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Local Productivity and Accountability Expert Offers Tips for Working from Home

Nettie Owens, Founder and CEO of Sappari Solutions, based in Pittsburgh, PA, knows that the Coronavirus is having quite an impact on the workplace already. This challenge can evoke anxiety for leadership and employees. "It's a normal reaction," says the productivity expert and graduate of Johns Hopkins University. Owens works with entrepreneurs, professionals, and corporations to reach their biggest goals through accountability and productivity. "You and your employees will be successful if you put protocol in place and clearly communicate expectations."

Here are a few strategies Owens recommends to help transition to remote/telecommute situations:

There are a few obstacles to overcome when working from home. The first, obviously, is where to work (And this is covered by several articles out there - don't work in your bedroom if possible or a dark, dank basement. Be sure to move the kids' craft projects off your desk first). Once you have where you are going to work sorted out, the next steps will be to recreate the structure that exists in an office environment. The reason you need structure is multifold:

- Remove distractions
- Keep up productivity so you can stay on task
- Ensure that people can communicate with you and vice versa

The tools you use for remote work will also help you to be more productive when you return to the office eventually. First, remove distractions by taking the time to think about what might distract you and planning for it. Will noise be an issue at home; while the kids are possibly home, too? Noise-canceling headphones are great as are safety earmuffs. What else might distract you? Social media? Download a social media blocking tool and set your 'work hours'. Will you get hungry? Decide on designated 'snack times'. Unwashed laundry? Plan to do chores before and after work and decide how much time you will dedicate to these tasks.

To stay on task, setting a schedule works wonders! Setting a schedule will also let your family know, "I am going to be working from 8 am-12 pm and then taking a break for lunch." This concept helps to ensure you can focus without the nagging questions. In addition, you may need to set up some structure for the family to have activities or tag team working with your partner. You can also use the timer technique to focus until the timer goes off and then take a break. Planning your tasks at the end of the day for the next day helps you to avoid the problem of 'what to do next' and keeps you from using your email inbox as your 'to-do' list.

It will also be important to set up a communication plan if your office has not provided one for you. Let people know when you will be working and when the best time is to contact you. Will you be meeting by video conference (Zoom is a great option) or phone? Are messages ok? Does your company use Slack or other direct messaging software? When should you be 'on' and checking? If your company does not provide a plan then design your own remembering that for most people, your best time for uninterrupted work is in the morning. Afternoons are great for meetings and tasks that are shorter and require less focus. Don't forget to give your brain a break. Just because you can work 24 hours from home, doesn't mean you should. At least once an hour, stand up, stretch, walk outside your workspace, get a drink of water and/or go outside.

Owens is a nationally recognized and award-winning expert in the field of organizing, accountability, and productivity. She is a member of the National Association of Productivity and Organizing Specialists (NAPO) and the Institute for Challenging Disorganization. She has been featured on ABC, CNN, eHow FOX, Parents Magazine and TLC. Her

methodologies are brain-based and backed by science. For more information on Owens and Sappari Solutions go to:
<http://nettieowens.com/>. ###