

# The CITY VOICE

## Working From Home Edition

City of Spokane Quarterly Employee Newsletter



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## Welcome to the City Voice Working from Home

Welcome to this special edition of The City Voice. The purpose of this newsletter is to help you navigate the new temporary realities of working from home during the COVID-19 Pandemic. On April 2nd, Governor Jay Inslee extended the "Stay Home, Stay Healthy" order through May 4th. Although this may not be the most ideal situation, we must all do our part to slow the spread of COVID-19. For some of the employees at the City of Spokane, this means extending the duration of working from home.

The goal of the edition is to ensure both employees and managers have the techniques and the necessary skills to help them adapt to this new way working.

We want to thank City employees for everything you are doing to help the Spokane community during this unprecedented time!

-Human Resources

# Ergonomics for the *Home Office*

Ergonomics is about improving your comfort, health, and productivity with thoughtful workplace design. There are some small changes you can make to improve your at home work experience.

## *The Basics:*

### *The Monitor*

- Set the top of your monitor at, or slightly below, eye level
- Keep your neck straight, instead of craning or twisting
- Position your monitor about an arm's reach away

### *The Keyboard and Mouse*

- Make sure your arms are close to your body, with elbows near your sides
- If available, use an external keyboard and mouse, and place them close to your body
- Keep your wrists straight by floating your hands above your keyboard when typing

### *The Chair*

- Choose a chair with back support and sit so your back is fully supported, reclining slightly if possible
- Don't sit on a stool, couch, or exercise ball

### *The Work Surface*

- Use a hard flat surface such as a table or desk
- Remove clutter and any drawers directly in front of your seat
- If your shoulders aren't relaxed while working, try raising your seat or lowering your workstation
- Keep your knees at 90 degrees, with feet flat on the floor

[Click here](#) to learn more about home office ergonomics



# Quick Tips for *Success at Home*

## *Create a Routine*

Creating a routine is essential to getting into a work focused mentality at home. In order to get into this work mentality, it is important to focus on creating an efficient work environment and establishing a routine that provides structure to your day.

When looking for an office space in your home, it is key to find a location that is quiet and away from distractions. Although the living room sofa may be comfortable, it may not be the best location to work from. Keep in mind the ergonomics of the space you choose to setup your home office in. Review page two to ensure that your space and equipment is set up correctly to provide the optimal workplace design. Take into account the lighting that is available. Natural light in work spaces has been proven to increase peoples mood and energy level. It is also important to set boundaries with household members. If possible, have a conversation to address how to best share the space during work hours.

Establishing a routine is extremely important in getting the most out of your workday. It is recommended that you try to maintain a morning routine that is similar to the routine you had when you were going to work. This means, try to wake up at the same time, get ready and dressed for work like you usually do. Taking breaks throughout the day ensure that you are able to perform at a high level. Schedule time to make/drink coffee, eat lunch, and if you can go on a quick walk. Employees with normal eight or nine hour works days have two fifteen minute breaks and one unpaid thirty minute to sixty minute lunch break. Maintain a work- life balance, when the day is over logoff and put the computer away. Working from home means you always have access to your computer, don't fall into the trap of constantly checking emails. It is important to separate yourself from work at the end of the day.

## *Focus on Mental and Physical Wellbeing*

During this challenging time it is important to focus on both your mental and physical wellbeing. [KEPRO's Employee Assistance Program](#) is "business as usual." Consultants are available to help employees with stress and anxiety, as well as other concerns that may arise.

Every Wednesday the HR TIDBITS are emailed to all employees. The HR TIDBITS contain helpful wellness information that can be applied to everyday life. Next time you are looking for self-care tips, a healthy recipe or a new workout to try, check out the Wellness Wednesday section of the HR TIDBITS.

Throughout the day, it is important to get up and move around. Attempting to sit all day is not the most effective way to get work done. Stretching your legs around the house is helpful in clearing your mind and may assist with refocusing yourself when returning to the task you were working.

While going to the gym is no longer an option given the present situation, it is important to stay physically active. Consider going on a walk or a run near your house. As the weather gets nicer, gardening and yard work are a great way to stay active while maintaining a social distance from other individuals. There is a large amount of great workout and meditation videos online that can be completed with little to no equipment.

## Quick Tips for *Success at Home Continued*

### *Stay Connected*

Communication is key when face-to-face interactions are not possible. During the current "Stay Home, Stay Healthy" order, there is a great risk that employees may begin to feel isolated and not connected to what is currently going on. To avoid this, it is the responsibility of both yourself and your manager to stay connected. Email is just one of the ways to stay connected. Phone calls, conference calls, Skype and WebEx are all resources that can be used to facilitate communication between colleagues, supervisors/managers, and customers. If getting coffee with someone was a part of your normal daily routine, consider setting up a virtual coffee break to stay connected.

Although communication is extremely important, it is also necessary to find a balance between communicating and over communicating. Even though thorough communication between the employee and managers is essential, this does not mean that every little thing must be directly communicated. Reach out to your supervisor for clear guidelines on what information needs to be exchanged and the timelines in which it needs to be shared.

### *Be Flexible and Stay Focused*

Make sure you are setting reasonable work hours for yourself. Overworking can lead to fatigue and loss of productivity. If working over your normal hours is something that often happens to you, consider setting a reminder on your phone or calendar of when it is time to logoff for the night. If your traditional schedule is not working for you at home talk to your supervisor about adjusting your start and stop time to accommodate what works better for you at home. Please note that if your supervisor needs you to maintain the hours that you are currently working you should try to be flexible in accommodating the department needs, as well.

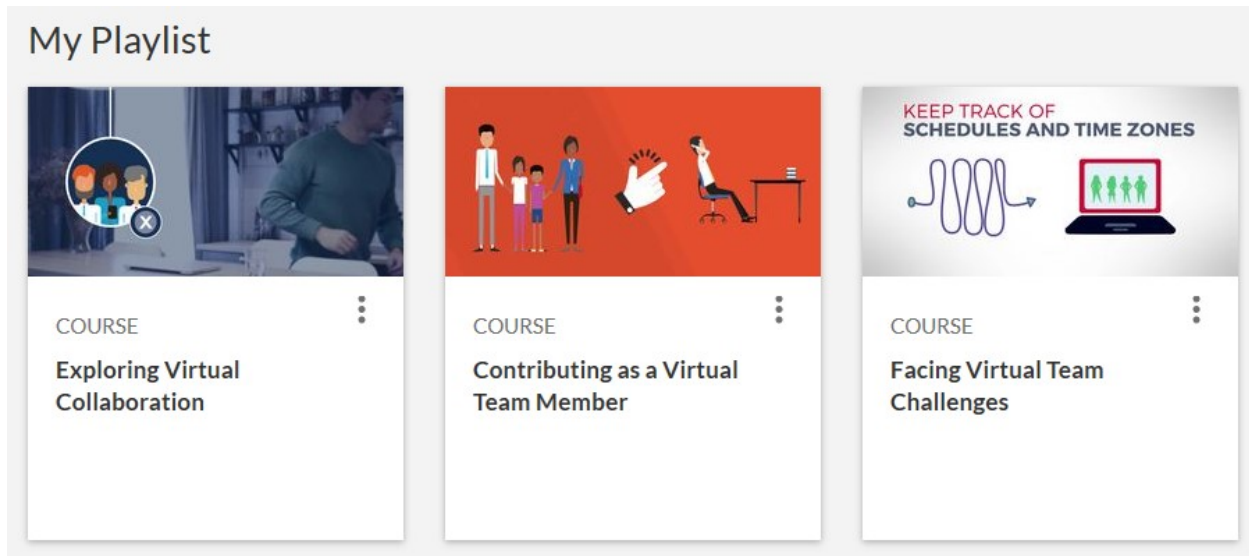
Create a daily agenda of what you would like to accomplish during the day. Allow room for adjustments to your daily agenda, as sometimes new projects or tasks will popup during the day. Review what you were able to get done at the end of the day and reprioritize your agenda the next day to accomplish what needs to get done. Plan ahead, create a weekly and monthly agenda. Discuss your agenda with your supervisor to make sure that your agenda aligns with the departments needs, goals and objectives. Allow room for your supervisor to provide feedback and alterations to your agenda, if needed.

### *Continue to Develop and Grow*

This section can apply to both your personal and professional life. Just because we are in an unfamiliar time does not mean that we stop progressing. Take this time to learn a new skill or grow your understanding of a departmental function that you previously did not know. This is also a great time to get caught up or start projects that you were not able to get to before. Make the most out of this time by pushing yourself to develop outside of the typical office environment. Our Skillsoft Learning Platform – Percipio is available to assist in this development process. Percipio provides e-learning on a various topics.

### PERCIPIO THE E-LEARNING PLATFORM

In January the City of Spokane introduced the new Skillsoft Learning Platform – Percipio! This upgraded platform delivers highly engaging content, curated learning paths, and an easy-to-navigate learning experience.



### PERCIPIO PROVIDES GUIDANCE ON WORKING FROM HOME

Percipio offers many videos and courses on topics relating to working from home. Working remotely presents a unique set of challenges that require resilience, virtual collaboration, and stress management. Virtual work during a crisis adds additional complexity to your day to day working life. Enhance your skills by learning how to apply mindfulness, manage your mental well-being, and adapting to unexpected change. To learn more about working from home and how to be a good team member while doing so, access Percipio using the below login information.

### DISCOVER YOUR CONTENT

#### To get started:

Go to the login page at <https://spokanecity.percipio.com/login.html#/>.

Enter your email or login name – firstname.lastname (as reflected in Peoplesoft)

Select **Forgot Password?** to set up a personal password or security questions.

Start Learning!

#### Questions?

Access our [brochure](#) or contact the Skillsoft Administrator at [erahr-sa@spokanecity.org](mailto:erahr-sa@spokanecity.org) for assistance.

## Temporary Telecommuting *Equipment Approval*

Due to the current COVID-19 (coronavirus) public emergency, the City of Spokane has implemented temporary telecommuting arrangements for employees whose job duties allow for telework. The following approvals must be obtained when setting up the designated work area required to perform duties safely and efficiently while protecting City equipment, software and supplies.

### *Contact IT For Approval If:*

- You need to be issued a laptop for telework (and your supervisor has not yet provided laptop information to IT)
- You require installation of software
- You need to take home a desktop or docking station
- You want to take home a free-standing monitor(s)

Contact IT at [helpdesk@spokanecity.org](mailto:helpdesk@spokanecity.org) or 1-509-625-6460.

### *Contact Your Supervisor For Approval If:*

- You need to take home a keyboard, mouse, headset or small desk scanner/printer
- You need additional office supplies to perform tasks/duties

The Supervisor should maintain an inventory of these types of items transported to the Telecommuter's work area.

### *Items Prohibited From Being Transported to the Tele-commuted Work Area Include (But Not Limited To):*

- Office chairs
- Sit/stand desks
- File cabinets
- Small meeting tables
- Portable/rolling whiteboards
- Lighting
- Monitors mounted on walls or other equipment (extendable arms, etc.)

### *Contact Human Resources For Approval If:*

You have a current ADA Accommodation on file requiring a specific piece of equipment, please contact your Human Resources Analyst.

If you are not sure who your HR Analyst is, send an inquiry to [erahrclerks@spokanecity.org](mailto:erahrclerks@spokanecity.org)



## Best Practices for *Managing the Distance*

### *Define Expectations:*

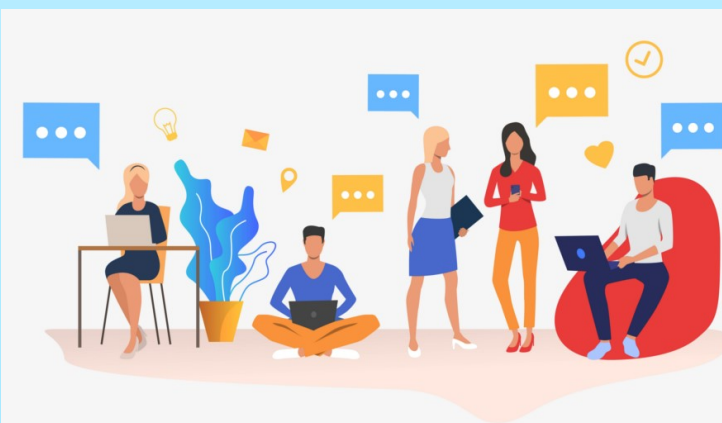
It is the managers responsibility to set the tone and develop confidence in the telecommuting process. When first starting off the telecommuting process and throughout the process, managers should set a clear expectations of what work needs to be accomplished and what deadlines must be followed. During this phase it is important for managers to share both the tasks and the reasons behind it, to ensure that the team has a clear understanding of the final goal or direct the group is moving in.

### *Communicate Often:*

It is important for managers to regularly communicates with the individuals in which they supervise. Creating a schedule of when and how often to check-in, is helpful in building trust and providing consistency in a time that is often not consistent. Check-ins can be daily or weekly depending on the need. Establishing an agenda and setting aside a time for questions or comments are essential to making the most of the check-ins. Working from home often creates a sense of isolation and a feeling of not being connected. Managers need to be aware of this and make themselves as accessible as possible to ease the stress of transitioning to working from home. Employees will often have questions, being available to answer theses questions and provide direction if needed, can be very helpful during this time. Managers should consider using multiple forms of communication, including, emails, phone calls, Skype, and WebEx. Some forms of communication may work better than others depending on the situation.

### *Establish Boundaries:*

It is essential for managers to establish their own boundaries as early as possible when telecommuting. While it is important to managers to make themselves available, it is also important for them to make time for themselves. Managers need to be transparent and open about their availability. This includes what forms of communication are



appropriate to use during different times of the day. Perhaps this means establishing that after 5:00pm email is the most appropriate form of communication. Managers should also encourage collaboration between team members so the team can rely on each other instead of directly asking the manager every time a question arises.