3 Tips for Starting a New Job Remotely

In 2021 it is very possible that you will be starting your new position remotely. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, many companies have pivoted to remote work in order to keep employees and their families healthy and safe. However, what companies have realized is that most employees can remain highly productive while working from home, which has led them to adopt remote work permanently. Other companies may return to in-office work at the appropriate time but are likely still utilizing remote work for the time being—at least until the majority of employees can receive the COVID-19 vaccine.

So what does this mean for people on the job hunt? They will likely be starting their new job from the comfort of their own home, which can be challenging but also has many benefits if done right. Here are three valuable tips to help you navigate starting your career as a remote employee.

1. **Set-up Your Workspace**

If you're starting your first day on the job remote you'll want to have an appropriate office set-up that will help you thrive and look professional to co-workers during video conferencing meetings. If you have the ability to dedicate an entire room in your home to your office, great! If not, simply carving out some extra room in the corner of the den, off the living room, or in the kitchen is absolutely acceptable. The most important aspects that your workspace should have are:

- Good lighting
- A non-distracting, clean background
- Peace and quiet

This isn't only for the sake of your coworkers, but for you as

well. First, good lighting will keep you alert and awake throughout your workday, which can help during an afternoon slump. Good lighting will also make you more visible and approachable in online meetings, signaling to others that you are engaged.

Second, your background won't make or break your office space but keep in mind it will be what your coworkers see during online meetings. Therefore, your workspace background should be set in an area with less traffic. For example, if you live with others make sure your background isn't set on a frequently used area of the house, so people aren't coming in and out or feel like they can't use that area when you're in a meeting.

Third, peace and quiet is a very necessary aspect of any workspace. It doesn't have to be completely silent as some people work better with a little background noise, but limited noise pollution will help you remain focused longer and be less disruptive during meetings.

2. **Make Your Workspace More Health Focused**

Following workspace set-up, helpful tools that support employee health are the second most important aspects of any workspace. Having all of the tools you need at the tips of your fingers will allow for minimal distractions throughout your day and help you stay focused on your daily tasks. You should have the general essentials like a water bottle to stay hydrated, a stress ball to help manage workplace anxiety, and headphones to block out surrounding noise at your workstation so you can reach them at a moment's notice—similar to if you were in the actual office.

Other health-specific tools will also help you stay focused as well as mentally and physically healthy while working from home. These health tools may include items like eyeglasses and a laptop riser. Eyeglasses may not seem like your top

workspace necessity, but with the increase in the use of technology for remote employees you will want to make sure your eyeglasses are up to date and close by to keep your eyes protected all day long. Updated prescription eyeglasses allow your eyes to focus on your computer screens better, which decreases your chance of experiencing eye strain or headaches due to blurred vision. Most eyeglasses also have anti-reflective lenses, which can further protect your eyes from strain when engaging with glaring screens helping you fight the effects of eye pain or burnout.

Similarly, a dedicated laptop riser can lift your laptop, which can improve the ergonomics of your workspace. If your laptop is lifted to align with your height you'll be able to look forward at your screen rather than straining your neck looking up or hunching down. Sitting up straight will also help you keep an appropriate distance from your screen as you won't be leaning forward, which can further help protect your eyes from the harmful aspects of working with computer screens. If possible, you might consider investing in an ergonomic office chair to accent your laptop riser for an even more ergonomically centric workspace. Proper posture and distancing from computer screens can help you maintain physical and mental health while working remotely.

3. **Make Sure You Communicate Well**

In a remote environment learning how to adapt and properly communicate with coworkers digitally is a very important function of your day-to-day, and possibly something you had not prioritized prior to the pandemic. As you get to know your new coworkers, ask them what their preferred method of communication is and the frequency they prefer. Some employees prefer face-to-face communication, while others prefer email, instant messaging, or phone calls. Also, many employees have set schedules or regular daily functions, so determine if they prefer to meet in the morning or the afternoon. This will allow you to communicate with coworkers more easily and shows

your flexibility to work cohesively with your new colleagues.

Keep in mind that you should revisit this conversation over time as well. Perhaps every quarter, reassess your coworkers' availability. Schedules often change and being aware of scheduling conflicts and best times for communication will help you function better in your position.

This is an often overlooked step when starting a remote position. Although you may have to compromise with many coworkers because schedules vary, knowing their preferred meeting times and methods ahead of time will save you both time in the future, especially when things get hectic as they often can when working remotely.

Keep in mind that you're entering a new environment when you start a new job. Each company functions differently and learning those functions remotely can have a learning curve. Cut yourself some slack and know that most employers are typically understanding, especially now. Take the first few months as an opportunity to ask as many questions about the company and your role as possible to make yourself feel more comfortable and confident working remotely.