

Is Remote Work Right for You?

The U.S. Census Bureau reported that from 2019 to 2021 there has been a 52.8% increase of U.S. employees working from home. This sudden shift in the way we earn a paycheck has been a breeze for some and a challenge for others. According to a 2020 Pew Research Center study, parents and younger workers are the ones more likely to have faced challenges when they transitioned to a remote work setting.

If you were part of the millions of employees who were forced to telework because of the pandemic, you can attest to the benefits, difficulties, or a combination of the two, that emerged from the work scene change. If you have never worked from home, consider the following before applying to a remote position.

Are you tech-savvy?

A prerequisite for a remote worker is to have an aptitude for technology. Are you comfortable using different software to do your job? Video conferencing, online chat platforms, and others, will very likely be a large part of your daily job requirements. More importantly, you will need regular access to high-speed internet to use those tools.

Do you have the resources?

Working onsite has its perks. The benefits of ample desk space, an ergonomic chair, and office supplies, just to name a few, are provided by your employer at no charge. On the other hand, while some companies provide their remote staff with a fully equipped work set-up, others expect their employees to obtain the necessary tools to do their job at the employee's expense.

Can you afford it?

Did you know that only a handful of states require organizations to reimburse their offsite employees for what is deemed "necessary" expenses? There are also rules against what can be claimed on your taxes when considered an "employee" of an organization under the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. Check your state's laws, the company's reimbursement policies, and if there are any qualified tax deductions to prevent unexpected personal expenses when setting up your home office.

What will your at-home work environment be like?

Do you live with someone who will also work remotely? If so, you will need to consider your space restrictions, distractions, and possible background noise from your fellow remote worker. Aside from the interruptions, tension can rise between two people working under one roof, making your work environment a toxic and unpleasant one.

What will your work-life balance be like?

Increased flexibility in one's schedule is known as one of the top reasons people prefer to work from home. Alternatively, many studies show that remote employees are working longer hours due to their inability to unplug. Findings from a 2020 Owl Labs State of Remote Work report stated that, on average, remote employees worked 26 extra hours each month during COVID-19. In Buffer's 2021 State of Remote Work report, 27% of survey respondents listed "not being able to unplug" as their biggest struggle when working remotely. When the same environment is used for both work and play, the line that separates the two can become blurred.

Working offsite isn't for everyone. Although there are many benefits to teleworking, knowing what challenges remote employees have faced, and continue to face, can help you decide if working remote is right for you.