

CREDIBLE THINKING

WORKING FROM HOME OR LIVING AT WORK?



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Staying Safe. Staying Open for Business.

At first the concept of working from home was more of an excitement for most. There was no need to commute which meant more hours in the day and more money in the bank account. Increased flexibility made it easier to go for those long summer night walks / runs, and perhaps more time to spend with the family. As we are at the start of the dark winter nights and cold weather, lockdown 2.0 has really raised questions on what factors are important in our everyday lives.

In practice, for many young professionals working from home means living, eating, working and in some cases sleeping in the same room. I now know how a zoo animal would feel being in the same surroundings, looking at the same things day in day out. I'm in my mid 20's living in a shared two bedroom flat with another surveyor. The choice of a change of scenery is either my bedroom or the open plan living room, it

is monotonous. Running is currently my escape and even then, I am exhausting the same routes. Although I appreciate the extra time in my day, it is completely impractical and long term, I think it would affect my mental wellbeing to work from home permanently.

The day to day practicalities must be planned around the timings of Zoom calls; I cannot be ping ponging my beans on toast in the microwave if my housemate is concentrating on an important call. Also, confidential work calls become more challenging. Although we can share rooms and plan around it, the reality of it leaves one of us working from our bedrooms, which I believe is unhealthy in many ways. Additionally, it does not exactly set the best impression, zooming on a bed with our laptops on knees.

For those starting new jobs how can you possibly learn or quickly ask that 'silly question' when you are not surrounded by more experienced colleagues? Zoom calls are no replacement for natural conversations and learning by osmosis. It is a level of business efficiency and development which is probably impossible to value.

I have found that many are finding it difficult to switch off. We have all been victims to seeing that late night email coming in but is the expectation that because you are working from home there is always the ability to be able to work? And on the flip side, I feel for all those who may be having a tough home time at the moment, when the office would usually be a distraction or an escape, how then does 'home' become

'work'? We are all built in a world that revolves around working in an office, it is a key element for meeting new people and perhaps meeting people you otherwise would not, which leads to opportunities.

With a vaccine on the horizon I hope that attitudes will change, and people are going to rethink that work - life balance. But why can't the elements on what people have benefited from be taken back into work? I believe the role of the office is crucial in doing this. Creating a fun environment, with informal break out areas to encourage social interaction, breaks away from the desk and fitting in that daily exercise is critical for well-being and productivity. More than ever the little things in the office that encourage people to be away from their desks are vital i.e. table tennis, pool table, sofa areas or informal working benches.

I do believe that people will want increased flexibility; a shift away from the typical 9-5 culture, 5 days a week. But the most important element is creating a 'hub'. Offices should be a place where people want to go to work, a place to drive business and encourage development.

I'd personally suffer from FOMO if I were the minority still working from home.

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