ZARVANA

# Virtual Productivity Toolkit

How to Thrive While Working Remotely

ZARVANA | RESOURCES

# Virtual Productivity Toolkit

## How to Thrive While Working Remotely

Virtual Productivity Toolkit

# The Upside of Remote Work

## Why share the upside

Our goal is not to convince you to work remotely, but only to help you be at your best when working remotely.

And your expectations affect your performance.

If you think working remotely will reduce your productivity, hamper your satisfaction with your job, and push you into burnout... there is an increased chance that it will.

See remote work as an opportunity.

# Remote work offers compelling benefits

Studies have shown that remote workers enjoy the following benefits:

- ✓ Reduced stress (88% reported) [1]

- ✓ Improved health (86%) [2]

- ✓ Higher engagement (59%) [1]

- ✓ Increased productivity (65%) [3]

- ✓ Higher job satisfaction (82%) [1]

- ✓ Greater retention rates [4]

**Productivity**    **Retention**

Remote Workers

+50%

Remote Workers ———

+13%

In-Office Workers ———

In-Office Workers

[1] Harrington, Susan J. and Santiago, Julie (2006) "Organizational Culture and Telecommuters` Quality of Work Life and Professional Isolation," Communications of the IIMA: Vol. 6 : Iss. 3 , Article 1.
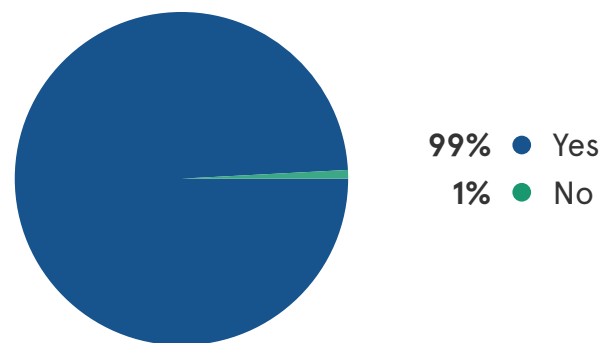[2] "The State of Remote Work," OWL Labs.
[3] "2018 Annual Survey Finds Workers Are More Productive at Home," FlexJobs. (Sep 2018)
[4] Nicholas Bloom & James Liang & John Roberts & Zhichun Jenny Ying, 2015. "Does Working from Home Work? Evidence from a Chinese Experiment," The Quarterly Journal of Economics, Oxford University Press, vol. 130(1), pages 165–218.
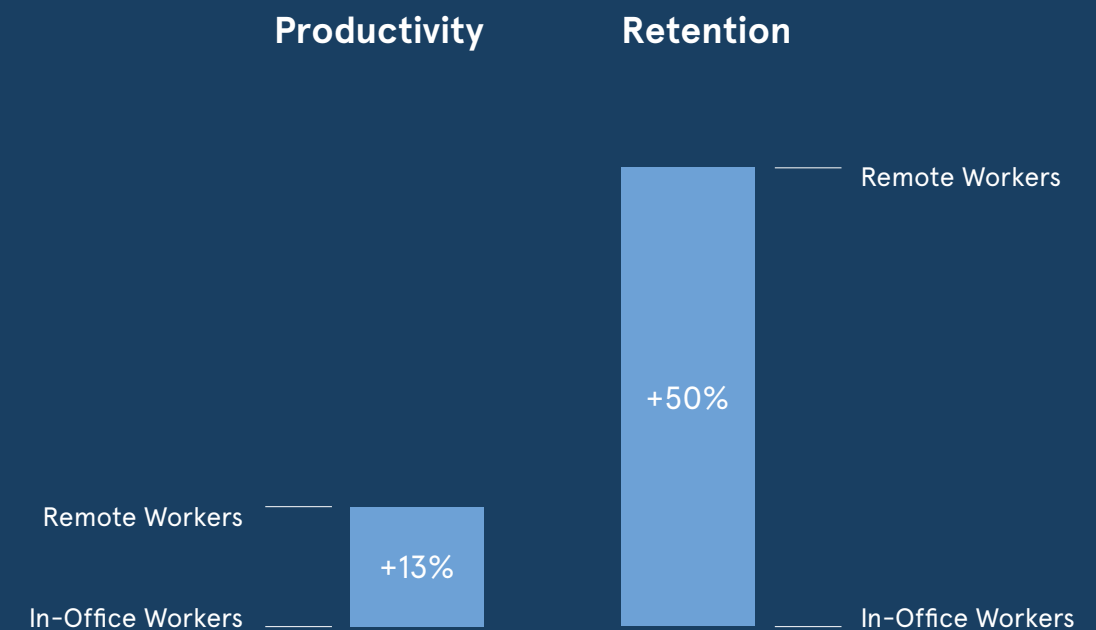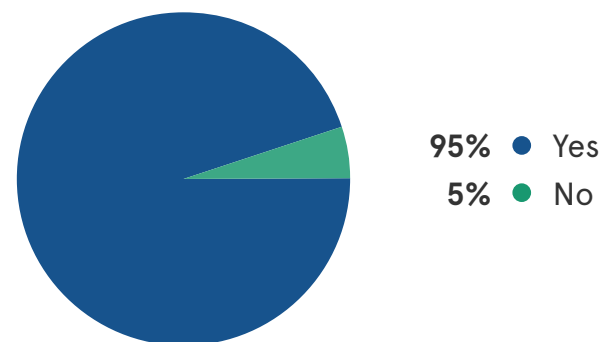
# Most people enjoy working remotely

Would you like to work remotely, at least
some of the time, for the rest of your career?[1]

**99%** ● Yes
**1%** ● No

Do you encourage others to work remotely?[1]

**95%** ● Yes
**5%** ● No

74% would prefer to quit a job for a remote one[2]

57% say the option to work remotely is
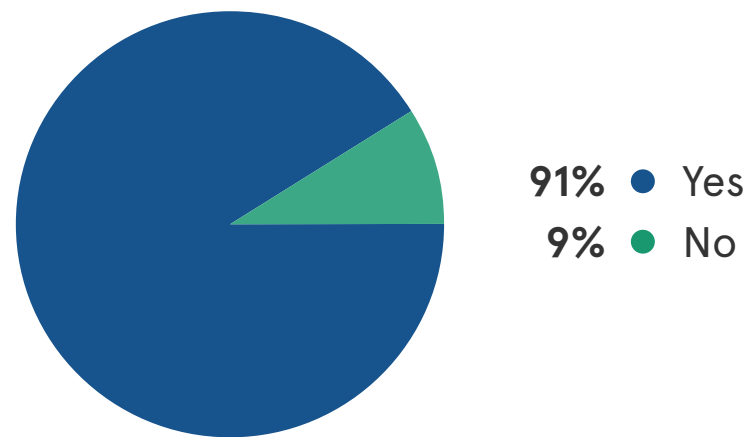the most preferable employment perk[2]

[1] "State of Remote Work: 2019 Report," Buffer.
[2] "The Remote Work Report by Zapier," Zapier (Nov 2019).

# Remote work is becoming more common

## As a result, it's beneficial to know how to do it well

Did you always intend to support remote work?[1]

**91%** ● Yes
**9%** ● No

63% of companies have remote workers[2]

43% of Americans work at least partially remotely[3]

[1] "State of Remote Work: 2019 Report," Buffer.
[2] "Future Workforce Report," Upwork (2019).
[3] "America's Coming Workplace: Home Alone," Gallup (Mar 2017).

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# Online Communication

# There are 8 main communication channels

Real-time communication channels are most efficient but also most disruptive. Use them when you expect considerable discussion or are dealing with complex topics.

Asynchronous communication allows the other people to engage when its best for them & gives them time to think before responding.

**Real-Time**

| | |
|---|---|
| Video Call | zoom |
| Phone | |
| Instant Messaging | |
| Team Collaboration | slack |
| Text Message | |
| Video Recording | vidyard  loom |
| Audio Recording | |
| Email | |

**Asynchronous**

Note: Application logos are examples, not a comprehensive list

# Principles of Online Communication
## #1: Prioritize quality over quantity

Characteristics of high-quality communication:

✓ Insight/answer first

✓ Concise

✓ Thoughtful

✓ Empathetic

✓ Proactive

"When it comes to the world of work, more connectivity and more communication is not necessarily better. In fact, it often makes things worse...

When I encounter a typical knowledge economy office, with its hive mind buzz of constant unstructured conversation, I don't see a super-connected, fast-moving and agile organization. I instead see a poorly designed distributed system. A well-designed distributed algorithm sends just enough of the right information to allow all parties to efficiently complete the task."[1]

**Cal Newport** | Neuroscientist, Author of *Deep Work* and *Digital Minimalism*

[1] "The Obvious Value of Communication is Perhaps Not So Obvious," Cal Newport (Mar 2017).

# Principles of Online Communication
## #2: Have clear guidelines about when and how to use each platform

Topics to cover in guidelines:

· Which platforms to use when

· Expectations around response times

· Quiet hours

· Inclusivity vs. efficiency (e.g., who to cc)

**More communication channels ⟶ Greater need for guidelines**

91% of companies are using two messaging applications [1]

66% are using both Slack and Microsoft Teams [1]

[1] "Slack or Teams? Many businesses opt for both," Computerworld (Jun 2019).

# Principles of Online Communication
#3: Avoid redundancy

"If someone needs something from me after normal work hours, they'll first ping me on Slack. If I don't respond within minutes, then I'll receive a Gchat message. If I still don't respond, I'm likely to get a text or direct message."
**Manager** | Tech Company

Sometimes this is necessary, but every time you do it, you send the message that people must respond immediately, and you reduce the likelihood that others will manage their communication platforms diligently.
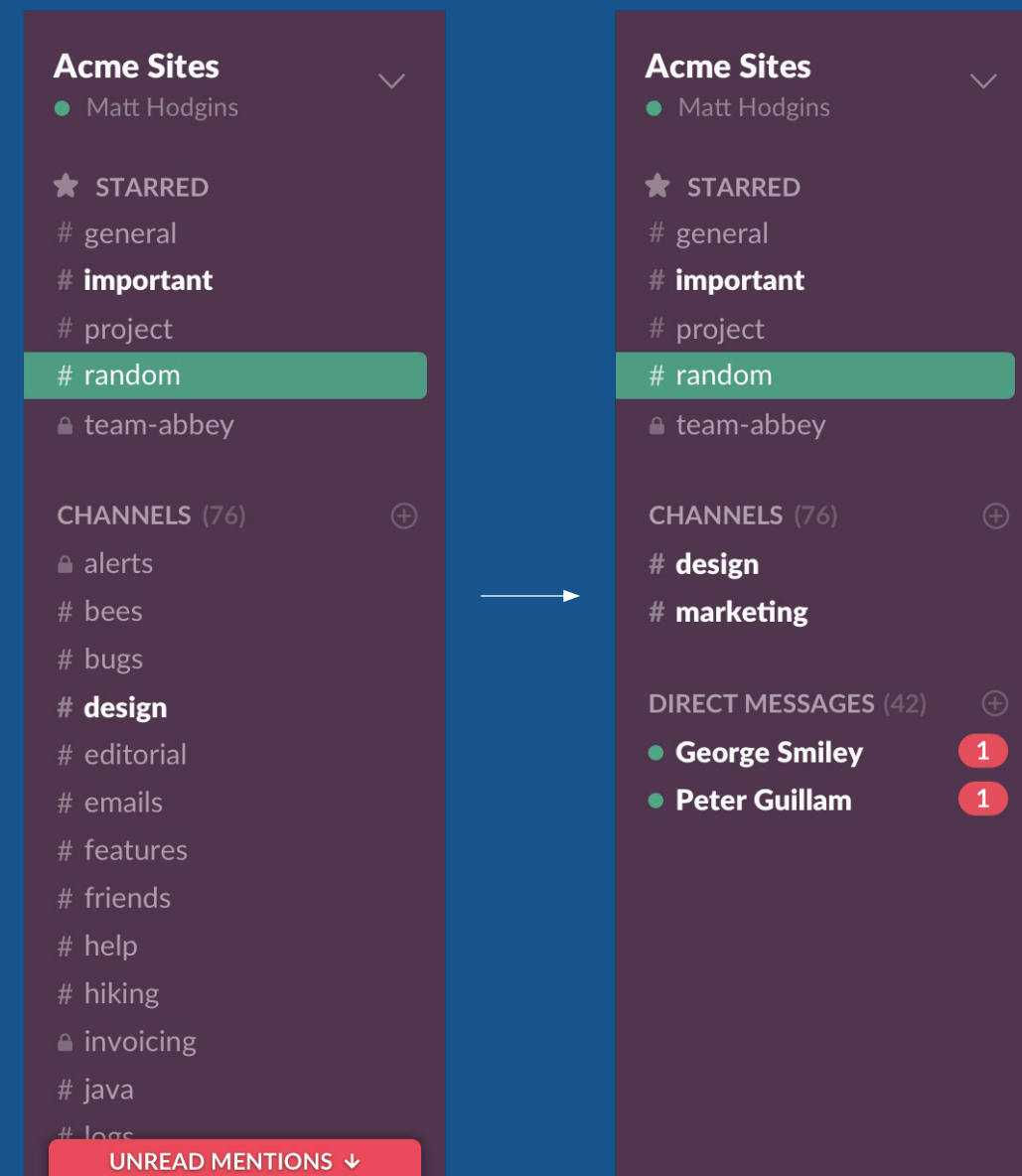
Silence...

Silence...

# Principles of Online Communication

## #4: Use the minimum number of communication channels

"Where there are so many channels and people involved, it gets cluttered. If our brains are too cluttered and we're processing too much information, our productivity and focus decreases." [1]
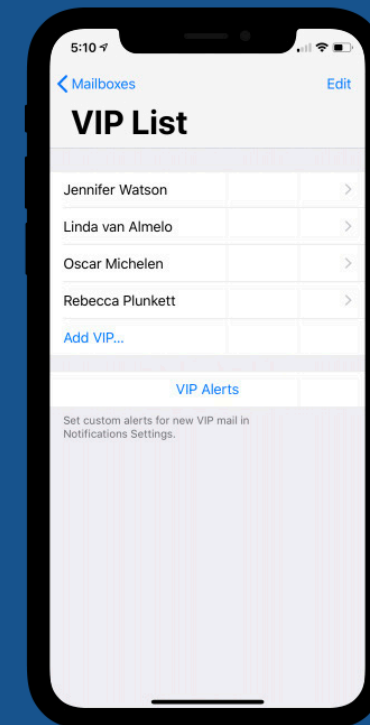
**Darius Foroux** | Productivity blogger

# Principles of Online Communication
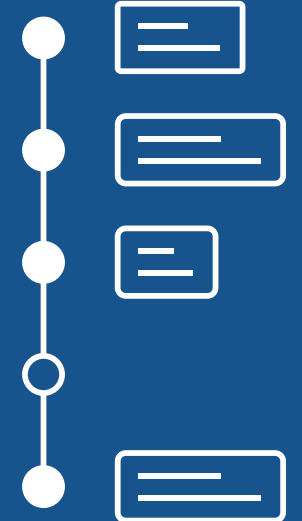## #5: Reserve one communication channel for a hotline

**1**  Pick 1 channel to serve as a hotline

**2**  Identify a VIP contact list & share the hotline with them

**3**  Give guidance on when VIPs should use the hotline

1                                        2                                        3

# Principles of Online Communication
## #6: Avoid a virtual facetime culture

"[Remote workers] feel a lot of pressure to show they're working and at their desk." [1]

**Sarah Lacy** | Founder, Pando & Chairman Mom

Actions that prevent a facetime culture:

· Monitor & reward output, not input

· Tell team members it's ok to be temporarily unavailable during the workday

· Intentionally use and respect statuses

· Model flexibility

[1] "The productivity pit: how Slack is ruining work," Vox Recode (May 2019).
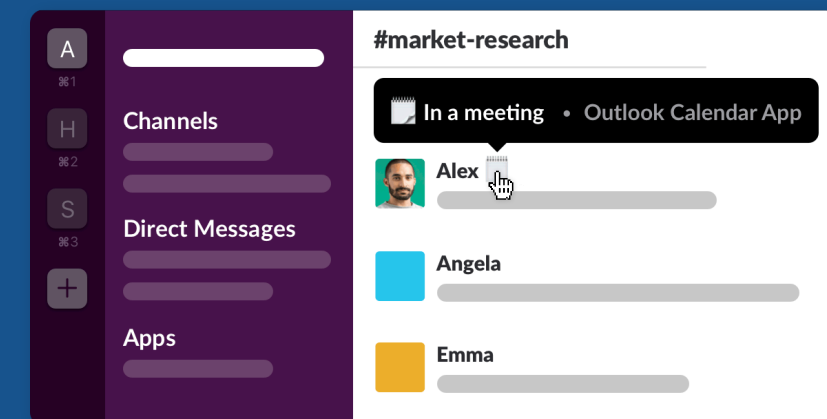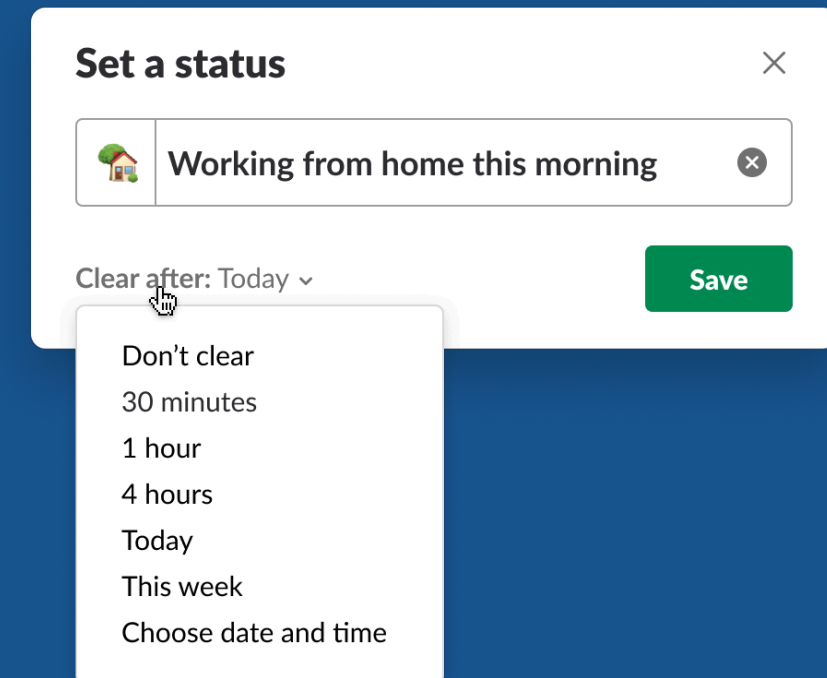
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# Remote Meetings

# Are Meetings Earning Their Keep?

## We spend a lot of time in them...

**4.6 hours**
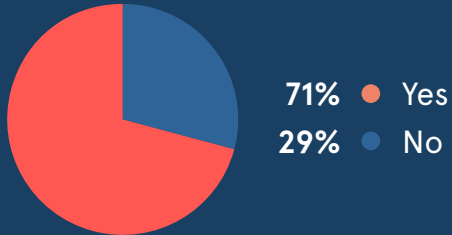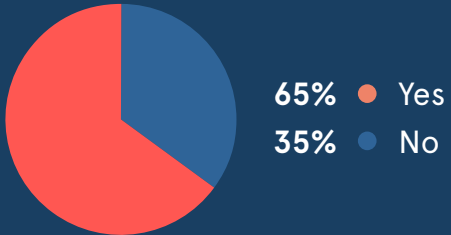
Senior Managers[1]

**3.2 hours**

Average employee[2]

## ...and experience much of it as wasted

Meetings are unproductive
and inefficient[1]

**71%** ● Yes
**29%** ● No

Meetings keep them from
completing their own work[1]

**65%** ● Yes
**35%** ● No

Meetings come at the
expense of deep thinking[1]

**64%** ● Yes
**36%** ● No
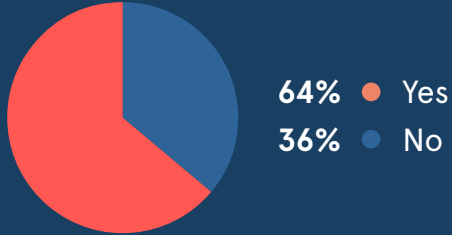
Meetings don't bring
the team closer together[1]

**62%** ● Yes
**38%** ● No
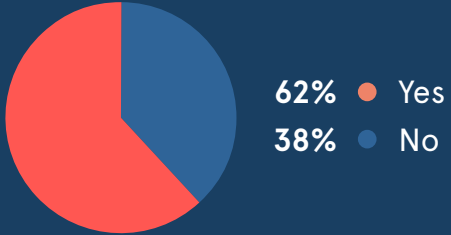
As a result, you want to resist the urge to add more meetings to your calendar just because you're working remotely. Instead, use this as an opportunity to right-size the amount of time you spend in meetings

[1] "Stop the Meeting Madness," Harvard Business Review (Jul 2017).
[2] "You waste a lot of time at work," Atlassian.

# Choose Video Over Audio

80% of communication is non-verbal[1]

**20%** ● Verbal
**80%** ● Non-verbal
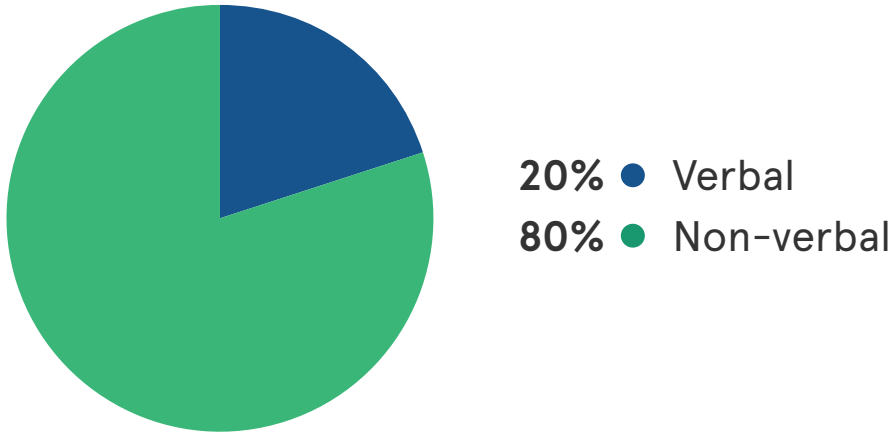
Multitask on video calls[1]

**4%** ● Yes
**96%** ● No
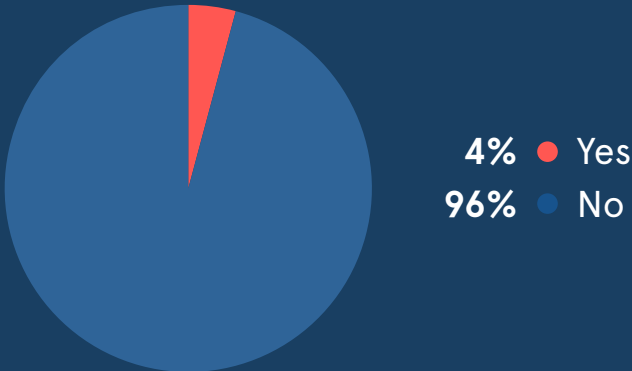
Multitask on phone calls[1]

**63%** ● Yes
**47%** ● No
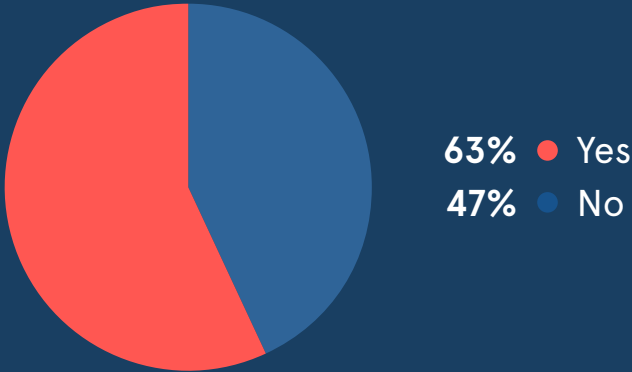
[1] "What Unproductive Meetings Are Costing You (Infographic)," Inc (Jun 2014).

# 3 Characteristics of Effective Meetings

Schedule meetings when:

| | They're small: < 10 | They're focused on discussion, not presentation | They're covering complex topics |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Do** | | | |
| **Don't** | | | |

# 6 Meeting Types

**?** Tentative

**Status Update Meetings**

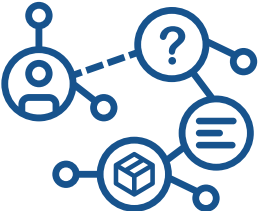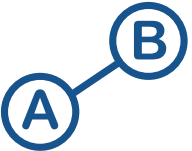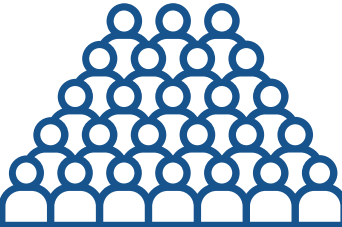Team members give an update on their progress, challenges, and next steps. Only hold if there will be back and forth discussion.

**✓** Accept

**Problem-Solving Meetings**

Those affected by a problem or responsible for resolving it discuss the cause of the problem and solutions.

**✕** Decline

**Information Sharing Meetings**

One or more speakers share information with the rest of the group.

**✓** Accept
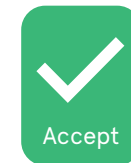
**Innovation Meetings**

Stakeholders brainstorm new products, processes, or initiatives and develop prototypes or other ways of testing their ideas.

**?** Tentative

**Decision-Making Meetings**

Decision-makers and informants meet to source options, evaluate options, and ultimately choose an option. Only accept if all decision-makers will join.

**✓** Accept

**Team-Building Meetings**

Team members meet to strengthen their relationships and/or discuss how they are working as a team.

# Meeting Cadence

Every team will have its own unique meeting needs.
Here is a starting point you can modify to fit your team:

| MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ✔ Team Status Update Email sent | ● Status Update Meeting (15 mins) | ● Problem-solving/ Innovation/Decision- making Meeting (30-90 mins) | ● Status Update Meeting (15 mins) | |
| ✔ Team Status Update Email sent | ● Status Update Meeting (15 mins) | ● Problem-solving/ Innovation/Decision- making Meeting (30-90 mins) | ● Status Update Meeting (15 mins) | ● Team Building Meeting (30-90 mins) |

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# Collaboration Tools

# Video Conferencing

**Key Desirable Features:**

- Ease of joining meeting

- Sound/video quality

- Mobile friendly

- Screensharing

- Ability to record conversations

- Virtual whiteboard

# File Management

Apps that enable you to share files online, work on files at the same time, and comment back and forth.

**Key Desirable Features:**

· Real-time collaboration

· Offline access

· Simple sharing

· Commenting/reviewing

Google Drive

**Dropbox**

OneDrive

box

# Team Collaboration

Apps that offer a unified platform for team communication and collaboration.

**Key Desirable Features:**

· Real-time collaboration

· Offline access

· Simple sharing

· Commenting/reviewing

Basecamp

slack

Microsoft Teams

Hangouts Chat

Workplace

# Task Management
Apps that help you keep track of what you have to do and assign/share tasks with others.

**Key Desirable Features:**

· Categorize and filter by 3 task properties

· Easy to indicate and sort by priority

· Always accessible

· Store tasks due much later out of sight

· Possible to mark tasks as "pending"

· Email integration

# Project & Process Management

Apps that help you keep projects and processes on track, gauge their status, and communicate with team members.

**Key Desirable Features:**

· Multiple views: task list, gantt chart, Kanban board

· Assign tasks to others

· Move tasks through process steps

· Communicate feedback on specific tasks

asana

monday

Trello

task pigeon

Wrike

Redbooth

ClickUp

Jira Software

# Video Sharing

Apps that enable you to record videos either of yourself, your screen, or both and then share them with others.

**Key Desirable Features:**

· Record yourself via webcam

· Record your screen(s)

· Record both at the same time

· Quickly share videos

· Host videos

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# Staying Focused

# Make your workspace distinct from your personal space

"Gradually, your habits become associated not with a single trigger but with the entire context surrounding the behavior. The context becomes the cue."
**James Clear** | Atomic Habits

Your home contains hundreds of cues that prompt non-work habits. The office contains hundreds of cues that prompt work habits.

When you start working from home, you need to change things in your home to avoid triggering non-work habits.

Change the picture

Surround yourself with work items

Avoid facing a personal space

Clear your desk of most personal items

# Apps that can help you overcome tech distractions

If you find yourself more tempted to waste time on social media and non-work websites when you begin working from home, it's likely because there is less external accountability.

You can simply block tempting websites, as the apps to the right will do, and/or you can work to reduce the temptations by:

· Reconnecting with your 'why'
  (why you do the work you do)

· Scheduling time during breaks or outside of work hours to spend time on the tempting websites

· Exploring whether you're trying to avoid certain tasks

**Website Blockers**

StayFocusd

Cold Turkey

RescueTime

freedom

# Block out distracting noises

**Focusing Noise Principles:**

· No noise > any noise

· Non-verbal noise > verbal

· Ambient noise > instrumental

· Familiar noise > novel
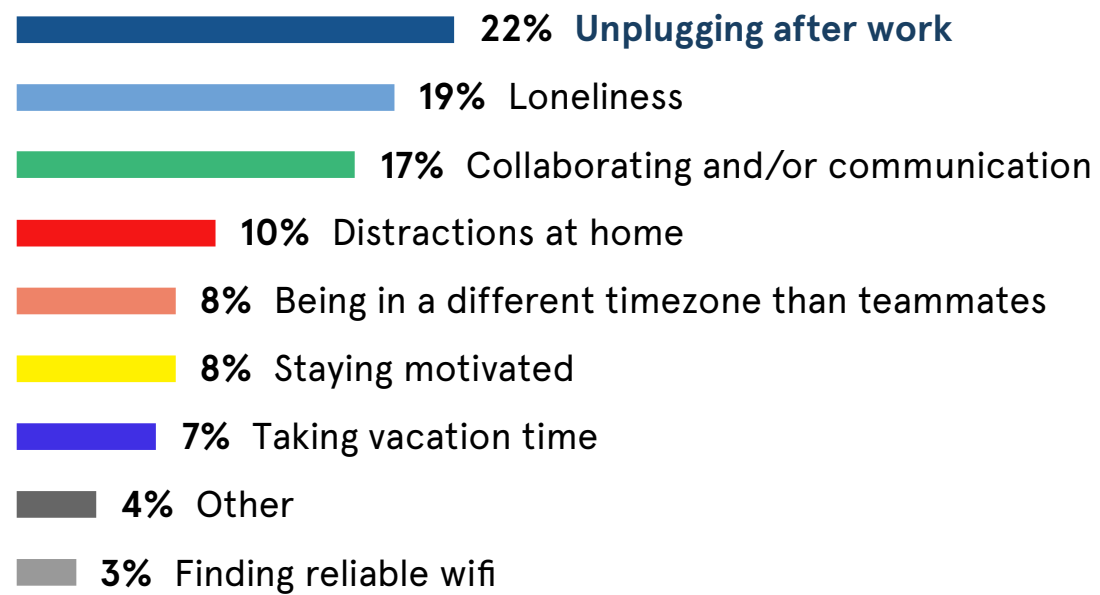
**Focus-Boosting Noise Apps:**

NOIZIO     focus@will     Brain.fm     Noisli

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# Work-Life Satisfaction

# Lines blur between work and life

What is your biggest struggle with working remotely?[1]

- **22%** **Unplugging after work**
- **19%** Loneliness
- **17%** Collaborating and/or communication
- **10%** Distractions at home
- **8%** Being in a different timezone than teammates
- **8%** Staying motivated
- **7%** Taking vacation time
- **4%** Other
- **3%** Finding reliable wifi

**In Office**

**Remote**

LIFE

WORK

LIFE

LIFE

WORK

LIFE

WORK

LIFE

WORK

LIFE
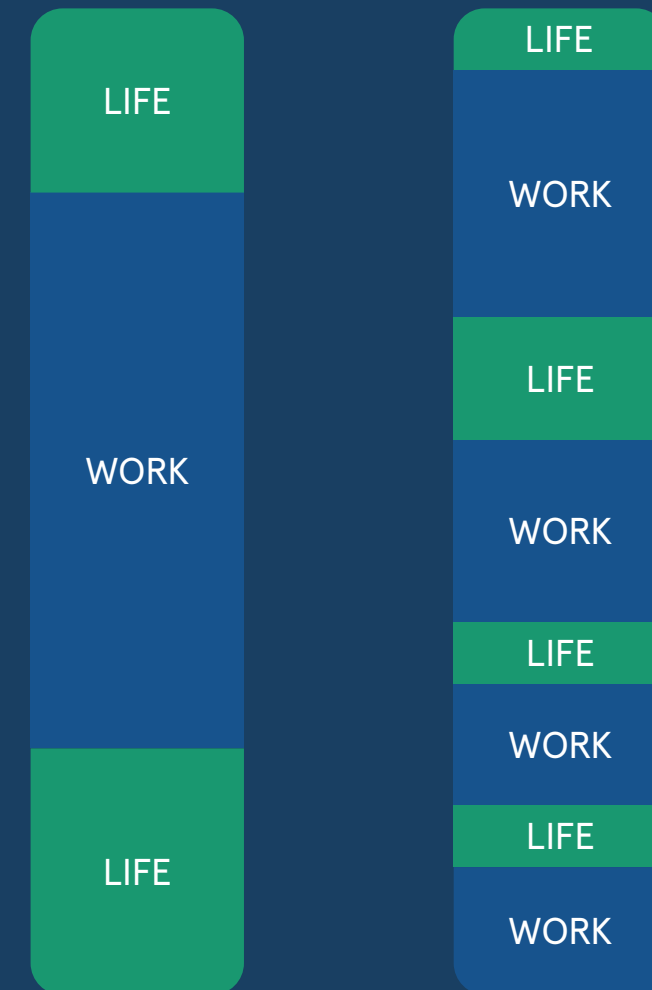
WORK

[1] "State of Remote Work: 2019 Report," Buffer.
For more, read: "How to Avoid a Key Downside of Remote Work."

# Pick a start and stop time

**1** Schedule your first work task of the day in your calendar

**2** Schedule either your last work task of the day
(if consistent) or first non-work task of the evening

Note: It can be fine to take advantage of the flexibility of remote work by mixing life into work hours but do so intentionally and sparingly.

**LIFE**

**Start Time**

**WORK**

**Stop Time**

**LIFE**
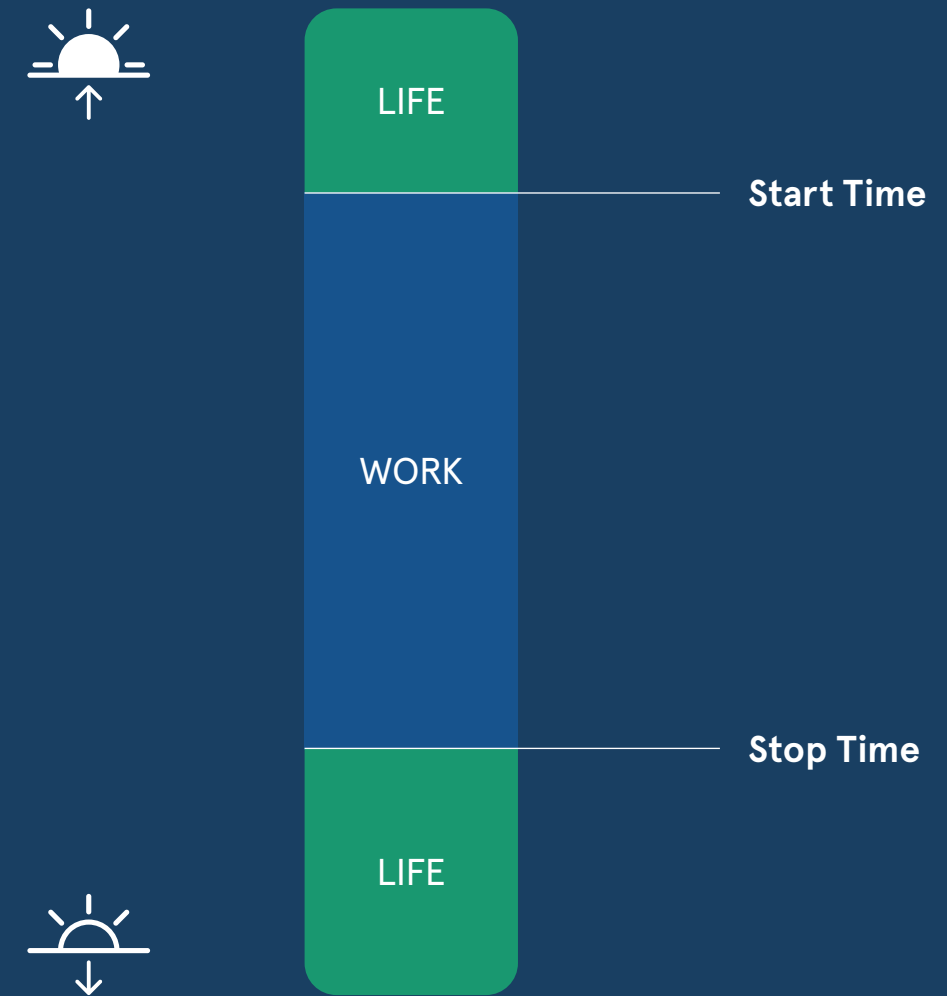
# Create a morning routine

- Avoid checking your phone as soon as you wake up (80% do[1])

- Add each part of your morning routine to your calendar as a recurring invite or create a checklist that you check off each morning

LIFE

WORK

LIFE

Journal/
Meditate

Exercise

Breakfast

Shower &
get dressed

[1] "80% of Smartphone Users Check Their Phones Before Brushing Their Teeth," Constant Contact.
For more, read: "How to Avoid a Key Downside of Remote Work."
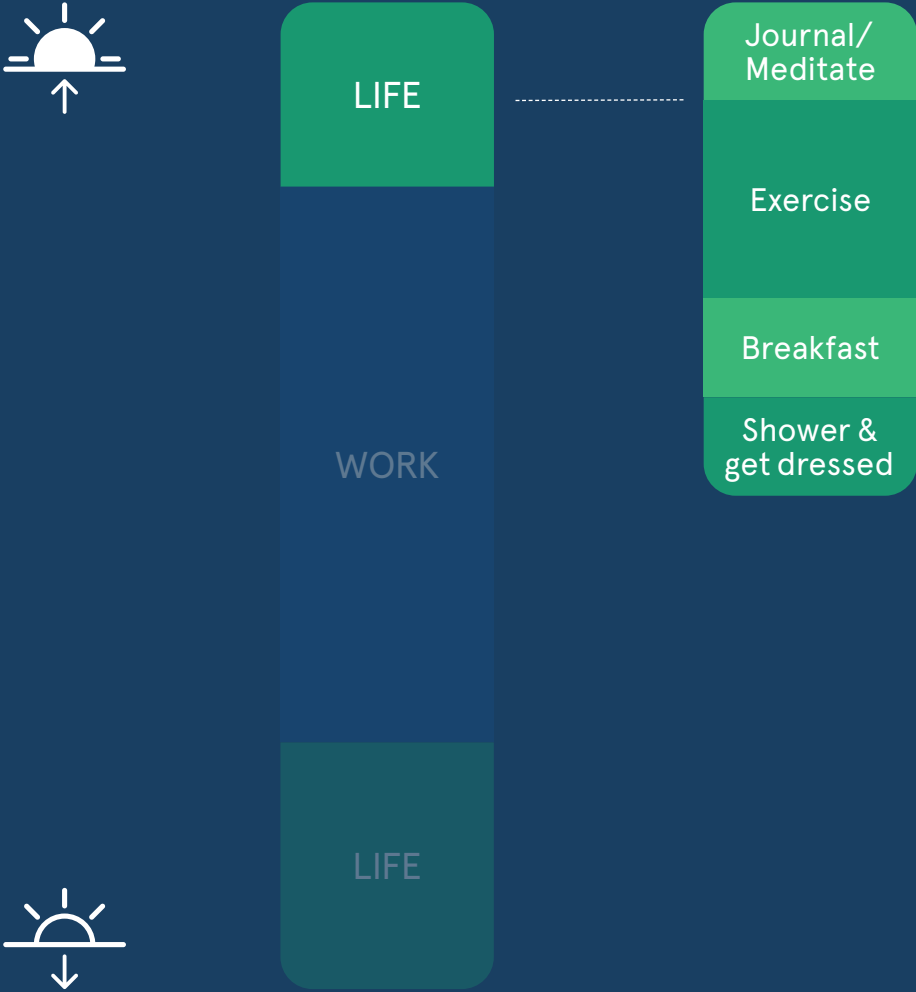
# Create an evening routine

- Add at least your first non-work task to your calendar, naming it specifically

- Intentionally schedule one or more of these research-based recovery experiences: relaxation, psychological detachment, and mastery experiences [1]

- Share your routine with someone else to hold you accountable



LIFE

WORK

LIFE

Go for a walk

Dinner

Call a friend

Read a book

[1] "How to Recover From the 3 Common Burnout Cycles," Zarvana (Feb 2020).
For more, read: "How to Avoid a Key Downside of Remote Work."
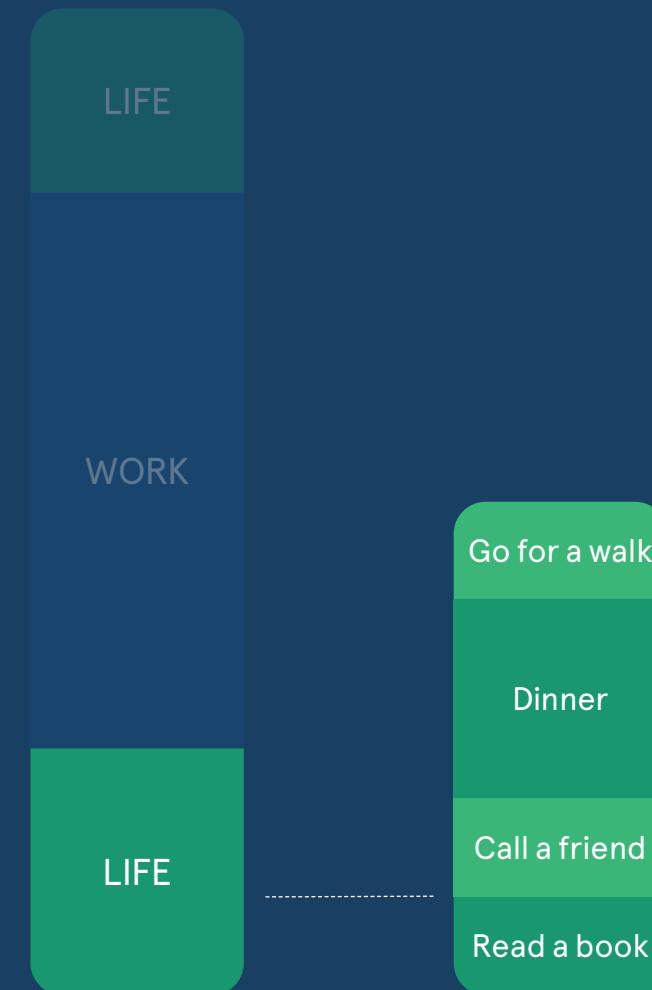
# Pursue work-life satisfaction

~~**Work-Life Balance**~~

Lacks measurable definition that makes sense

~~**Work-Life Integration**~~

Promotes blurring of lines between work and life and 24/7 connection to work

**Work-Life Satisfaction**
Work doesn't decrease satisfaction with life.
Life doesn't decrease satisfaction with work.

Work enhances satisfaction with life.
Life enhances satisfaction with work.

For more, read: "Forget Work-Life Balance. Instead Define Your Work-Life Equation."
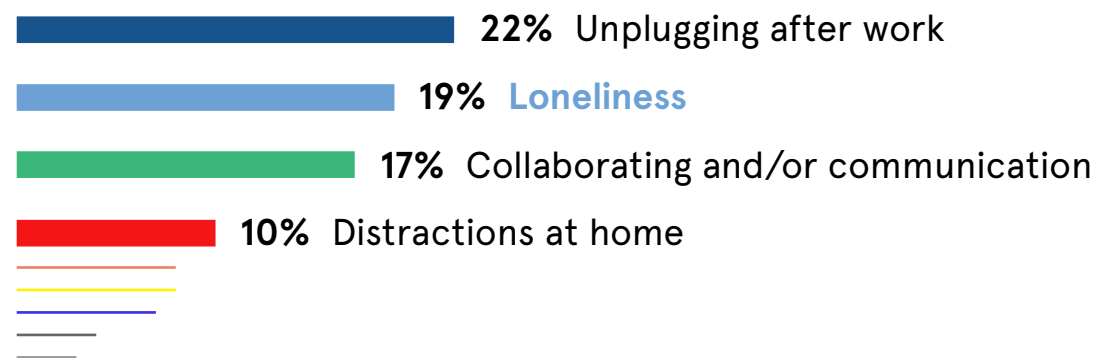
38

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# Avoiding Isolation

# Isolation is common,
# but not inevitable

What is your biggest struggle with working remotely?[1]

**22%** Unplugging after work

**19%** Loneliness

**17%** Collaborating and/or communication

**10%** Distractions at home

"We need to acknowledge that isolation, anxiety, and depression are significant problems when working remotely, and we must figure out ways and systems to resolve these complex issues."[1]

**Amir Salihefendic | CEO Doist, maker of Todoist**

"Geographic distance is not destiny. Relationship quality is more closely tied to 'perceived proximity' – or relational closeness – than it is to physical proximity."[2]

**Researcher** | College of William & Mary

[1] "State of Remote Work: 2019 Report," Buffer.
[2] Beyond Being There: The Symbolic Role of Communication and Identification in Proximity to Geographically Dispersed Colleagues," MIS Quarterly (2015).
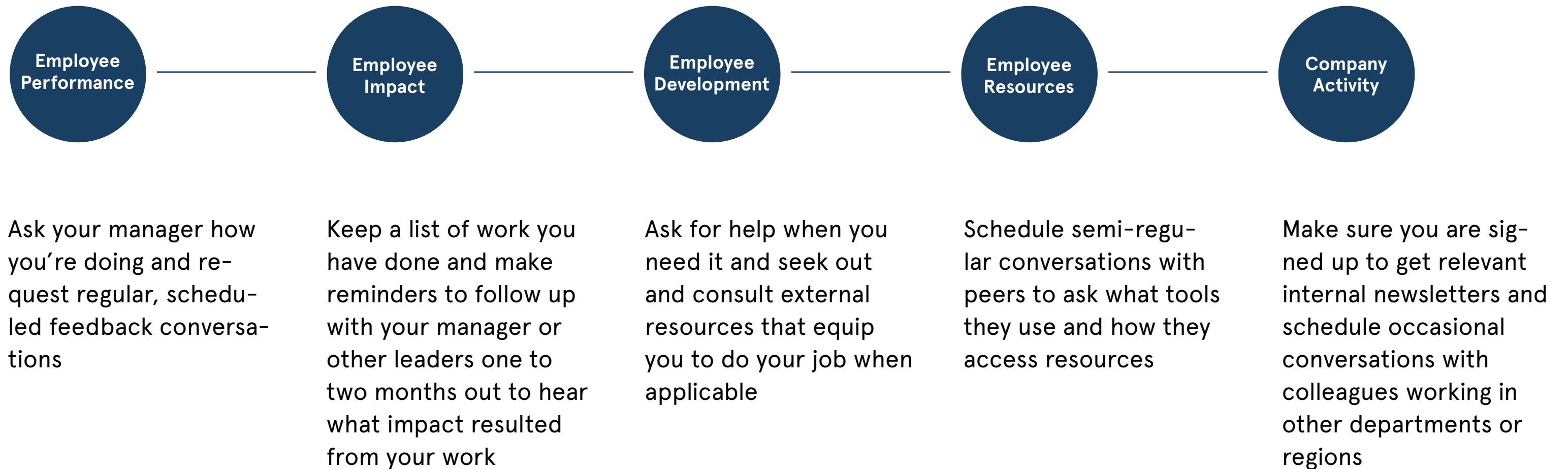
40

# 5 Dimensions of Social Isolation

Social isolation is not a one-dimensional issue. It is caused by a lack of communication and connection on several fronts.

Five dimensions seem to have the greatest impact on remote workers' experience of isolation.



Employee Performance

Employee Impact

Employee Development

Employee Resources

Company Activity

# Isolation-Preventing Actions
# for Individual Contributors

**Employee Performance**

**Employee Impact**

**Employee Development**

**Employee Resources**

**Company Activity**

Ask your manager how you're doing and request regular, scheduled feedback conversations

Keep a list of work you have done and make reminders to follow up with your manager or other leaders one to two months out to hear what impact resulted from your work

Ask for help when you need it and seek out and consult external resources that equip you to do your job when applicable

Schedule semi-regular conversations with peers to ask what tools they use and how they access resources

Make sure you are signed up to get relevant internal newsletters and schedule occasional conversations with colleagues working in other departments or regions

# Isolation-Preventing Actions for Managers

In addition to adapting the actions on the last page to the role of a manager, managers can take these actions to foster deeper connection:

· Employ a more collaborative leadership style

· Connect with team members frequently enough to know how their work is going and how they're doing as a person

· Make time to discuss personal details

· Foster a strong team identity by unifying them around a single vision or against a common challenge

For more, read: "How to Overcome the Social Isolation of Remote Work"
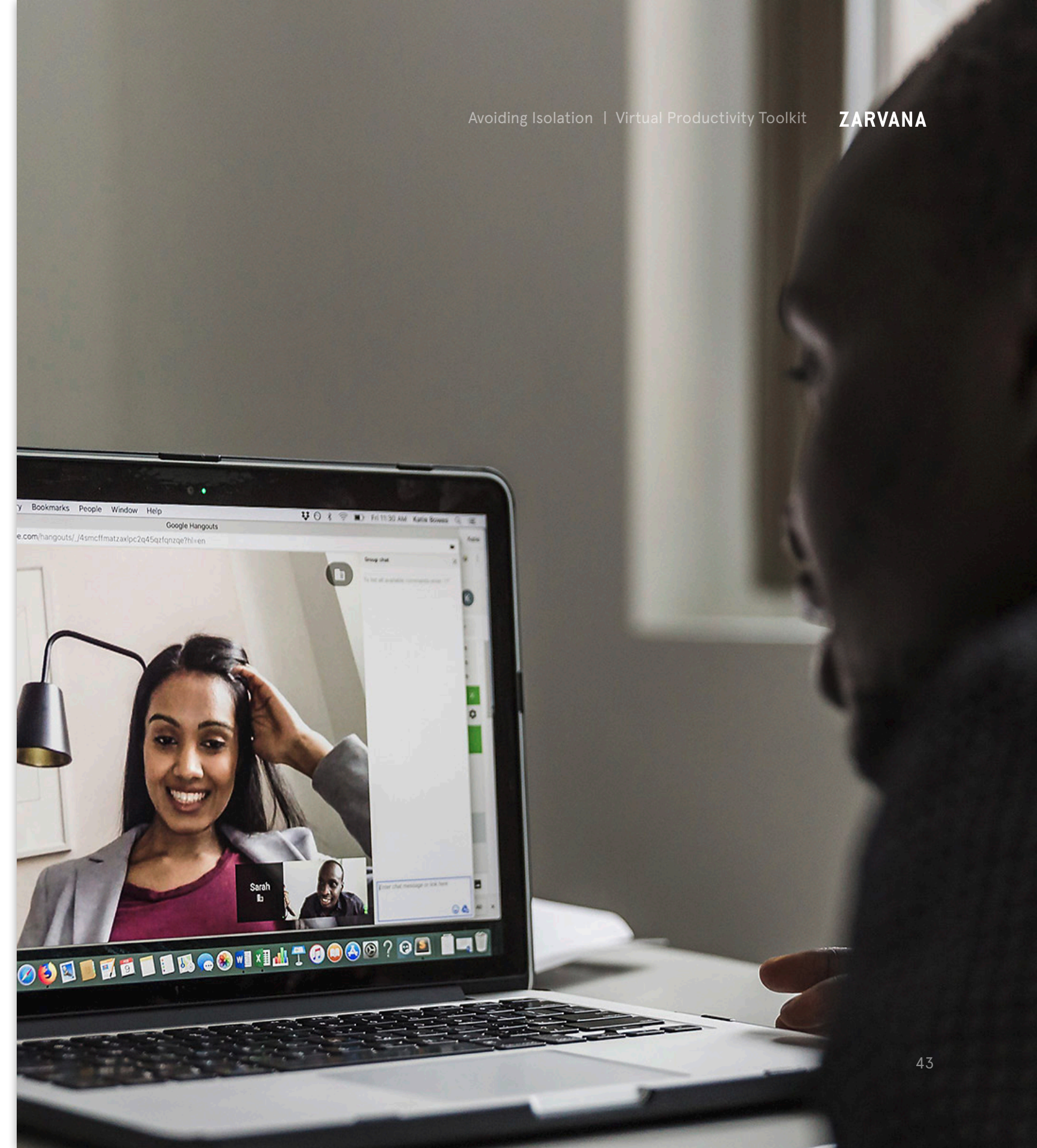
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Want to maximize your
remote work experience?

# Virtual Productivity
# Course

Begin today:
my.zarvana.com/course/virtual-productivity

Zarvana helps professionals
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practices into habits.

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