Americans are actually working more during COVID-19 than they did in the office

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As most Americans continue to adjust to working from home during quarantine, the number of hours workers save on commuting hassles is being redistributed into their work.

Remote working certainly has some perks during the COVID-19 crisis. Social distancing and shelter-in-place are two of the best ways to help combat the virus since it encourages people to stay indoors and not head over to the office. But the additional free-time that comes with no commutes and standing in traffic for countless hours means US workdays are up by three hours since the rise in the coronavirus outbreak, according to a new analysis.

Using internal data, **NordVPN*** found that the average workday has increased by almost 40% in the US — or an extra three hours — which has Americans working 11-hour days, according to the study.

It's the largest increase in working hours in the world, according to NordVPN, which compiled the data since mid-March.

The UK, France, Spain, and Canada added two more hours a day to their workdays, according to data, while workers in the Netherlands have tacked on an additional hour.

The data as well revealed that employees are starting work earlier, but finishing at the same time. This is perhaps because people are not commuting, and instead of sitting in traffic, they choose to work.

Finding ways to disconnect while working remotely can be challenging considering your home isn't your normal workspace, but it's important to find the right balance and not to have work drag on long after your shift ends.

Some tips to a better balance when work and home become blurred due to COVID-19

Take control of your notifications

Opting out of notifications breaks the "always-on" mindset that you constantly need to be available and reactive to others. To avoid continued disruption, turn off all but the most critical notifications—whether from a specific person or related to a particular project. You'll find yourself less distracted and overwhelmed by notifications.

Have brief breaks to support your productivity

To keep yourself accountable, set aside specific time blocks for non-work activities like checking the news or scrolling through social feeds. When the time block ends, close any apps or browser windows you opened so you can get back to the work at hand.

Set up email filters and rules

Many of you receive at least a few email promotions or newsletters a day that you should have opted out of long ago. These messages crowd your email inbox and make it harder to find important or time-sensitive notes from external partners and colleagues. In order to keep your email inbox streamlined, create filters to automatically sort through what you need to see now, versus what can wait until later. Filtering through senders is an especially quick and powerful hack. If the sender isn't from @yourcompany.com, filter those emails to a separate inbox so you can catch up on them later.

Use "Do Not Disturb" mode

Set scheduled focus times (e.g. 20 minutes, 2 hours, or "until tomorrow") so you can fully disconnect and concentrate on the work that matters most. When a team member tries to @-mention you or assign a task, they'll see you're on DND and not receiving notifications right now. If you start worrying that you're missing something important you can always flip it off for a quick checkin, but try taking advantage of the peace and quiet while you have it.

Follow a "less-is-more" approach on social media

When's the last time you went through your list of social followers and follows? Practicing good social media hygiene is one of the easiest ways to cut down on unwanted distractions, no matter where you are. If an account is no longer providing valuable content, unfollow it. Conversely, if there are accounts that provide helpful links and information, follow them to ensure your content feeds are worthwhile. If you're feeling extra bold, maybe even consider deleting accounts on platforms you don't use any more.

Try the same approach with your productivity tools

Take inventory of all your workplace productivity tools at least once a year to make sure you're still getting value from them. You might be surprised by the amount of crossover that exists between tools (e.g. internal messaging, file storage, reporting), or discover that you rarely use some at all. Trimming the fat will not only save you hours of time spent toggling between tools but money wasted on unnecessary licenses and subscriptions, too.

*__NordVPN__ is a virtual private network service provider of an internet security and privacy tool.

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