breaks or lunches with your team. Connectivity is essential to maintaining relationships with both colleagues and clients.

Virtual Team Building— Make it Fun!

[Hot jar](#)

Virtual team building activities

[Timely](#)

The best team building activities for remote teams

[Museum Hack](#)

Virtual team building for remote teams

Check out these virtual engagement tips from [Tom Krieglstein, Swift Kick](#)—master of employee engagement and culture of connection.

Tip #1

Since the meaning of a conversation is based 7% on the words, 38% on the tone of the words, and 55% on the body language, leverage voice and video chat as much as possible.

Tip #2

Communicate early, often, and with very simple messaging. Confusion happens much faster, and lasts longer, in virtual teams.

Tip #3

Clearly define metrics for success. Working from home is very autonomous, so make certain each team member has clearly defined metrics for success so they know if they are “winning” or not without having to ask anyone.

Plan Ahead

For many, having a plan is the first step to keep calm and stay the course. Although technological measures can aid some of these best practices, they aren't always needed.

It's especially hard to work remotely when entire households are home. This means interruptions are likely to occur more frequently, especially for those with children present. Try to acknowledge and address potential distractions before they happen. Here are a few best practices to plan ahead and minimize interruptions:

- » **Create a daily schedule** and share it with the household. Include time for work and activities, learning (if needed), as well as mealtimes and breaks.
- » **Make a meal plan** and prep food and snacks in advance so when hunger calls, you're ready.
- » **Communicate top priorities** like important calls and deadlines, especially if you are co-parenting with children home.
- » **Set boundaries** by designating separate work, study, and play areas.
- » **Be flexible** with working hours. If possible, work off hours, especially when uninterrupted time is needed.
- » **Tune-in and listen** to music or white noise apps to help focus and tune-out distractions. The [Calm](#) app is a favorite.
- » **Temper your expectations** and be flexible.
- » **Remember!** Take advantage of down time to leverage the many available training sources from [YouTube](#) and [Microsoft Learn](#).

Ultimately, you will be interrupted at times, but by managing distractions it will help everyone be more productive in the long run.



Time Tip

Try the Pomodoro time management technique of focusing on a task for 25 minutes and then taking a break. Tools such as [Tomato Timer](#) can help keep tasks—and breaks—on track.

How VHB Can Help

We're in This Together

With COVID-19 impacts changing daily, leverage your online community, whether it be work colleagues, family, friends, or neighbors to stay connected and up to date.

VHB embraces technology to improve our operations and address our clients' most complex issues. From questions on Information Technology systems to virtual meetings to leveraging technology and data to move your projects forward, we're here to help you navigate through these challenging times. **Need Information Technology help? Connect with [Greg Bosworth](#), VHB's Chief Information Officer.**

Virtual elbow-bumps and air high-fives! If we continue to work together, we will come out stronger than ever.