

Working Remotely: Keeping It Successful and Fun

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1. Stay visible

You won't be able to put in face time, so compensate by staying visible and accessible in other ways: e-mail, phone calls, occasional meetings. If you can't be there in person, ask about sitting in via speaker phone. Video conferencing may be on the horizon, with its advantages and potential hazards -- this could be a meeting topic in itself.

2. Stay connected on a personal level too

Use e-mail and phone to maintain your contacts on a personal level as well. If possible, attend your clients' social events.

3. Maintain a professional impression

Clients form their impressions of you from what they hear on the phone and see in their e-mail. Don't leave your favorite hip-hop song playing in the background when you talk on the phone (unless of course you're in the recording industry). Don't let your kids answer the phone. If for some reason family members do have to answer your phone during the workday, be sure to coach them on what (and what not) to say. Ask me about the swimming pool story....

4. Back up *everything*

When you're working on your own, one computer glitch can spell disaster. Back up your entire hard drive regularly, and keep the backup in a safe place that's physically removed from your computer. Between hard drive backups, back up important files.

5. Continue to network

Since we're here at this meeting, all of us know the value of professional associations. Explore other opportunities for networking too.

6. Keep marketing yourself

This can be difficult, but remember to keep marketing yourself. Again, this could be a meeting topic in itself! Motivate yourself to make a certain number of contacts each week. Stay in touch with former clients and remind them that you exist. Obtain referrals to potential clients and follow through on contacting them.

7. Create a detailed written agreement for every project

Usually my clients have a contract that they want me to sign. Even so, I'll send them a letter or detailed e-mail note that describes the project, my responsibilities and theirs, timeframe, terms of payment, etc. Every project is different, but I recommend being as specific as possible about what they expect from you and what you need from them in order to do your job. In addition to the legal benefits, this has the advantage of helping to clarify the project and clear up any misunderstandings upfront.