

Working Well in a Virtual Environment

There's no doubt more people are working from home today than ever before. The internet has helped make that happen. Some work for themselves and others have made arrangements to work at home either full or part time. This can present some challenges in working well with people that are in the office full time.

The first challenge is virtual workers are going to be the envy of their office counterparts and that could lead to some jealousy. Why do some employees get to do it and others are not allowed? Managers will need to handle this situation delicately. Some jobs need the worker to be onsite. For instance, a computer operations person may need to swap out drives, or backup tapes, etc. Organizations should have some kind of provision that gives onsite workers incentive for not being able to work at home.

Another challenge for the virtual worker is that they need to be extremely focused to make sure they are actually getting work done. They almost should go above and beyond what is expected of them to make sure that management maintains the trust that they are actually getting the work done. The minute it is shown this not to be the case, it will be very difficult for employees to ever gain back that trust.

Some people are easily distracted and will need to set up an environment like an office that is specifically for the purpose of working at home. These employees should close the door and make it known to their family that the situation should be treated exactly the same as if the employees were physically going into the office. The occasional interruption is acceptable, just as it would be if the spouse called the office. But they should be kept at a minimum.

Virtual employees should also remove any kind of stimuli such as televisions, etc. as these can distract them from their work. It is very easy to get into bad habits and hours go by with no work getting completed. This is the quickest way to have this privilege of working from home revoked.

Virtual employees should always make themselves available whenever they are contacted by team members or management. They should answer the phone right away, or get back to whoever called as soon as

possible. Consistent lags in communication are going to reflect badly on the virtual worker and should be a situation that is avoided or at least, minimized.