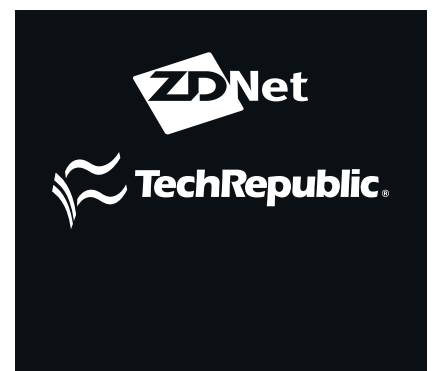




# TOP 100+ TIPS FOR TELECOMMUTERS AND MANAGERS

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While working remotely is a long-standing trend in IT, it's now becoming a reality thanks to the spread of COVID-19.

How can telecommuters work from home successfully? What equipment and collaborative software do they need? How do you curb distractions like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter?

TechRepublic compiled the top 100 tips to help tech professionals make the shift to remote work. Whether you're a telecommuter or managing telecommuters, this ebook will help you put in place some best practices to work successfully at home.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 04** Working from home: 64 expert tips for staying healthy, happy, and productive
- 11** 10 ways to avoid work-at-home traps
- 16** 24 video conferencing tips to go from telecommuting zero to hero
- 21** Managing telecommuters due to coronavirus COVID-19? Here are 8 management tips
- 25** How to better defend your organization against remote access threats



IMAGE: ISTOCKPHOTO

## WORKING FROM HOME: 64 EXPERT TIPS FOR STAYING HEALTHY, HAPPY, AND PRODUCTIVE

We asked ZDNet's remote work veterans what kind of advice they can offer to others who work from home.

**BY: JASON CIPRIANI/ZDNET CONTRIBUTOR**

Whether you've been working from home for years, or are just getting started, it's not as easy and fun as you one might think. There are mental hurdles to overcome, including the feeling of isolation, especially if the only voice you've heard all day long is yours as you talk to your dog or cat.

Sure, the idea of rolling out of bed and going to work in your pajamas sounds like a [dream come true](#). But in reality, it does more harm than good to your mental health. We asked ZDNet's team of remote workers from all over the world for their best advice when it comes to working

from home. From setting a daily routine to desk setups and ensuring you take care of yourself, here's what they had to say.

## DAILY ROUTINE

How and when you start each workday is a crucial piece of the puzzle to ensuring you're productive and comfortable when working from home. It's important to treat each workday like a day in the office, but there's more to it than that.

1. Organize your days with recurring tasks. Example: On Mondays, do X, Tuesdays do Y, Wednesdays do Z, etc.
2. Get dressed in the morning as though you are going to an actual office. Working in your bathrobe for "just an hour or two" is a slippery slope.
3. Don't schedule conference calls back-to-back. At some point, you'll forget who you're talking to and say something unusually silly.
4. Do schedule breaks.
5. Make a task list and be prepared to change your priorities at the drop of a hat. Because you're at home, you're in a fluid environment. You may need to move to another room, change the hours you're working because the fridge decided to flood, or other events. Having a list allows you to switch up and remain productive, regardless of events.
6. Find a hybrid arrangement where you're in the office (or a co-working space) for actual face time if possible.
7. Having different work spots for different parts of the day, for specific tasks or based on your mood.
8. Put your phone on airplane mode when working on a project or a deadline. This allows you to stay focused on the task at hand and not get distracted.
9. Create a healthy routine that involves a proper breakfast, lunch, and dinner.
10. Turn off email and social media at a set time and avoid taking your smartphone to bed.

11. Get a reasonable number of hours of sleep each night.
12. Coffee. Lots of it.
13. Don't bring food to your desk; just drinks. Once you bring food to your desk, it's a slippery slope to the bag of Reese's miniatures.

## EQUIPMENT AND WORK ENVIRONMENT

[Using the right equipment](#) -- be it a chair, desk, keyboard or monitor -- can help have a big impact on how your back feels at the end of the day. And, as you'll quickly see, working at the kitchen table is a big no-no.

14. Use an ergonomic ([Kinesis](#)) keyboard, a big 4K screen, and a proper office chair.
15. Flexible monitor arms, touchscreens, wireless keyboards & mouse are your friends.
16. [Adjustable chairs](#) and stand up desks help with comfort and ergonomics.
17. Don't use a laptop on the kitchen table -- or any table or desk, for that matter.
18. If you find the classic desk arrangement quite limiting, know you don't have to stick to it. Keep ergonomics in mind, and switch between positions often. It helps your mind and body.
19. If you have a laptop, connect it to a keyboard, mouse, and monitor for a more formal desktop experience. But do your research before making any purchases.
20. When possible, having a dedicated office space with a door that can be closed is essential.
21. Set boundaries. Be it kids, your partner, or your roommate. Just because you work from home doesn't mean you're always available to run errands, watch a sick kid, or wait for the electrician.
22. Think outside the box if you have a baby or a puppy to take care of. Adjust your work environment so you are comfortable and can focus, while still being able to take care of a sick kid, or yourself.

23. Connect your computer to the big screen TV when needed. It serves as a great conferencing tool, even if you're just working out details on a home project with the family. Plus YouTube is much nicer at 65 inches.
24. Don't work in the kitchen.
25. Run Ethernet everywhere you can. When on a deadline or a push or moving big videos, you don't want to rely solely on Wi-Fi.
26. Get as much bandwidth as you can afford, both up and down.
27. Set up a local NAS for shared files and backups. But also be sure to back up to the cloud. Make sure you back up.
28. If you're going to do videos, make sure you have space where light doesn't cause issues, where you can have quiet, where the sound doesn't reverb, and where you don't have confidential stuff on the whiteboard behind your head.
29. Continually optimize and re-think your work environment.
30. Don't be afraid to invest in a good chair and a large monitor. Both will more than pay for themselves in reduced pain and increased productivity.
31. Know what local coffee shops and restaurants have good Wi-Fi. Have a VPN for those days. If you need to escape the chaos at home, you'll have a known bolt-location (this is also important if your local network connection goes out).
32. Also, know coffee shops a half hour or more away with Wi-Fi. If your local ISP is down and you're on a deadline, you'll want to know where to drive that has Wi-Fi and bandwidth at a more remote location.
33. Invest in sound-blocking earplugs or earmuffs. They'll save your butt on days where the chaos is too insane and you need quiet to concentrate.

## APPS AND SERVICES

Use apps that allow you to efficiently communicate, but don't get carried away by interacting with coworkers or clients at all hours of the day. That said, you can use apps like video conferencing tools or Slack and Discord to interact with people outside of work.

34. Zoom, the video conferencing service, is your friend.
35. Consistently using [video conferencing tools](#) will ensure you get up and get dressed each day.
36. Use apps like Evernote to manage your workload, organize ideas and just keep on top of things.
37. Avoid constantly checking email and social media, and turn off all the unnecessary notifications on your phone to avoid interruptions.
38. If you [move between computers](#) throughout the workday, keep things in sync with services like Dropbox, iCloud, OneDrive, and other cloud storage services. That way whatever you're working on is available everywhere.
39. Use apps in full-screen mode as much as possible to limit distractions.
40. Join Slack channels or Discord servers with friends or groups with similar interests so you can interact with other people.

## MENTAL HEALTH

[Maintaining your mental health](#) is the most important aspect of working from home. You miss out on the impromptu encounters and conversations, which, at first glance, feel superficial, but after you've been working in your home office for a few weeks, you'll be longing for any human interaction.

41. Getting out of the home/office during the workday is essential for sanity.
42. Shovel snow, walk down the street, connect with nature or go talk to your cat.
43. [Adopt a dog](#) and take it for walks a couple of times a day. Cats may traditionally be a writer's best friend, but for getting up and moving you can't beat a pup.



44. Build time in your schedule to go to the gym when it's less crowded. It improves your well-being while placing you around people. And while you're at the gym, get on a bike, sweat and read fiction. There's nothing like getting into another world to improve your sanity.
45. Again, set boundaries. One of the biggest challenges, especially for those with a family, is family members thinking that working from home means you are always available for a phone call or errand. Communicate your schedule, and if needed, create "do not disturb days and hours."
46. Work outside. It's astonishing how a little fresh air can improve the mind's functioning.
47. Avoid guilt. Taking a break at home is way harder than walking out of the office and going around the block.
48. Have a designated workspace and office (preferably away from the kitchen).
49. Get out of the house after work or you get a little salty, bonkers, or feel isolated.
50. Get creative and experiment to build your perfect workplace.
51. Use headspace apps, white noise machines, or audiobooks to help you sleep.
52. Leave your smartphone charging in the living room at night, and if you use it to listen to music or podcasts, connect it to a Bluetooth speaker in your bedroom.
53. Do things you enjoy -- start a new hobby, join a club, etc. Something to get you out of the house regularly.

## PHYSICAL HEALTH

Taking care of your eyes, back, and overall physical health is just as important as mental health. A lot of these tips overlap with the equipment and work environment section above.

54. For five to 10 minutes every hour: Get up, move around and take your eyes off the screen.
55. Eat healthily! Don't rely on microwave meals and delivery orders.

56. **Don't work on a laptop.** In the long run, it will probably cripple you, and the cost of physiotherapy soon adds up to more than the cost of ergonomic equipment.
57. You can do some work on a laptop, but using a laptop on a kitchen table for sustained periods is a bad idea. You might get by if you take regular screen breaks, but if you're under deadline pressure, who does?

## TIPS FOR MANAGERS

Not only do employees have to learn how to work from home and remain efficient, but managers also have to learn how to effectively lead and manage remote workers. Below are suggestions from ZDNet's editor-in-chief, Larry Dignan:

58. Hire well.
59. Remote work works best when there are deliverables and deadlines.
60. Communicate well.
61. Don't micromanage.
62. Use the flexibility remote work gives you to your competitive advantage.
63. Utilize chat and video platforms.
64. Video conferencing office hours may be interesting. Try out open office hours via Zoom so people could just drop in.

The biggest takeaway here is that there isn't a one-size-fits-all solution. There are some core ideas, such as taking breaks, getting out of the house, and ensuring your office is conducive to allowing you to be productive. But outside of that, keep an open mind and experiment with different approaches. Perhaps most importantly -- don't be afraid to switch things up!



IMAGE: ISTOCKYURI ARCURS

## 10 WAYS TO AVOID WORK-AT-HOME TRAPS

Don't fall prey to the common pitfalls of working from home. Here are 10 things you can do to stay focused and productive.

**BY: JACK WALLEN/TECHREPUBLIC CONTRIBUTOR**

You've finally convinced your boss that working from home is not just a viable option, but the best option to ensure you remain a productive member of the team. Or maybe you've ventured out on your own and now you enjoy a home office.

Solitude.

Peace.

Productivity.

But don't think it's all rainbows and pajama parties. In fact, working from home offers plenty of traps that working in a standard office environment doesn't typically produce. As a long-time member of the working-from-home department, I've learned how to avoid most of them. Here are some suggestions to help keep you on track.

## 1: AVOID THE DISTRACTIONS

When you're working from home, the distractions will hit you like an avalanche. And unlike when you're working in the office, these distractions are often enticing. Television, bed, loved ones, exercise, shopping... you name it. The distractions will come in all shapes and forms. You must train yourself to avoid them—at least to a point. Although it may be tempting to carry your laptop to the bedroom and work from bed, the next logical step is to take a nap. You'll get nothing done and wind up scrambling to meet deadlines at the end of the day.

## 2: KNOW WHEN TO QUIT

This is probably the single most challenging pitfall you will face. Working from home makes it easy to keep on going... in the evening, when you should be giving your attention to yourself or others. This isn't so much about having a rigid clock-out time, but knowing when you've completed all you need to complete that day. Once you've finished those tasks, quit. Step away from the office and be done. If you continue to work beyond your daily task list, you set yourself up to blur the boundaries between work time and personal time.

## 3: SEPARATE THE OFFICE FROM THE REST OF THE HOME

This is primarily a psychological trick -- but it's incredibly important. If you don't separate your workspace and your home space, you will always feel like you are at work. That feeling will do a serious number on your psyche. Don't let it happen. Unfortunately, not everyone has the luxury of a spare room to serve as an office. In that case, do what you can to separate your work area from the rest of the home. This may mean using curtains or a standing screen to block your office from the rest of the house -- or working in a basement. If you can't do that, at least make sure to step away from your work desk at the end of the day and don't look back.

## 4: DON'T FORGET TO SOCIALIZE

This one is tough for some. The idea of working alone is appealing to many people. The problem is, when you do work by yourself (day in and day out), it can become easy to retreat within and stop having any connection with the outside world and other people. After a while, this becomes the norm and those social skills will start to suffer. Make sure, on a daily basis, that you socialize -- and not on Facebook! You need face to face and mouth to ear communication to keep these skills sharp. Don't let working from home retool your mental and emotional makeup to that of a hermit.

## 5: SET A FLEXIBLE SCHEDULE

You may have heard this advice: Work a normal schedule when you work from home. But I can tell you, this will drive you bonkers. Why? One of the benefits of working from home is flexibility. You're doing your job and all of a sudden your spouse needs you to help with a task. You say, "Sorry, I'm at work." Then you spend the rest of the day in the doghouse. Or you look outside to see the sun finally poking through the clouds. Why not take a walk? Oh, but that schedule was carved in stone by the powers that be of the powers that be. No, actually, it wasn't. So long as you can achieve your goals on a daily basis, don't worry about keeping a rigid schedule. Otherwise, you lose one of the best perks of working from home.

## 6: DON'T BE TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF

Even though you're being flexible, you have to make sure you don't let family and friends take advantage of you. That is not to say you have to set unyielding boundaries, but this will be on you. When your spouse, children, and friends have distracted you from work enough for the day, it's time for you to say "no." It's easy to give in to those requests. But at the end of the day, if those requests prevent you from getting the job done, you have allowed yourself to be taken advantage of. It will be crucial (especially if your spouse is also stay at home) to set some boundaries early on.

## 7: DRESS FOR WORK (IF NEEDED)

There are some who need to dress the part. Others, like myself, can work in pajamas all day and still be productive members of society. But for those of us who spend our days in "soft pants,"

here's the catch: The more time you spend in your jammies, the harder it will be to put on actual clothes to step out into society. The next thing you know, you're going to Target in your "Iron Man" pants like you were a ten-year-old (guilty). If you need the familiar structure that comes along with the khakis and button downs, don them daily. In fact, if you need a routine, get up at a regular time, shower, dress, and step into your office and do the daily grind in the comfort of your loafers and best casual Friday wear.

## 8: BE DILIGENT ABOUT DATA SECURITY

This one is tough to satisfy. When you're working in an office, that company is responsible for the security of your data. But when you're working from home that may not be the case. If you are freelance or contract, you're on your own. So you must take precautions to protect and back up your data. This is especially important if you are handling sensitive client information. Do not just depend upon a router and modem from your network provider. Encrypt the data, keep it on a non-networked machine whatever you have to do to keep it safe from prying eyes. If you happen to use a cloud service, make sure you use something like [Boxcryptor](#) to encrypt that cloud data.

## 9: GET THE RIGHT EQUIPMENT

You may not have an IT department budget behind you to keep you in laptops, tablets, desktops, printers, etc. If you are a freelancer or contract for hire, this is completely on you. You will need to make sure you have the equipment you need. If you run into an instance where you don't have the tech to get a job done, buy it. (Remember, in some cases, it will be a tax write off.) Don't hesitate to purchase what you need to do your work. Keep your machines running smoothly, your printers in ink, and keep anything on hand that will enable you to get the job done without "making do."

## 10: PREPARE FOR THE FUTURE

This covers a number of factors. First and foremost, make sure you keep good documentation for tax purposes. You'll most likely have a lot of expenses to claim. Speak with your accountant so you know exactly what you need. Also -- and all freelancers and contract workers will understand this -- make sure you have enough in savings should things go belly up. Working from home (especially

when you don't have a company as a safety net) can be a bit less secure than standard employment. Planning for the future means making sure you have a future.

## WHAT WORKS FOR YOU?

Working from home can be like living a vacation 24/7/365 if you navigate those waters with care and planning. Don't let any of these traps snare you and you'll enjoy your life away from the drudgery of the office.

What's the biggest problem you've encountered working at home? Share your experiences and advice with fellow TechRepublic members.



## 24 VIDEO CONFERENCING TIPS TO GO FROM TELECOMMUTING ZERO TO HERO

Getting started working from home and facing your first video-conference? Here's some tips on how to make the best of it and not to screw up.

**BY: STEVEN J. VAUGHAN-NICHOLS/ZDNET CONTRIBUTOR**

Over the years, I've done innumerable video conferences, webinars, and calls. But every time I'm still a little nervous. Here are battle-tested ways I and some friends and colleagues have found to do well at video -- or, at least, not mess up too badly.

latest developments



## HARDWARE AND SOFTWARE, NUTS AND BOLTS

1. Does your gear work? Are you sure? Check your camera, your computer, your microphone, and your internet connection. Then check it again. Hell is doing tech support with your setup while everyone else is waiting and thinking, “Can you believe this guy!?”
2. Oh, and while you’re at it, make sure your video service is working well. With, conservatively, a few million [new users using video-conferencing for the first time](#), I guarantee there will be failures and slowdowns.
3. Also, do your best to make sure your video-conferencing software is working well before the call. That means turning off CPU-heavy background applications, automatic alerts, and downloads. You do not want your video to end up stuttering.
4. Don’t play with your computer or smartphone. You don’t want to end up like Matthew Miller, head of the [Fedora Project](#), who switched to another browser tab and forgot they were on camera. Whoops.
5. You can use your built-in webcam and microphone, but if you want your video to impress, you want to get a [decent external webcam, mic, and headphones](#).

## ORGANIZE, ORGANIZE, ORGANIZE

1. Are you in charge of the meeting? Then organize it. Email an agenda beforehand, so the conversation doesn’t wander all over the freaking place. Stephen Satchell, a developer at [INE](#), remembers having “a video conference with no agenda or even an informative topic.” The result? “It was rambling chit-chat for an hour, which, if properly done, would have taken 10 minutes.” Don’t waste time like this.
2. That said, put time in for idle chit-chat. I guarantee that no matter how much you want to have a laser-light focus on your latest gizmo’s delivery date, the first few minutes of every conference call will include “How are the kids/parents/dogs doing?” and “Can you see me?”. Plan for it and then move on to the meat of the meeting.

3. Got files or information to share beforehand? Then, Fabio Ramos, senior director of product marketing at [8x8](#), a VoIP company, recommends that you: “Share these with other participants beforehand if possible. You may share information during the call, but it may be distracting or difficult in some cases for others to use files while talking with you. Double-check that everyone has the materials and access they need.”

## VIRTUAL MEETING ETIQUETTE

1. It’s a business meeting! If you normally wear a suit and tie, wear them. A t-shirt with Linux commands? Go for it. Pants are optional. Just keep in mind that if you need to stand up to answer a call of nature, your CEO may not be as impressed with your Mickey Mouse shorts as your cat.
2. Do not -- for the love of kittens and puppies -- eat during a conference. That pepperoni pizza may look tasty on the plate, but it doesn’t look good on your face. Or, on your shirt.
3. Which, reminds me, check your clothes for lunch remains before turning on the camera. Ketchup is not a fashion statement.
4. Be on time. Can’t get there until five minutes late? You may be better off not showing up at all. No one -- and I mean no one -- likes “Beep! Steven has joined the meeting.” Or so I’ve been told.
5. [Bob Suitor](#), IBM’s VP of Quantum Computing, adds that besides starting meetings promptly when scheduled, you should strive to “avoid side conversations, and by all means wrap it up early if you can.”
6. Freelance writer [Lisa McGreevy](#) wants to remind you, “There’s no need to make a huge deal if you accidentally drop off and have to reconnect. Just quietly come back to the room. Don’t interrupt with, ‘Sorry I dropped off, bad connection, I’m back now! Sorry!’ That’s more disruptive than the chime alerting you’ve reconnected.”
7. Are you talking? No? Then mute your freaking microphone. [Rikki Endsley](#), an [AWS open-source](#) community manager, recommends you “behave as if you were in the room with the other participants.” She added, “I was on a group

call last year and we could hear a participant using the restroom because he clearly was not following these basic video conference rules.” You do not want to be that person.

8. Seriously. If you’re not talking, mute your mic. Freelance writer [Mitch Wagner](#) remembers being in “an editorial meeting and someone else was presenting an article they were doing and one of the cats was pestering me to be picked up and I finally said, ‘Will you shut up and leave me alone?’” It did not end well.
9. [Karanbir Singh](#), CentOS’s project lead, would like to remind you: “Participate as if you were physically in the same room. And participate completely (aka, no checking emails or doing other work waiting for someone to say your name, etc). “People don’t like it when they call on you and see you obviously typing away.” I mean, they seriously don’t like it.
10. [Adrian Warman](#), the principal cybersecurity consultant at the [UK Ministry of Justice](#), adds: “Be really clear about stages in the meeting, discussion points, and conclusions. Recap often. If you’re in a voice-only call, or worse, some are voice-only, others are video, it’s really easy to get lost.”
11. McGreevy sums it up: “Just pay attention. No eating a four-course meal, taking a phone call, texting, typing the whole time, watching videos, driving, turning your camera on and off 40 times (“be right back!”), etc. I see this stuff all the time and it’s so distracting. Just. Pay. Attention.”

## APPEARANCE IS EVERYTHING

1. Lighting’s important. With bad lighting, you’re going to look bad. If you’re in a room with a window, aka natural light, face the window. No window? Find a light to put in front of you. Never sit with your back to a window. Cinematographers can do great things with backlighting. You can’t. You also don’t want to sit under a bright light. You’ll get shadows under your eyes, which will make you look tired, older. It’s not a good look.
2. Make sure your background looks decent. You may like your kid’s drawings on the fridge. Your co-workers? Not so much. You can even set up a [dedicated video area with a green screen](#) and all the trimmings. But many video-conferencing programs, such as [Zoom](#), [enable you to set up a virtual background](#),

so your messy room is replaced by a much image of you on the International Space Station.

3. Look up, not down. If you look down at your camera, which is very common with smartphones, your audience will get a great look up your nose. And, oh, by the way, have you trimmed your nose hairs lately?
4. Dogs, cats, and children should not be seen nor heard. That said, as Wagner reminisced: “When high-level SVP at a multi-billion-dollar vendor says that her two-year-old daughter was going to bed and insisted she had to say goodnight to me. So, I said goodnight to her. I don’t care how much of a tough investigative reporter you are -- when the two-year-old girl wants you to say goodnight, you say goodnight.”
5. Finally, [Stephen Walli](#), [Microsoft’s](#) principal program manager, reminds us that many of these foul-ups can be seen in all their glory in the classic “[A Conference Call in Real Life](#)” [video](#). Watch. Laugh. Cringe. Learn.



IMAGE: ISTOCKPHOTO

## MANAGING TELECOMMUTERS DUE TO CORONAVIRUS COVID-19? HERE ARE 8 MANAGEMENT TIPS

ZDNet has operated under a remote work model for nearly two decades. Here are a few best practices we've learned since you're highly likely to be getting a crash course in remote work management.

**BY: LARRY DIGNAN/ZDNET**

Managers around the world are getting a crash course in managing a remote workforce due to the [novel coronavirus](#) and you can expect some growing pains ahead.

But like any crisis there are opportunities and new ways of doing things that will emerge. If anything the novel coronavirus may have simply [accelerated trends in the workplace](#) that were already happening.

At ZDNet, we've had a remote team for nearly two decades. We are globally dispersed with hubs in London as well as Sydney with contributors around the world. In the US, we're also scattered throughout the country. We also have a blend of editors as well as contributors. Add it up and we've been operating under a work model that many of you will have in the not-too-distant future as multiple enterprises are telling employees to work from home to minimize [the spread of COVID-19](#).

Last week, we offered a series of tips on [working from home from the employee perspective](#). Here's a follow-up to offer a few management tips as your workers go remote.

## 1. QUANTIFY AND WATCH YOUR KPIS.

We're blessed in that we operate in a business with deliverables and deadlines. Simply put, it's fairly obvious if someone isn't available or meeting standards. Managing a remote team means you need to be more focused on your deliverables and performance metrics. If you're not quantifying work, then it's hard to hit your objectives remotely. Metrics free you with a remote team (more on that later).

## 2. DON'T MICROMANAGE.

With a remote workforce you're forced to let go of any micromanagement tendencies. You simply can't track your people as well. That reality is good for both the manager and the workforce, but many supervisors won't see it that way at first. If you're the type of manager that has to know where a worker is every second of the day, you are going to stumble out of the gate. Remote work means you have to trust your people, let them run and get their work done. Your job as a manager is to clear the way so they can complete their missions.

If you're a micromanager what can you do? The first thing you need to do is know what your metrics are and why they matter. We're not talking metrics like time on Slack or keystrokes. We're talking about what really matters to the business (productivity, revenue, collaboration etc.). This rush to remote work can be game changing and can crystallize what really matters. As long as an employee is delivering the goods and hitting targets you shouldn't be concerned about how, when and where the task is completed.

### 3. FLEXIBILITY IS YOUR NEW COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE.

A remote workforce buys you a lot of flexibility. The downside for remote workers is that the day may never seem to end if they don't follow healthy work habits. The upside is your teams can scale up based on workflow not a schedule that's dictated by commutes and operating hours. You can use this flexibility to win in the field vs. less nimble competitors.

### 4. COMMUNICATE WELL AND OFTEN.

The knock on remote work is that you don't get those chats over coffee and cohesive culture. To replicate that you need to make sure you're visible on Slack, have an open door (messaging) strategy and make use of video conferencing. This communication theme is easier said than done but it needs to be emphasized. Open office hours via video conferencing may be worth a try so your remote team can get adjusted. Also keep in mind that you're never going to be able to communicate enough so aim for continuous improvement.

### 5. USE VOICE, VIDEO AND THEN WRITTEN FOLLOW-UPS.

Face-to-face meetings should usually have a written follow-up so there's a record and less confusion. With a remote team, this best practice is even more important. You have to work harder to make sure people are on the same page.

### 6. TRUST YOUR PEOPLE.

Remote work also means that you have to trust your team. Trust is earned via deliverables and performance, but managers shouldn't start from a position of distrust. Trust your people until proven otherwise.

This trust will be critical due to the distractions that are involved with COVID-19. Schools are closed. Supermarket shelves may be empty. Some workers will be in cities with shelter-in-place restrictions. Falling 401(k) balances. There will be distractions. Perhaps the biggest distraction will be a never-ending stream of bad headlines and news chatter. You'll have to trust your people to work through the distractions and deliver.

## 7. USE ALL THE TOOLS AT YOUR DISPOSAL BUT REMEMBER QUALITY NOT QUANTITY.

Most enterprises have a handful of video conferencing tools, team management platforms and chat apps. Pick the ones that work and go with them. YAT (yet another tool) is a curse for remote workforces. It is best to use the collaboration tools that folks are using already. Collaboration doesn't have to be fancy.

## 8. THINK THROUGH HOW THIS EXPERIENCE WILL CHANGE YOUR WORK PRACTICES IN THE FUTURE.

After some growing pains, it's likely that you'll find your team happier and more productive. Pay attention and think through how the future of work for your team needs to evolve. Enterprises are likely to use this novel coronavirus crisis as a big A/B test for expenses ranging from sales and marketing to travel to commercial real estate holdings. The old way of doing things may not make sense in the future.





IMAGE: ISTOCKPHOTO/VALERYBROZHINSKY

## HOW TO BETTER DEFEND YOUR ORGANIZATION AGAINST REMOTE ACCESS THREATS

With people working remotely due to the coronavirus, cybercriminals are trying to take advantage of such tools as VPNs and remote desktop services, says security firm Radware.

**BY: LANCE WHITNEY/TECHREPUBLIC CONTRIBUTOR**

The dramatic and fast spread of the coronavirus has forced companies to take urgent steps to protect their offices and their employees from exposure. As such, many organizations are asking or requiring their staffers to work at home to avoid contact with others. But this quick transition is prompting cybercriminals to target the people and tools required to work remotely. Released on Wednesday, Radware's report [Coronavirus: Security Recommendations For Remote Access Threats](#) explains how to safeguard your organization against remote access threats.

## DDOS ATTACKS

One attack vector discussed by Radware is a [distributed denial-of-service \(DDoS\)](#). These types of attacks send malicious traffic to targeted machines in an attempt to overload them. In doing so, the servers that your workers need to access then slow down or become unavailable.

A more specific kind of DDoS attack can affect remote workers using virtual private network (VPN) tools. Most VPN tools use Secure Socket Layer (SSL) or Transport Layer Security (TLS) to encrypt and secure any information sent back and forth. Hackers can send malicious data to the SSL server or otherwise exploit the SSL process, thereby taking down the service.

To protect yourself against DDoS attacks, Radware recommends using a hybrid DDoS solution that combines cloud-based DDoS services and on-premise protection. The on-premise detection can prevent any type of disruption from application and protocol specific attacks. The cloud-based services can provide automatic diversion to the cloud if the attacks continue to grow.

## VPNS

Remote workers rely on VPNs to gain secure access to an employer's network. But VPNs have increasingly become a tempting target for cybercriminals using advanced persistent threats (APT). Last year, flaws were discovered in [VPN tools from Palo Alto Networks, Fortinet, and Pulse Secure](#) that would let remote attackers take control of an affected system and gain access to an organization's network.

In response, the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) and the [National Cyber Security Centre](#) (NCSC) advised organizations to review and update their VPN solutions:

- Palo Alto Network Security Advisory [PAN-SA-2019-0020](#), in relation to [CVE-2019-1579](#).
- FortiGuard Security Advisories [FG-IR-18-389](#), in relation to [CVE-2018-13382](#); [FG-IR-18-388](#) in relation to [CVE-2018-13383](#); and [FG-IR-18-384](#), in relation to [CVE-2018-13379](#).
- Pulse Secure Security Advisory [SA44101](#), in relation to [CVE-2019-11510](#), [CVE-2019-11508](#), [CVE-2019-11540](#), [CVE-2019-11543](#), [CVE-2019-11541](#),

[CVE-2019-11542](#), [CVE-2019-11539](#), [CVE-2019-11538](#), [CVE-2019-11509](#), and [CVE-2019-11507](#).

To protect yourself against VPN vulnerabilities, Radware suggests the following steps:

- Update VPNs, network infrastructure devices, and devices being used to work remotely with the latest software patches.
- Implement multi-factor authentication (MFA) on all VPN connections to increase security. If MFA is not implemented, require teleworkers to use strong passwords and not reuse passwords for other purposes or sites.
- Reset credentials associated with potentially affected VPNs.
- Implement granular access controls in VPN solutions to limit the access based on user profiles.
- Ensure and enforce the security posture of client devices before allowing access to internal resources.

## BLUEKEEP EXPLOITS

Remote desktop tools may also play a role for off-site workers as they allow them to remotely access and control a workstation or server. Discovered last year, Bluekeep is a [vulnerability in Microsoft's Remote Desktop Services](#) that could allow attackers to remotely execute code. The flaw affects Windows Server 2003, 2008, and 2008 R2, as well as Windows 7, XP, and Vista but not Windows 8 or Windows 10. Microsoft issued a patch for the bug, which it included as part of its automated Windows Update last May. But there are likely some organizations that have not yet installed it.

To protect yourself against Bluekeep, make sure that all affected versions of Windows have downloaded the latest updates. You can also manually download and install the Bluekeep patch from [Microsoft's Update Catalog](#).

## REMOTE DESKTOP PROTOCOL ATTACKS

Remote access to an organization's critical computers and servers is highly prized by cybercriminals and hackers. One way of gaining that access is through a user account that has remote desktop privileges. To do that, criminals often apply [brute force attacks](#) to try to obtain the credentials of a privileged account. Though less than 1% of such attacks are successful, they can last for two to three days, according to Radware.

To protect against RDP account takeovers, Microsoft advises system administrators to combine and monitor the following multiple signals to detect RDP inbound Brute Force traffic on their servers:

- Hour of day and day of week of failed sign-in and RDP connections
- Timing of successful sign-in following failed attempts
- Event ID 4625 login type (filtered to network and remote interactive)
- Event ID 4625 failure reason (filtered to %%2308, %%2312, %%2313)
- Cumulative count of distinct usernames that failed to sign in without success
- Count (and cumulative count) of failed sign-ins
- Count (and cumulative count) of RDP inbound external IP
- Count of other machines having RDP inbound connections from one or more of the same IP

## PHISHING

With more people working from home, cybercriminals are ramping up phishing campaigns designed to trick them into sharing passwords, financial information, and other sensitive data. Many of the latest phishing emails promise important details on the coronavirus to get people to click on malicious links or open malicious file attachments.

To defend your organization and employees against phishing attacks, Radware offers the following advice:

Stay current with anti-malware and phishing products and inform employees about the dangers of opening attachments or clicking links in emails from untrusted sources. While most organizations already implement a general awareness program for phishing, it does not hurt to inform employees about an expected increase in phishing attempts promising information on COVID-19.

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