

The Greek philosopher, Heraclitus, is credited with the adage, “The only constant is change.” Small business owners certainly know this to be true, and in the era of the [coronavirus pandemic](#), it is further amplified. One of the most transformative changes in business right now driven by the pandemic is the [rapid shift to working from home](#). One [survey](#) showed nearly 85% of employers are encouraging employees to work from home as part of their COVID-19 response, with more than 65% of employers also taking steps to allow work from home for employees who normally could not do so. Also known as remote work, telecommuting, and teleworking, working from home presents opportunities and challenges for employers and employees. Read on for small business guidance on how to thrive in this new space.

Benefits of Working from Home

Benefits for employers associated with allowing remote work include increased worker productivity, decreased hiring costs and decreased in-office costs, according to recent [research by Harvard Business School](#). An added benefit in our current moment is enhanced worker-safety, reducing the risk of employees spreading the coronavirus in the workplace and bringing it home to their families. On the employee side, some of the top benefits remote workers reported in [Buffer’s 2019 State of Remote Work survey](#) are having a flexible schedule and more time with family. Broader benefits to society include reduced emissions from commuting.

Challenges of Working from Home

Increased cybersecurity risk is a key challenge of implementing remote work for your employees, especially now as cybercriminal groups remain active, even [taking advantage of the COVID-19 crisis](#). [Marketplace reports](#) that, for new web domains, coronavirus sites are 50% more likely to be malicious than sites not related to the virus. It is important to acknowledge this risk, and equip your employees with training on how to [stay secure while working from home](#). SBDCNet compiled a comprehensive collection of information, resources and tools for [small business cybersecurity](#).

Additional challenges include [changes to office culture](#), increased [stress for parents](#) due to COVID-19 motivated school closures, among [others](#).

Have a Plan - and Communicate it Clearly

To ensure your small business can reap the rewards of remote work and overcome the challenges, HR professionals recommend establishing a clear plan for employees on remote

work procedures and having strong channels of communication throughout [the transition](#). The Society for Human Resource Management compiled a comprehensive list of tips for [organizational preparation and implementation of telework](#), and the Harvard Business Review provides a [guide for managing newly remote workers](#). Forbes recently published [The Ultimate Small Business Work From Home Guide](#) as well as [an article on working from home during the Coronavirus pandemic](#), with actionable insights for employers as well as employees.

Prioritizing Wellness

Now more than ever, employee health is a crucial asset to business success - and that includes mental health. Given that working from home presents challenges to well-being, employers should prioritize employee wellness when possible. Consider providing employees with information on [ergonomics](#). To combat the sedentary nature of remote work, nonprofit [Cleveland Clinic recommends](#) taking regular stretching breaks focusing on the back and scheduling workouts. Pillars of physical wellness such as a consistent sleep schedule and nutritious meals are key to [self-care while working remotely](#) too. On the mental health side, try [finding ways to stay connected](#) despite social distancing as well as [setting boundaries](#) with work and loved ones ([including children](#)). When it comes to leading remote workers, know that [demonstrating empathy as a leader](#) can go a long way to support employee wellness as well as business success [in a crisis](#).

Of course, not every small business is compatible with remote work. See guidance from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce for managing coronavirus concerns for [employees unable to work remotely](#), and stay tuned for upcoming SBDCNet guidance on adapting your small business to the constant change presented by the pandemic.

Additional Small Business Resources

Already in business or thinking about starting your own small business? Check out our various small business resources:

- View our COVID-19 Resources here: [COVID-19 Small Business Resources](#) and [COVID-19 Industry Resources](#)
- View more small business help topics here: [Small Business Information Center](#)
- View business reports here: [Small Business Snapshots](#)
- View industry-specific research here: [Market Research Links](#)

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