

Guest Post: Where Do You Work?

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Working from home has become a common topic of discussion since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. It forced employers to figure out ways for employees to work from home. And employees had to figure out how to be productive at home. With the passing of time, various hybrid work arrangements have developed, giving employers and employees flexibility with no loss of productivity.

I chose to work from home long before the pandemic because it is convenient. It avoids all the headaches of the daily commute. My home office is set up for me to successfully do my work and access what I need from my wheelchair. I can easily reach my in-home help to attend to my personal care needs. The available technology allows me to write and submit my work from home. I enjoy setting my own hours of work each day. These are my reasons, but each person has their own list of factors to consider.

I have discovered the following pitfalls in my working at home. It is easy to get distracted by whatever else is going on around me. My office space is in the kitchen with abundant natural light, perfect for working, but the

smell of brownies baking can be a distraction, as can the noise of a vacuum in another part of the house. The same technologies that allow me to do my work at home can just as easily distract me from that work, especially during the Olympics. No one is watching to see if I am really working, so it requires self-motivation and self-accountability. So, another pitfall is sticking to my schedule.

I imagine the pitfalls of working on-site can include the noise of a co-worker humming or talking loudly on the telephone, or other background noise. I work best in a quiet atmosphere. It is possible you must be content with your office set-up as is, without flexibility to make changes. Generally, there are expected office hours. I can imagine feeling boxed in without natural lighting, or being drawn into office chatter or drama, which wastes time.

There are positive aspects to working on-site. There would be easy collaboration with co-workers and feedback on assignments. It would feel great to be part of the company fabric by developing friendships and socializing. It would be easier to separate work from home life. And a commute to and from work can be used to run errands and/or decompress from the stresses of the job.

Keep in mind that not all jobs can be done at home. For example, it is unlikely that you'd have a full chemistry lab in your house. Medical procedures usually need to be done on-site. Construction jobs and installation or repair jobs need to be on-site. Besides the nature of the job, consider the nature of your own personality and discover which option is best for you, or a hybrid of them both.

I enjoy working from home, and I'm grateful for the technological advances that make it possible. But I must hold myself accountable each day for what I accomplish since no one is looking over my shoulder. If you find yourself needing to work from home, remember it takes thought and planning. But with planning and persistence, working from home can be successful.

From the editor: Utah resources for adapting your work to your needs

Do you need help making your work set-up suitable if you have a disability? Here are some agencies that can help.

The Department of Workforce Services helps people with disabilities find employment. Within the department are Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Vocational Rehabilitation, and Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

The Utah Center for Assitive Technology is a statewide service that can help Utah clients find and use devices that would help them do their jobs independently. It also offers customization services to clients who may need modifications to an existing device to make it work for them.

The Utah Assistive Technology Program offers financing for assistive technology devices to clients statewide. It also offers customization services at its fabrication labs in Logan and the Uintah Basin.