



# Out of Office

HOW TO WORK FROM HOME,  
TELECOMMUTE, OR  
WORKSHIFT SUCCESSFULLY

que

S I M O N S A L T

FREE SAMPLE CHAPTER



SHARE WITH OTHERS

## Praise for *Out of Office*

“Whether you work remotely now, or have just dreamt of it, you need this book. Simon Salt has written a clear-eyed, utterly useful guide that is the de-facto instruction manual for Out of Office work.”

—**Jay Baer**, *New York Times* best-selling author of *Youtility*

“The world we live in now, no longer has borders to separate us. Technology empowers any talent in the world to work from where they desire. Simon has written a solid guide to help companies embrace this change in the global workforce and lays out the steps any individual or organization needs to follow in order to be successful in today’s business world.”

—**C.C. Chapman**, Chief Marketing Officer, YSN

“*Out of Office* is a terrific manual for navigating the ever increasing future work options. This book will help entrepreneurs, freelancers, and organizations answer questions and find a fit for individual working options. As an entrepreneur who built my company with children at my feet, I wish this book was available when I was getting started!”

—**Alli Worthington**, Author, Speaker, Entrepreneur

*This page intentionally left blank*

# Out of Office

SIMON SALT

**que**<sup>®</sup>

800 East 96th Street,  
Indianapolis, Indiana 46240 USA

# Out of Office

Copyright © 2014 by Simon Salt

All rights reserved. No part of this book shall be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without written permission from the publisher. No patent liability is assumed with respect to the use of the information contained herein. Although every precaution has been taken in the preparation of this book, the publisher and author assume no responsibility for errors or omissions. Nor is any liability assumed for damages resulting from the use of the information contained herein.

Cover photographs by Yuri Arcurs and Ronstik/Shutter Stock

ISBN-10: 0-7897-5092-9

ISBN-13: 978-0-7897-5092-1

Library of Congress Control Number: 2013952805

Printed in the United States of America

First Printing: March 2014

## Trademarks

All terms mentioned in this book that are known to be trademarks or service marks have been appropriately capitalized. Que Publishing cannot attest to the accuracy of this information. Use of a term in this book should not be regarded as affecting the validity of any trademark or service mark.

## Warning and Disclaimer

Every effort has been made to make this book as complete and as accurate as possible, but no warranty or fitness is implied. The information provided is on an “as is” basis. The author and the publisher shall have neither liability nor responsibility to any person or entity with respect to any loss or damages arising from the information contained in this book.

## Special Sales

For information about buying this title in bulk quantities, or for special sales opportunities (which may include electronic versions; custom cover designs; and content particular to your business, training goals, marketing focus, or branding interests), please contact our corporate sales department at [corpsales@pearsoned.com](mailto:corpsales@pearsoned.com) or (800) 382-3419.

For government sales inquiries, please contact [governmentsales@pearsoned.com](mailto:governmentsales@pearsoned.com).

For questions about sales outside the U.S., please contact [international@pearsoned.com](mailto:international@pearsoned.com).

### Editor-in-Chief

Greg Wiegand

### Sr. Acquisitions Editor

Katherine Bull

### Development Editor

Amber Avines

### Managing Editor

Kristy Hart

### Project Editor

Andy Beaster

### Copy Editor

Bart Reed

### Indexer

Tim Wright

### Proofreader

Sarah Kearns

### Publishing Coordinator

Kristen Watterson

### Cover Designer

Chuti Prasertsith

### Compositor

Nonie Ratcliff

# CONTENTS AT A GLANCE

Introduction.....	1
<b>1 Why You Shouldn't Try an Out of Office Experience.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>2 The Benefits.....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>3 The Challenges.....</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>4 Working from Home.....</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>5 Working on the Road.....</b>	<b>91</b>
<b>6 Getting Organized.....</b>	<b>107</b>
<b>7 Rule Setting.....</b>	<b>123</b>
<b>8 Work/Life Integration.....</b>	<b>139</b>
<b>9 Time to Go Back to the Office.....</b>	<b>155</b>
<b>10 Tools and Tech to Help.....</b>	<b>171</b>
Index.....	189

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
Who Works Out of Office? .....	2
What's in the Book? .....	2
Where This Book Was Written .....	4
<b>1 Why You Shouldn't Try an Out of Office Experience</b> .....	<b>7</b>
You Are Too Social .....	9
You Are Too Easily Distracted .....	14
You Don't Have the Space .....	17
You Need an Office for Clients .....	21
You Need Regular Team Contact .....	24
Not All Gloom .....	26
Out of Office Work Style Self-Assessment .....	27
<b>2 The Benefits</b> .....	<b>31</b>
Control of the Environment .....	32
Reduced Stress—Improved Health .....	35
Community Involvement .....	37
Saving Money .....	37
Setting Priorities .....	39
Setting Hours .....	41
Childcare and Bonding .....	44
Managing the Process .....	45
Recruitment and Retention .....	47
Feels Less Like Work .....	48
<b>3 The Challenges</b> .....	<b>51</b>
Partners, Pets, Children, and Other Demons .....	52
Interruptions .....	57
Domestic Chores .....	59

Broader Challenges .....	60
Isolation .....	62
Support Tasks .....	63
Technology .....	64
Relationship Building .....	66
Accountability .....	69
<b>4 Working from Home .....</b>	<b>73</b>
Where in the Home? .....	75
Office Contents .....	79
The Employee Based at Home .....	85
<b>5 Working on the Road .....</b>	<b>91</b>
Essentials Items .....	91
Smartphones and Smart Travelers .....	97
Staying Healthy .....	100
Getting Rewards .....	102
<b>6 Getting Organized .....</b>	<b>107</b>
Workflow .....	114
Carrying It All with You .....	117
<b>7 Rule Setting .....</b>	<b>123</b>
The Connectedness of All Things .....	123
Unplugging—Not the Future .....	124
Shaping Behavior .....	125
Pros and Cons of Always On .....	127
Creating a Rule Book .....	129
Rule One .....	129
Rule Two .....	130
Rule Three .....	132
Rule Four .....	133
Rule Five .....	134



<b>8</b>	<b>Work/Life Integration</b> .....	<b>139</b>
	Balancing Act .....	139
	Priorities .....	140
	The Myth of Multitasking .....	141
	Integration, Not Balance .....	142
	No More Priorities .....	143
	No More Weekends .....	144
	A Fair Exchange .....	146
	Stop Watching the Clock .....	147
	Stop Conforming .....	150
<b>9</b>	<b>Time to Go Back to the Office</b> .....	<b>155</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>Tools and Tech to Help</b> .....	<b>171</b>
	Videoconferencing .....	172
	Skype .....	172
	FaceTime .....	173
	Google Hangout .....	174
	GoToMeeting .....	175
	Gadgets .....	177
	Neat Receipts .....	177
	Mophie Phone Case .....	178
	Collaboration Tools .....	179
	Dropbox .....	179
	Box .....	181
	iDoneThis .....	182
	Microsoft SkyDrive .....	183
	iCloud .....	183
	Productivity Assistants .....	183
	RescueTime .....	183
	Coffee Break .....	185
	Breaker .....	186
	<b>Index</b> .....	<b>189</b>

## About the Author

Photographer, author, writer, and speaker **Simon Salt** has been working from locations that are definitely Out of Office for more than six years. He has been quoted by the *Wall Street Journal*, *Forbes*, and various other print and online publications and has spoken to audiences across the globe. He presents topics as diverse as mobile, digital, and social marketing and creativity. He also has a comedic session on how to speak English the English way.

Educated in Britain, Simon has degrees in Information Technology, Business and Finance, and Behavioral Science. He also has a master's degree in Logic, Text, and Information Technology—but he still has yet to pass high school math! He is a lifelong learner and is currently attempting to learn Spanish.

Simon is a strong believer in community service and has served as a volunteer firefighter, led a wildland search-and-rescue team, is a certified FEMA Community Emergency Response Team trainer, and currently rides with the Patriot Guard Riders honoring fallen service personnel.

This is Simon's third book, and is already planning his next one—he is also considering therapy to help his addiction to writing. When not sitting at a keyboard, Simon is behind a camera, helping tell other people's stories—something he loves to do.

## Dedication

*This book is dedicated to the four women who have inspired and continue to inspire me the most:*

*Alicia Helen Salt, my mother, who inspired an early love of words (in memoriam).*

*Gemima Salt, a wonderful daughter who has grown into the most amazing woman.*

*Tessa Salt, so full of talent—a daughter to make any father proud.*

*Michelle Lemire, my life partner and so much more, and without whom I would not be growing, evolving, and becoming the type of man I'd like to be friends with.*

# Acknowledgments

Any author will tell you that although their name might be the only one on the cover, no one writes a book alone. I am indebted to the people who have helped me with this book in more ways than they know:

- Katherine Bull, my long-suffering acquisitions editor and friend.
- Amber Avines, for keeping my English more grammatically correct than I ever would.
- Jennifer Pariseau, psychologist, family therapist, and most importantly a long-time friend. We met as students and were reunited via Facebook. I am extremely privileged to have had Jennifer help me with this project. If you are looking for a great family therapist in the Seattle area, talk to Jennifer (<http://thenurturedparent.com/>).
- Ilene Haddad, an insanely talented individual with whom it has been a pleasure to work on several projects in the past. I was so glad when Ilene agreed to collaborate with me on this project. I think her chapter illustrations bring a little levity to the book. You can see more of her illustrations at <http://www.casaweenie.com/>.
- There is one other person who, for reasons far too complicated, cannot be named here but knows who they are. Without your help, comments, and friendship, there would be no book with my name on it.

Thank you to this cool team of people.

A book that only shared my thoughts might be a little on the dry side. By using the service Help A Reporter Out (HARO; [www.helpareporter.com](http://www.helpareporter.com)), I was able to connect to a lot of wonderful individuals who were willing to share their stories with me. I am very grateful to everyone who took the time to respond. I am especially thankful to the following people who shared stories and thoughts with me that I was able to incorporate into the book:

Kevin Ohashi, Jimmy Martin, Wes Rogers, Pavel Mikoloski, Adam Itkoff, Pam Consear, Jamie Pritchser, Kirsten Westberg, Steph Calvert, Denise Snow, Edward Carroll, Shelley Hunter Kukuk, Kathryn Vercillo, Katie McCaskey, Thursday Bram, Faith Amon, Ruksanah Hussein, Jeff Zbar, Haralee Weintraub, John Miller, Eric Nagel, Shel Horowitz, Dayna Steele, Dan Ramirez, Arthur Cooper, Jacque Miller, Robert Pearce, Carolyn Pearson, Donna Ledbetter, Steven MacDonald, Lidia Varesco Racoma, Adrienne Capollupo, Kim Miller, and Sheila Kale

## We Want to Hear from You!

As the reader of this book, *you* are our most important critic and commentator. We value your opinion and want to know what we're doing right, what we could do better, what areas you'd like to see us publish in, and any other words of wisdom you're willing to pass our way.

We welcome your comments. You can email or write to let us know what you did or didn't like about this book—as well as what we can do to make our books better.

*Please note that we cannot help you with technical problems related to the topic of this book.*

When you write, please be sure to include this book's title and author as well as your name and email address. We will carefully review your comments and share them with the author and editors who worked on the book.

Email: [feedback@quepublishing.com](mailto:feedback@quepublishing.com)

Mail: Que Publishing  
ATTN: Reader Feedback  
800 East 96th Street  
Indianapolis, IN 46240 USA

## Reader Services

Visit our website and register this book at [quepublishing.com/register](http://quepublishing.com/register) for convenient access to any updates, downloads, or errata that might be available for this book.

*This page intentionally left blank*

# Introduction

*If you don't like change, you're going to like irrelevance even less.*

—General Eric Shinseki

With the changing nature of office work as we understand it, I felt it was time to create a book for those who are considering or have already made the move to a nontraditional work space. This might be a coffee shop, a co-working space, or even the beach. I use the umbrella term “Out of Office” throughout the book to encompass these nontraditional spaces and the process of working in them.

In this book, I will be using several terms that apply to the different forms of Out of Office working. I define them in the following way:



**Work at home**—These are individuals who are working for themselves. They are also referred to as *solopreneurs*. Although these solo workers are primarily based at home, they may also utilize some of the same locations as others following the Out of Office work style, such as coffee shops, co-working spaces, and so on.



**Telecommuter**—This individual works remotely from a home-based office for an organization. They share many of the same challenges as the work-at-home individual but have the additional challenges of being part of a larger organization and managing that dynamic.



**Workshifter**—This is an individual who spends the bulk of their time away from the organization's offices, but not necessarily at their own home. They make the greatest use of nontraditional work locations such as airports, hotels, coffee shops, co-working spaces, and anywhere they can get an Internet connection, including their car.

Where a section of the book refers to a specific style of Out of Office worker, or at least has more applicability to that work style, I have indicated as much with one of the icons used here.

## Who Works Out of Office?

The type of work conducted by these individuals has a common core to it. It is primarily focused around the manipulation of data and information. This leads to them being referred to as *information* or *knowledge workers*—a phrase coined by Peter Drucker in 1959 to highlight that the work product of these types of employees is knowledge rather than a traditional tangible output. The types of jobs this encompasses has increased manifold since Peter Drucker coined the term. From lawyers and accountants, which Peter Drucker would have been familiar with, to those who operate online businesses, provide customer service for large organizations, and fulfill various types of marketing roles. As the types of roles have changed, businesses are finding it necessary to change and evolve the nature of what constitutes an office space.

There are many types of workers who do not work in a traditional office and have no need to—mechanics, delivery drivers, and so on. These workers are not included in the scope of this book.

## What's in the Book?

This book contains the result of collecting stories, information, and guidance for people who are considering working from a nontraditional space, either on their own or as part of a larger organization, and for those who are already doing so but want to do it more successfully.

The book is organized in the following way:

- **Chapter 1: Why You Shouldn't Try an Out of Office Experience**

This chapter lays out why working in a nontraditional setting might not be the best choice for you. It includes a self-assessment test as a guide to deciding whether this style of working is for you.

- **Chapter 2: The Benefits**

This chapter explains the ways that working Out of Office can be beneficial to your productivity, to your organization, and to your personal life. It includes contributions from people who are already embracing this type of work style successfully.

- **Chapter 3: The Challenges**

This chapter provides a look at the challenges faced by those who do not work in a traditional office setting—from ensuring you have enough space in your home, to dealing with the noisy coffee shop or the lack of Wi-Fi in your hotel.

- **Chapter 4: Working from Home**

This chapter shows how people can and do create effective work spaces in their homes. It covers the things to consider when setting up a work space in your home and how to set boundaries in both the physical and relationship sense to ensure you stay productive and that your personal life doesn't suffer.

- **Chapter 5: Working on the Road**

This chapter tackles the challenges presented by working in remote locations, from airports and hotels to airplanes and trains. It also covers the tools that make it easier, the technologies that make it more efficient, and some of the security concerns you need to be aware of.

- **Chapter 6: Getting Organized**

This chapter explains how those working Out of Office for larger organizations can be integrated with co-workers in a traditional office setting. It also explains how to effectively set working hours that take into account your own needs as well as the needs of clients, partners, and family.

- **Chapter 7: Rule Setting**

This chapter details how to avoid working 24 hours a day, seven days a week. You'll learn how to say no to others and still be productive as well as how to set rules but still retain flexibility.

- **Chapter 8: Work/Life Integration**

This chapter explains why trying to achieve “balance” isn't working and how to achieve a better state of integration. It details the measures to put in place so you can take time off from your business and not have it collapse. It also explains how being Out of Office doesn't have to mean you are “out of mind” with co-workers.

- **Chapter 9: Time to Go Back to the Office**

Is it time for you to go back to the traditional office setting? This chapter covers how to tell and how to make the transition. Is it time to grow your business and hire others? This chapter explains how to work with remote teams that are helping build your business.



- **Chapter 10: Tools and Tech to Help**

The final chapter in the book presents a collection of handy tools and technology I use or that have been recommended to me by others.

Whether you're considering the move to an Out of Office work style for yourself or for your employees, this book aims to guide you through the pitfalls, highlight the advantages, and arm you with the information necessary to make an informed decision.

There are definitely challenges to be faced, but there are also many benefits to this new style of working—for both the individual and the organization. Just as society as a whole is evolving and embracing new norms, so is the workplace. Working Out of Office is the next step in the evolution of the office environment.

## Where This Book Was Written

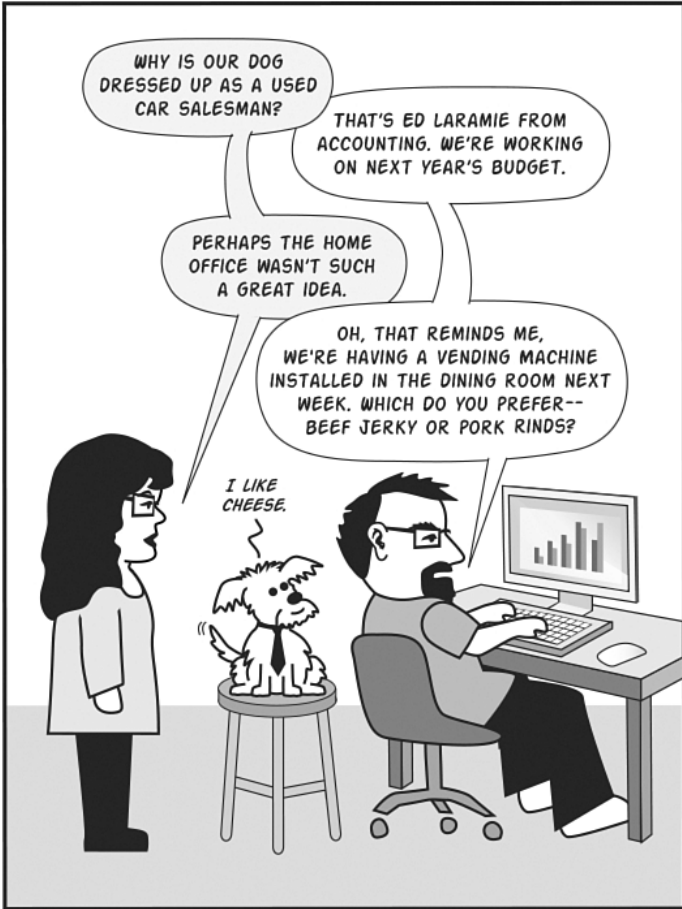
I thought it might be fun to share where this book was written, given that I am an Out of Office worker:

- Sixty five percent of the book was written from my home office, which I confess also means the couch in the living room, the balcony, and occasionally from bed.
- Fifteen percent of the book was written in airports, on planes, and in hotel rooms.
- Ten percent of the book was written in coffee shops; this includes those I visited while traveling as well as ones local to me. So, parts of this book have been written in the UK, Italy, and Hong Kong as well as various states within the U.S.
- Five percent was written at conferences during those moments when I had a conversation with someone about the book's topic and they shared an insight or gave me an idea, and I just knew that I had to write it down. Typically this is where my notebook and pen come in handy.
- Five percent was written while doing other tasks, such as shopping, traveling in the car, or sightseeing. I use voice notes for this type of writing and transcribe them later.

Wherever you find yourself working Out of Office, I hope you are enjoying it as much as I do.

*Simon Salt, 2014*

*This page intentionally left blank*



# Why You Shouldn't Try an Out of Office Experience

At the end of a short hallway, just past the guest bathroom, in our two-bedroom apartment is what the floor plan shows to be a second bedroom. It is a large-ish room that's on the interior of the apartment so it has no external windows. It has a large closet in it and a connecting door to the guest bathroom.

It isn't a bedroom, though; it is my office. The walls are decorated with a whiteboard, a corkboard (covered with things that remind me of places I've been), a hook with numerous speaker badges on lanyards hanging from it, and a framed article (the first magazine article I had published). Also, two firefighter helmets (from my time as a volunteer firefighter) hang above the closet door.

My desk, which formerly occupied the office of a lawyer, is large, with a leather top and numerous drawers. It dominates one wall. The other free space is taken up by a futon (the guest bed).

This is my space. Yes, it is a guest bedroom, and I am evicted when we have guests stay over—but for the most part, it is mine. I can shut the door when I am on a call or leave it open as I please.

I can play my music or watch YouTube videos as loud as I want. It is a fortress of solitude in many ways. It is also part of my home. A home I share with my partner and pets.

The dream of escaping the 8-to-6 grind, the cubicle, and the endless meetings can seem like a utopia. Working “Out of Office” isn’t for everyone, though. Some of those people who do perform the “escape” end up just as unhappy as they were before. Therefore, before you leap, let’s take a look at why you might *not* want the Out of Office experience.

I’ve been working Out of Office for more than six years. I have had many discussions about how easy (or not) it is with others who also use this work style as well as with those who are working from the more traditional in-office setting.

## WHAT IS AN OUT OF OFFICE WORKER?

For the purposes of this book, I am focusing on knowledge/information workers. Of course there are many who do not work from an office. However, I focus on those who would traditionally have found themselves working in an office but because of changes in technology and attitudes are now enabled to work from other locations.



- **Solopreneur**—This is the solo worker, working for themselves. This person works primarily from home but also utilizes some of the same locations as workshiffters and telecommuters, such as coffee shops and co-working spaces.



- **Telecommuter**—This person works for an organization remotely, usually from home, and shares much of the same challenges as the solopreneur. However, the telecommuter has the additional challenges of being part of a larger organization and managing that dynamic.



- **Workshifter**—This person has been called the “Road Warrior” in the past. This is an individual who spends the bulk of their time away from the organization’s offices, but not necessarily at their own home. They make the greatest use of nontraditional work locations, such as airports, hotels, coffee shops, co-working spaces, and anywhere they can get an Internet connection, including their car. Some of my time working Out of Office has been as part of larger teams, some of which were not only separated from me by distance but culture—even based in different countries. I’ve also been running my own based-from-home business for five years while working with clients from around the world as well as having freelancers based around the United States.

Some people are self-aware enough to know in advance that they just don't have the right personality type to work from home or in nontraditional settings.

Others are unsure if they have what it takes; they are unsure what is involved in this type of work style as well as what the advantages and disadvantages are. My hope is that this chapter will help these people gain some insight into the drawbacks and challenges faced by those who have chosen or have been directed to work "Out of Office."

Although many people dream of having a flexible work life, coming and going as they please, and not facing the gloomy vista of a cubicle wall day in and day out, for most the Out of Office experience is little more than that—a dream. Some roles just can't be completed effectively away from the traditional in-office setting, and for some people the distractions, the lack of structure, and the lack of social context is just too overwhelming to allow them to be effective.

To assist you in deciding whether you might be suited to the Out of Office work style, I've worked with a professional therapist to create a self-assessment quiz. The quiz can be found at the end of this chapter, and is also available online at [www.outofficesuccess.com](http://www.outofficesuccess.com). Although created by a professional, the quiz is meant as a guide, not as a professional assessment of your abilities, personality, or personal traits. So please don't base life-changing decisions solely on the quiz. It will, however, give you some ideas about whether the Out of Office work style is something you could explore, either as an individual or within the larger setting of your corporate employment.

But before we start looking at the self-assessment, let's discuss a few of the reasons why, in general terms, you might want to think twice about making the leap from the In Office environment to the Out of Office environment.

## You Are Too Social

Although your colleague in the next cubicle might annoy you on a daily basis, regaling you with stories of how their new baby is so cute or how their puppy did at obedience classes, or driving you crazy with the sound of fingernails being clipped, they are part of the social fabric that makes up your daily life.

Remove them, and part of your daily life is removed as well. Now on the face of it you might think it would be a relief to have this person gone, but as human beings we have evolved to be social—even if we have annoying work colleagues. Yes, they get on your nerves, and, sure, the first conversation you have when you get home and talk to your partner is about how annoying your work colleagues were that day, but (and it is a big but) they give you a frame of reference for your work. You know they will be there each day, you know they will annoy you, but you also know that those sounds that come from the next cubicle over are signs of life.

On the other hand, you may work in a place where you love your fellow co-workers, where work life and family life blend in a way others can only dream of. You and your colleagues work hard together, play hard together, have each other's backs, and enjoy each other's company. Maybe you play in a softball league together or enjoy Sunday football in each other's homes. Perhaps your children are friends with each other.

Now imagine you are at that social gathering, watching football on a Sunday, but suddenly you have no point of reference for the conversations about office activity. You weren't there when a certain joke was told, you weren't in that amazing presentation, and you weren't present when the new client signed the big deal.

No matter how close you were to those people, you are going to feel like an outsider, because if you are no longer part of the everyday life of the office, that is exactly what you are—an outsider. The support network that people establish through being in the same place and sharing experiences with the same group of people on a daily basis—sometimes for years on end—cannot be underestimated. It is a factor in the reason behind some people never changing jobs; they find a place where they are comfortable and they stay for as long as they can.

Here is a tale of one person who tried the Out of Office work style and found that they missed the interaction too much to continue:

*I find that my people interaction needs are too high and not satisfied with electronic interaction only. The irony, of course, is I spent countless hours on conference calls and in front of my PC at the office. But being with smart, diverse people every day is more stimulating than with them on the phone or PC. So I do a lot of nonprofit work to ensure I am getting that stimulation that only comes when you are seeing a smile or looking someone in the eye. **Heck, I like dealing with conflict and anger better face-to-face.***

I love the last line in this story (the emphasis is mine); it was something I hadn't even considered, but it is very true. Conflict and anger are much better resolved when the people concerned can actually see each other, can see their opponent(s), and can use not only verbal but nonverbal communication as part of the resolution.

Although popular culture would have us believe that people are in fact changing careers all the time, this is really a myth—a myth often given credence by pundits vaguely citing the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). So bad has this myth become that the BLS issued a memo in March 2012 stating that “no consensus has emerged on what constitutes a career change.”

In fact, it seems that once employees find a place where they like the work and the people around them, they tend to stay. Although many people would like to say that they love the job they do, many simply do it to pay the bills. So if it isn't the work, what keeps us in one place? The obvious answer has to be the people. Of course, income security, benefits, location, and lack of alternatives play a strong role in maintaining a position as well. However, given that work life is at least eight hours a day, five days a week, the people we share a work space with are the primary social group in most of our lives.

For those people who find themselves hanging out with their colleagues after work and on the weekends, and even taking vacations with them, a work life centered around just themselves rather than a team might not work out so well.

The concept of the eight-hour day is, in reality, less of a truism and more of a vague wish by senior managers. It would be a rare individual who arrives at the office, sits at their desk, and in a constant uninterrupted stream works for eight straight hours without a break. Leaving aside breaks for biological needs, if you factor in a 30-minute lunch break and twice-a-day refreshment (or smoke) breaks of ten minutes, you have already reduced the working day by nearly an hour.

That would be the most effective worker on their most effective day. Yes, I know people eat at their desks and continue to work, but I would argue that they are not working at 100-percent effectiveness, even if they are still operating a keyboard one handed while consuming a sandwich.

Now let's take a more realistic look at a worker's day: Few information workers work alone; they are reliant on others within the organization who are up and down stream of them in the flow of information. Their work is dependent on the constant flow of that information, in much the same way production line workers are dependent on the stations before them in the line, providing the parts needed for their role. When that flow is interrupted or the information needs clarification, then the bane of the organizations occurs—the dreaded meeting.



### *Note*

For the purposes of this book, I am defining an information work or knowledge worker as a person whose primary output of production is information or knowledge, as opposed to those workers who produce tangible products. Lawyers, marketers, public relations, software developers, writers, and so on would all fall into this definition.

---



Sometimes a meeting is just a gathering at someone's cube, and sometimes it's something more formal. Although meetings might be painful to attend, according to popular culture, they in fact often provide a needed break from the routine and a chance to catch up with co-workers, whether about work-related matters or social ones (usually they provide an opportunity for both).

Here is a story from someone who tried the Out of Office work style but decided it just wasn't for them:

*It is fully possible to perform my duties from home on my personal computer. When I was hired I thought I would give it a try, working from home. However, it only lasted about a month and I had to go into the office in Seattle.*

*Living, sleeping, and working all within the same space was not a good idea for me. All throughout college I had tried my best to separate school and home life. I would stay up late on Monday through Thursday writing papers, doing research and homework so that I could go home on the weekends and not have to do anything for school. I would refuse to do homework at home.*

*I wanted to have the separation between "work" and home life. I was able to manage that schedule for four years. I don't know why I thought it would be different this time.*

***Probably the most important reason I moved back to the office was to have face-to-face interaction and to get out of the house. I found that during the month I worked from home the only time I left the house was to visit my parents or to meet up with friends. I needed a change of scenery and a change of pace.***

*I now work in the office in Seattle, which is much better. I have to look sharp for work, and I get to have my much-needed human interaction.*

***Moving back to the office, easily one of the best decisions I ever made. Period.***

That's a pretty telling story. The emphasis is mine, but clearly for this individual working from home was *not* something they could adjust to.

The need for face-to-face interaction was just too great, and they recognized that about themselves and rejoined their colleagues in the more traditional in-office setting, which they felt was the best decision they could have made.

This face-to-face time is very necessary for the social-oriented worker. As we know, a significant percentage of human communication is conducted nonverbally (not the often misquoted 93 percent, but still a significant amount). Therefore, when we

have physical meetings and are able to see the speakers' faces, we are able to gather other cues to help us understand their message in its entirety.

This is also part of the social need for many people to work with others—the need to pick up on nonverbal cues as indicators of the true nature of an interaction. How many times have I wished for a “sarcasm” font when writing a document, email, or blog post? Some forms of communication benefit from the nonverbal cues that accompany them, and some fail completely without these cues.

For the social-focused worker, the companionship provided by being part of a traditional in-office environment gives them the “social fix” they don't always receive outside of the office. Never is this more true than for those who live alone, for those who have recently migrated to a new part of the country, and for those who do not have a support circle developed outside of the workplace. For these people, spending their working days alone or having limited exposure to other people (and especially other colleagues) would be a draining experience and one that would ultimately impact their ability to be effective workers. Therefore, not only do they lose out, but so does their employer.

This is definitely something anyone considering the move to an Out of Office work style should consider: How do they handle long periods of time in their own company. Later in the book we'll look at coping strategies, but if this fundamental requirement (being able to go for prolonged periods without social interaction) is not something that a person can adequately cope with, it is fairly certain that the nonconventional Out of Office work style will not be a good fit for them as a permanent move—although that isn't to say it couldn't be handled as an interim measure.

So if you are the life and soul of the office and the go-to person when anyone in the office needs something, working outside of the traditional office environment might not be the best move for you. If you look forward to Monday morning and getting back to the noise and hustle of the office environment, then the Out of Office life style is probably going to be a disappointment.

Of course, working Out of Office doesn't mean working in isolation; it's not solitary confinement. There are varying lengths of time, for different roles, that will mean working alone or working around strangers. Although working around strangers can actually be invigorating for some, it can be a major distraction for others. Especially if you are particularly social, the opportunity to meet new people can be a great attraction to working Out of Office, but it doesn't necessarily aid productivity.

I've been working out of the traditional office environment for six years now, and there have been times while I have been writing that I will suddenly realize that, with the exception of my girlfriend, I have not seen another living soul for four or

five days. Some people will say that isn't healthy, and although I'd agree that prolonged isolation is not good for you, some people just have personalities that suit being away from the madding crowd better than others—and I happen to believe I'm one of them.

## You Are Too Easily Distracted



Working Out of Office is a great, almost endless, source of distractions.

Working from home means that you are subject to all the domestic distractions that home life brings. After all, you are home all day, so would it really hurt you to do the laundry, walk the dog, get the groceries, run a few errands, pick up the kids from school? The list, like the distractions, is endless.

Then of course there is TV, the Internet, books, magazines, hobbies, and a dozen other things that can be done instead of work—all of this just in your own home. Why not use the gym when no one else is there, perhaps in the middle of the day? That way, you'll get a great workout in and not have to wait on the machines.

Surprisingly, although we think of technology as the great distractor, there are several technological solutions that enable you to shut out distractions created by technology. Of course, the simplest and easiest to use is the on/off button. Turn your phone off and it can't distract you! Also, software is available that will put certain websites on a timer. For example, if you are working on a presentation and you really don't need the distraction that Facebook provides, you can set the software to block Facebook for a given period of time. For some, music is a distraction, but for many others it can aid concentration. Certainly some studies seem to support that view, and listening to music through earphones is a great way to block out the noise from a coffee shop or public transport. There are mental exercises you can undertake to help you increase your ability to focus on tasks. Although we all love to think of ourselves as amazing multitaskers, the reality is we aren't. If you are finding yourself becoming easily distracted, one solution, if you have the time, is to give into it. Being distracted could well be a sign that you need to take a break from the current task, so do it, but in a controlled way that doesn't mean you miss a deadline.

For the easily distracted, working Out of Office can be like letting a child loose in a candy store—there are so many things to catch the eye, so many new things to be tried, so many other things than work to capture the mind. Although there's actually no reason why work has to be organized around a traditional schedule of 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Friday, there does have to be some organization, especially when the person working Out of Office is actually part of a larger team, some of whom are working in a traditional setting.

Escaping the home and working from an alternate location might be a solution for some, but sometimes this just increases the distractions. Coffee shops, airports, train stations, bookstores, and so on are all great places to work. Many provide power, Wi-Fi, even food and drink to keep you going, but they are also great places for people watching—and what greater distraction can there be for a human being than to sit and watch other humans going about their lives? We are all voyeurs, and social technologies have only increased this habit in many people. How many people's Facebook walls did you "browse" today?

A coffee shop can be like a Facebook wall in real life. People get lost in their own worlds; you get to listen in on phone calls, see what people are reading, what web-sites they are surfing, and of course what their favorite beverage is.

Airports are just as rich an environment. I have seen some amazing outfits being worn in airports and had to scratch my head in wonder as to why someone would wear something like that on a plane (never mind wear something like that in public). There are the stories of reunions, of meetings and goodbyes, all to be witnessed. In fact, if you are in an airport long enough, you will see all of the human emotions expressed. You'll witness anger, love, laughter, tears, hellos and good-byes, and the wonder on children's faces as they press them against the big glass windows and watch planes come and go.

Hotel lobbies are rich environments, too, with people checking in, checking out, and passing through. Who are all these people? What are their stories? Are they on vacation, business, meeting an illicit lover?

How can you not be distracted by all that humanity?

Of course, you are also part of that social tapestry that others are watching, not some removed observer; your actions can invite interaction from those around you. Another distraction! There is always someone who wants to start up a conversation. I'm a very antisocial traveler on planes, I put my earphones in before we have taken off—hopefully a clear sign to fellow travelers that I have no intention of joining in a conversation. But some people just love to chat on planes, and all those good intentions you had of getting a couple of hours work done on the flight just went out of the window as you get sucked into a long conversation about whatever topic is most pressing to that person at the moment.

I'm not suggesting that you have to become insular and reject the humanity around you, but knowing that those around you can be a constant source of distraction and recognizing how susceptible you are to it is an important factor in understanding how well you are going to cope with the Out of Office work environment.

Can you tune out those distractions, or are you like the dog in the movie *Up*, constantly pulled one way and another by squirrels? If squirrels (and by that I mean distractions) are your thing and you have an issue tuning them out, then working in a place filled with them is probably not the best move for you if you want to stay productive. Of course, those places can provide great respite from work and are always great entertainment.

My cell phone is one of my great distractions. I try and remember to put it in silent mode or at least vibrate when I am working, but sometimes I forget. Then the little “ding” noise notifying me I have a new message, email, or Facebook update just lures me away from the keyboard. Even though I know I’m not waiting on anything life changing, I am still a victim to this distraction—you know, just in case there is in fact a life-changing post to Facebook that I would be the last to see!

I work from many different places—primarily my home, but also from coffee shops and all the other places I have mentioned here. So I know just how distracting they can be. I always set out with the best of intentions of getting work done on the road, but inevitably end up either not getting any done or only getting a fraction of what I had imagined completing done. Of course, distractions are really just excuses to avoid doing something we don’t want to do, and the cure for that is discipline.

I’ll be returning to this theme later in the book and sharing thoughts from a professional therapist about self-discipline, avoidance techniques, and other ways those of us who are easily distracted manage to fool ourselves that it’s not really our fault that we are distracted—we are just being social, being helpful, or whatever reason we give ourselves.

From partners to pets, children to errands, the social web to passing strangers, we are all susceptible, to varying degrees, to the distractions that life presents us. How we handle those distractions and how much we let them intrude on our work life is what identifies us as either being suited to the Out of Office work lifestyle or not. Again, this isn’t a measure of a person’s talent, abilities, or usefulness as an employee.

The ability to tune out distractions is definitely an important facet of a person who is going to work in a nontraditional setting. It can, I believe, be learned, although I think it is one of the more difficult “soft skills” to learn as a worker, especially when working with those who are in a more traditional environment and less open to the same types of distractions.

## You Don't Have the Space



Having the proper space is especially important when working from home. A dedicated workspace that has all the equipment you need to complete your work is essential. There is nothing more frustrating, especially for someone who has been used to the more traditional in-office environment, than to find you can't complete a simple task because you are lacking a tool as basic as a stapler.

But it goes beyond this. As we will look at in Chapter 4, “Working from Home,” the space that you work in can directly affect your productivity. Short-term, interim spaces are fine when you just need to rattle off a few emails. That type of work can be done from pretty much anywhere. Heck, I do that sitting on the couch in front of the TV from a laptop. However, can you imagine if your couch were your only workspace? Or perhaps the dining room table, the kitchen counter, or your bed?

This type of thing happened to an Out of Office worker who moved to a smaller place:

*Working from home did work for a while as long as I had a specific place at home dedicated to work—i.e., created an office. But after I moved, I thought I could do with a smaller place by combining and creating multiuse spaces. It didn't work. **I found that working in the office—i.e., having a dedicated space and place—makes me more productive. There are less distractions.***

Again, the emphasis is mine. Although the idea of a multiuse space seems great—and of course less square footage usually means less rent—obviously an opportunity cost is associated with a smaller space. A multiuse space must constantly be reconfigured to suit the activity at the time. Therefore, if your office space is also your dining area, then when you are done working you have to change it back, and when you are finished dining it has to be returned to the work space before you can recommence work. Otherwise, you just become undisciplined and try and work in your dining space or eat in your work space and find, as this person did, that the distractions are just too great.

How productive would you be if these places were your full-time work space? I'd hazard a guess and say not very. We are all more productive when we are comfortable; the right height desk, the right height chair, and so on, all make a difference.

Beyond the physical aspect is the familiarity aspect of a regular work space. Knowing that a particular room is your office and that, when needed, you can shut the door, thereby controlling the space, is incredibly important to most people. In fact, the lack of privacy and inability to shut out distractions is one argument against the cubicle farms that are so pervasive in today's offices.

Knowing where everything is and having it at hand increases our productivity and decreases workplace stress.

So thinking about your workplace and how you will set it up is an important step to take before committing to the Out of Office work style. Is your spare bedroom really going to work as an office? Is the noise from the furnace in the basement going to distract you if you set up down there? Can you afford to make the environmental changes to the property to provide an office space that is both usable and comfortable?

Although these are challenges, working from home at least gives you options regarding the space you use and how you use it. Working Out of Office in public spaces provides much less choice about the space and how it is used. You can rearrange tables and chairs in a coffee shop, but not in a way that inconveniences other patrons, and spreading across a couple of tables with your computer, paperwork, and other items is definitely not going to make you popular.

Other places become even more restrictive. On an airplane, for example, does your computer fit on the drop-down tray? What happens when the person in front of you pushes their seat back and suddenly that small amount of space is reduced even further? Space is an important aspect of our working environment, to the point that most states legislate the amount of space an individual should have as a working environment in commercial properties.



With the best intentions you have of working anywhere, the challenges of doing so can seem insurmountable. One of the major issues of working in a space that you don't own is the lack of control. It can be the smallest of details that provides hurdles. For example, you finally find that spot at the gate in the airport that has a power outlet that isn't being used. You get yourself comfortable, get your laptop plugged in, and start working; you even manage to connect to the free Wi-Fi. Perfect, you are being productive with your wait time. Then you realize that you need a biological break—which means you have to tear down your temporary workspace, pack it up, and head to the restroom, knowing that the chances that the outlet you found will still be vacant are slim at best. The power vultures are already circling, watching you shift in your seat.

I know I am not the only one this has happened to. I've even taken advantage of this happening to other travelers, watching their look of longing and regret as they

unplug their devices and pack them up, knowing that I am going to swoop in and set up my own shop as soon as they vacate.

So bad can the power vultures be that I've even found them unplugging me and plugging in their own device; this happened most recently at a conference where I was trying to work during a session. I suddenly noticed the power warning light on my laptop illuminate. I knew I had plugged into an outlet just behind me. I turned around to find that someone had unplugged my cord and plugged in their phone. They looked completely unabashed at me when I asked them to re-plug my cord; they simply shrugged and did it.

The need to control our workspace and the need to remain connected to our alternate world of email, social media, company intranet, and so on, often outweighs our need to be social to those around us. Space is what we want, but we will take whatever we can get and make the most of it if we have to.

## HOT DESK

A term derived from the military concept of a hot bed: literally trading a sleeping space with another soldier when changing shifts. Hot-desking is less intimate and usually refers to the practice of keeping unassigned workspaces available for field staff when they visit the parent company offices. This practice has now spread to more public spaces such as co-working offices and executive suites.

This approach is hardly ideal, but it is the reality of many who work Out of Office. The front seats of cars, tables on trains, tray tables on planes, and the corner of the bar in a coffee shop—these places serve well for short-term stop gaps, but they lack the space and the familiarity to be permanent arrangements. Enter the hot desk arrangements offered by co-working and by-the-hour executive offices.

Offering the temporary nature of other, more public spaces, these facilities also offer a more private office environment with room to spread. Of course, this convenience comes at a cost not associated with more public, free spaces. But as always, you get what you pay for. The opportunity cost is clear to the Out of Office worker: Lower cost equals less space, and higher cost increases the amount of private space.

Co-working spaces also offer the benefit of having a community/traditional in-office environment, even if the others present aren't exactly co-workers. We'll talk more about the advantages and disadvantages of these spaces in Chapter 5, "Working on the Road."



The space you choose is going to depend on the length of time you are going to need it, the amount of money you want to spend to acquire it, and ultimately how much privacy you need to get your work done. I can't imagine not having my own space at home to call an office; I've always had that even when I worked primarily from a traditional office—a place that I could equally be productive from at home was essential even then. It is more so now that I work full time from home.

Although I am fine working on the road, I find that I am never quite as productive as when I am in my own office. There are many reasons for this, and as highlighted in this chapter, distractions, comfort, and the lack of control of the environment are just a few of them. Sometimes the reasons are practical: The place where I am working lacks Wi-Fi or sufficient power outlets. Sometimes the reasons are more about my focus and whether or not I can discipline myself to work in a strange place.

The familiarity of the place, the ability to walk away from the desk and leave everything as is without packing up and taking it with me, and the knowledge that no matter how obscure the cable, office supply, or device, I have everything within reach just seems to make me more comfortable and therefore more productive.



Whatever space you decide on, it is essential that you ensure you have adequate, comfortable space available to you before you commit to the Out of Office work style. Trying to shoe-horn yourself into an inadequate space after the fact is only going to lead to frustration and an unproductive working environment, which will only increase stress.

One last element to think about when choosing a space is new technology. This means that we are often now connecting back to traditional offices, co-workers, and clients via video. So although you might be comfortable with that collection of teddy bears in your office from your teenage years, or working around a stack of packing boxes that contain who knows what, do you really want them as a backdrop to your video meetings?

Your space, even in your own home, may well be shared (at least in a virtual way) with others. Making it professional and (if only to the extent of the field of view of your camera) tidy, organized, and presentable is another essential forced upon us by modern technology. Yes, you may well be wearing sweatpants under the desk, but more formal work attire on top is going to be needed for an on-camera appearance.

In the same way, your work space shouldn't be distracting to clients, colleagues, and others with whom you are connecting visually. That isn't to say it should be devoid of all personality; just be aware of what is around you, or at least in camera shot. It is not always just the permanent fixtures in your office that can disrupt or distract those who are viewing you.

One of my cats has an uncanny way of knowing when I am doing a video call and will seize that moment to jump into my lap. He has greeted more than one video caller with a close-up of his nose as he inspects the camera—or worse, when he turns tail and decides that they aren't particularly interesting to him.

We'll talk more about the way others in your house can invade your space later in the book. For now, though, when picking a space, especially a permanent one in your home, think through all the needs of the members of your household and how that space impacts them before you start moving the furniture around.

## You Need an Office for Clients

Whether we like it or not, sometimes people judge us and our ability to deliver based on their perception of us. Okay, that's a lie—it happens all the time. Whether they base that on the clothes we wear, the number of piercings we have, the color of our hair, or the office we work from, clients and customers judge us by measures we may not be aware of.

For some industries, this is less of an issue. I work mostly from home, as a digital strategist, author, and speaker. My office doesn't matter as much as my ability to get to my clients' offices. If I'm doing a strategy session, I prefer to go to the client, or at least video conference with them so that we are all on the same page at the same time. Also, they tend to relax more in their own surroundings.

Other professions require an office space; for example, would you be comfortable with a lawyer who suggested you meet at your home? Would you be worried that they didn't have an office? Some people would probably be fine with it, but I think many would not be. It's expected that when taking that kind of advice, you receive it in a professional environment, usually the law offices.

Some consultants feel that an office adds an element of professionalism that separates them from “freelancers” and other solo-run businesses that do not have the budget for an office. If this is you, then although I understand, and have even explored those thoughts myself, I would say that you are seeking the more traditional in-office work style and probably will find it harder to adjust to the Out of Office work style.

An office doesn't make you more of a professional; ultimately what gives your business credence is the product you produce or the service you provide. Providing excellence in those areas will overcome pretty much any resistance you might meet from clients or potential clients who want to visit your swanky office.

Of course, if you are chasing those types of people as your source of income, then again perhaps the Out of Office work style isn't going to fit with your overall business plan. It doesn't work for all businesses, nor for all people and certainly not for

all target markets. I have clients who are Fortune 500, household names, and they never seem to be bothered that I work from home; rather, they are more concerned that I can deliver a quality service at the right price—and, of course, by reducing my overheads and working from home, I have a competitive edge over other providers who have to support the cost of a large, luxurious office.

Renting an office space is certainly an option for many solopreneurs. It can and in many cases does lead to improved productivity and provides for an alternate workspace that is as (if not more) controllable than a home-based office. This is certainly a factor to consider when looking for viable Out of Office work locations—even though it is technically in an office, it is not the formal organizational setting that I am referring to as “in office.”

If the expense of renting an office on your own is something you are unsure about, there are other options.

An office is quite probably the largest expense any individual or organization will take on—whether you rent or purchase, it is a major overhead. Executive offices that rent by the hour or have shorter-term leases are a good solution for this type of situation if you need an office on a frequent basis, but what if your need is more sporadic, less structured? Do you just accept the nature of this type of requirement and pay the overhead, hoping to get utility from a space that you only use infrequently?

Actually, several solutions fit this need. Many co-working spaces provide meeting/conference rooms that can easily be tailored for any meeting and can be rented on an hourly basis.

Their rates are usually lower than those of executive offices, and although they might not present exactly the same image as an executive suit, they are most definitely a step up from a coffee shop table.

Here is a story about an Out of Office worker who chose the co-working space to keep him motivated and sane:

*I finished graduate school and moved back home to the U.S. in 2010. My plan was to start my own business. I have a background in programming and online marketing and started my first online business at age 16. So this didn't feel unusual. What was unusual was that I was no longer in school. This difference didn't seem like much, but I quickly realized I wasn't being productive after a couple months. Days seemed to disappear.*

***It was hard to get work done with an infinite supply of distractions and no peer group or structure to stop me. I was a mess.***

*I was lucky enough to recognize it. I tried a lot of different things to spark my productivity. Nothing that kept me at home worked. Four months later I joined Affinity Lab, Washington D.C.'s oldest co-working space. Suddenly, I was in an environment full of other entrepreneurs being productive. It also gave me a social group, which I desperately lacked after moving to a city with very few friends. It got me started and has sustained me for the past 19 months. I built my startup, Review Signal(.com), which I built and launched (last week!) during my tenure at the co-working space. I would have never managed without getting back into an office environment. **I don't need a boss, but I need colleagues for social and professional reasons.** Having access to 60+ other companies who have faced similar challenges and help each other was the difference between giving up and wasting my time and being productive and launching a product. Getting back into the office environment has kept me sane and even made me happy living in Washington, D.C. again.*

That need for like-minded individuals—to be around those who at the very least share an understanding of what it is like to be facing challenges alone or with only a couple of other people for support—is why co-working spaces are so popular, especially with new entrepreneurs who have yet to build out a team but still need the proximity of others. For employees of larger organizations, co-working spaces can also provide the social setting that they may be missing; however, the infrastructure/security concerns can outweigh the social benefits.

Hotels often have conference rooms as well as meeting rooms that are available for hire for short periods, especially during the week when they aren't being used for conferences or weddings. Although having someone meet you at a hotel might seem awkward, the environment can actually lend itself well to a different kind of professional experience. If you go with a more upmarket hotel, then the furnishing and fittings will certainly be of a higher level than you would find in all except the most formal and expensive of office spaces. Hotels have the advantage over other office spaces of also being able to offer catering services. So if your meeting is going to be timed around lunch, but a restaurant isn't appropriate, why not have lunch catered in the conference room?

Far from being an odd place, the hotel setting can actually enable you to step up your presentation and increase the perceived value of your business, if you think creatively.

Of course, if these elements are outside your budget, or simply don't exist in your locale, then a formal office might be your only resort, and again that is a major consideration to take into account before committing to the Out of Office work style.

## You Need Regular Team Contact

The need for regular team contact is a very specific, and although it can apply to almost any profession, I've witnessed it especially among creative people. Part of the creative process is brainstorming, throwing ideas around to see what works.

Working in isolation can lead down some very odd creative paths, and although sometimes those paths can be valuable, they can equally be very poorly thought through. I have no doubt that some of the major missteps that social media has borne witness to in recent years have come from people working in isolation and not having the opportunity to, at the very least, run an idea past a co-worker before hitting the Enter key.

Take, for example, the post on Twitter by Kenneth Cole, CEO of the Kenneth Cole fashion house. He took to Twitter during the early days of the Arab Spring uprisings and posted the following:

*Millions are in uproar in #Cairo. Rumor is they heard our new spring collection is now available online at <http://bit.ly/KCairo> -KC*

Now, had he run that past someone, they might—and of course I say *might* because he is the CEO, and who knows whether anyone would tell him otherwise—have pointed out the gauche nature of the tweet and advised against it. Instead, it was posted and caused a huge backlash against Kenneth Cole, both the person and the brand on all its social media properties.

Sometimes even working in a traditional office environment can be isolating, especially if, as a senior executive, you closet yourself from co-workers who might just be more in touch with things than you are. So working in an Out of Office workplace where access to co-workers is even harder to achieve and sometimes may require scheduling appointments presents the opportunity for an even greater chance of these situations arising. One workaround is to simply not enable Out of Office employees to communicate publicly on behalf of the organization. That option is, in my opinion, not only short-sighted, but, in the world in which we now do business, not practical either. Whereas a decade ago corporate communications was limited to strictly those whose role specified that they communicate on behalf of the company, many more employees now find themselves being given the task of utilizing social channels as part of their job and becoming voices for the company. Some of these employees are working Out of Office because of the nature of their role—perhaps they are event organizers, sales support staff, or any one of a number of other roles that are now part of the social teams that have been created in recent years by companies. Silencing these employees not only limits the company but it is detrimental to the development of the individual.

I know many individuals who work in PR, marketing, and corporate communications for large corporates; they work in teams, and before publishing things, whether through social or more formal communication channels, they, at the very least, go through a peer-review process. Sometimes it is formal; other times it is simply a matter of leaning over a cube wall and throwing the idea out there to get a reaction. However, it is done, and getting feedback from team members is an integral part of many jobs, and without regular contact it can be hard to achieve this. Even making use of technology such as phone, email, and video conferencing it isn't always possible to replace the instant nature of being in the same place as your team members—not to mention that without being with them, you can't see what they are working on or whether they have the time to spare to provide the feedback you need. What's more, you can't be used as a sounding board yourself and therefore contribute to the overall team effort.

Working from your home, a coffee shop, or on an airplane, you are denied that peer feedback, or at least denied the instant nature of it, which is sometimes necessary, especially in our now, always-on business environment. Being part of a team is expected from most workers, and those who work in a creative or information-based workplace find this to be especially true. Of course, that is not to say it can't be done, but it takes careful management and usually requires additional time and thought put into the process to ensure it can still be achieved effectively.

This additional time requirement can put an unfair burden on in-office team mates, which can lead to either resentment or the circumnavigating of the Out of Office co-worker. It's important that those in charge and the Out of Office co-worker strive to ensure that this doesn't happen by proving the added value of the team member who works remotely.

Certainly this can be a major reason why an organization doesn't implement Out of Office working, especially for personnel that they consider to be key to a team or process. I'll be discussing the technologies and other methods that can ease this issue, and how some organizations have overcome it, later in the book.

Another of the other issues that can be encountered by Out of Office workers who co-work with those in a more traditional office setting is that as the office culture develops, as shifts occur through either changes in personnel or simply as the team matures, they can miss out on that culture change. They can become trapped in a moment or style of work that the team has moved away from—and suddenly the Out of Office worker seems out of step with the rest of the team. This can be frustrating for both sides. The Out of Office employee feels disconnected with the rest of their team, and the in-office team members view their colleague as being out of touch. This dissonance can lead to a decline in the ability of the team to maintain cohesion, and projects and other work that depends on collaboration can suffer.

Of course, this is an extreme example, and many organizations are more than able to head off this scenario before it becomes a serious problem.

In addition, in many organizations geography within the office environment implies status. If you are allocated to a cube rather than an office, you are probably not as “senior” as those in offices. If your office is on a certain floor, or is perhaps that much vaunted “corner office,” you are again more likely to be senior. Although these concepts may seem anachronistic to many, they still persist in the corporate world where the lines of hierarchy that were so clearly delineated a few decades ago have now become increasingly blurred. Where does the Out of Office worker fit into this geography? Perhaps they “hot desk” when visiting the corporate office and work from a spare desk, cube, or meeting room. But what does this imply about their standing within the organization? What does this say to the employees themselves about how the organization views them as part of the internal geography? Although it is often not practical to “reserve” dedicated space for Out of Office individuals, without a place of their own it is easy for Out of Office workers to feel undervalued by the office-based team members.

This confusion can sometimes lead to resistance to ideas, suggestions, and requests from members of staff who are in fact junior to the Out of Office worker but do not realize the role or place the Out of Office worker plays within the organization.

These obstacles can be overcome, but they take work on the part of organizational leaders, HR, and the co-workers involved. Sometimes the resolution is to simply abandon the practice of Out of Office workers or at least reduce the amount of time that a worker spends Out of Office. Although this isn't necessarily the best solution, it is an understandable one—it is the path of least resistance. Certainly organizations have to think carefully before implementing or agreeing to Out of Office working and look to see where the benefits outweigh the burdens that will occur.

## Not All Gloom

It isn't all solitude and depression for the Out of Office worker. This would be a very somber and dull book if it was. Throughout the remainder of the book, you will read about many organizations and individuals who make this work style an integral part of the way they work—and do so successfully. The diversity of these organizations, from single-person operations to Fortune 500 companies, is a clear indicator that, when approached properly, the Out of Office work style is a very legitimate way of working.

Like so much else that has been changed by technology, societal shifts, and attitudes to gender roles, work styles are changing, and the pace at which they are changing is accelerating. Although Out of Office working is not yet the norm,

I truly believe we will see an increasing number of people and organizations adopting this work style and realizing the benefits of doing so.

The benefits to both individuals and the organizations they work with and for definitely outweigh the costs. As with any new concept, the early adopters bear the brunt of the cost but also reap the rewards and advantages early.

A good example of a large organization that is supportive of the Out of Office work style is Citrix. They have set up a website at [www.workshifting.com](http://www.workshifting.com) as a place where both individuals and organizations can share information about this work style. Of course, Citrix also provides technology that enables Out of Office employees to stay connected to the larger organization, but the fact that they have recognized how much their technology enables it and have actively sought to support the community of Out of Office workers speaks volumes about Citrix as an organization.

This chapter isn't meant to deter you as much as it is meant to assist you with making a decision, having seen some of the realities and challenges that others have faced.

As with many other work styles, working Out of Office can be extremely rewarding and fulfilling, and the flexibility can lead to increases in productivity, loyalty to the organization, and the self-development of the individual working in this way.

Throughout the rest of the book, we are going to look at the other hurdles you will need to overcome to work successfully Out of Office, and I will be sharing more stories from people who have overcome these hurdles successfully.

## Out of Office Work Style Self-Assessment

1. Do you enjoy the company social scene?
  - a. Very much so, I know everyone's name and family members.
  - b. Somewhat so, in order to keep work flowing.
  - c. Not much at all. I keep to myself and get my work done.
2. Does your work entail long hours of focus on one major activity?
  - a. Not much. I am usually working between writing something up and collaborating with others.
  - b. Somewhat. I spend a portion of my day writing up reports, and some of it collaborating with others.
  - c. Very much so. I can spend at least a day working on one activity to completion.



3. Are you easily distracted by things around you?
  - a. Very easily distracted. I find it difficult to focus if there are other things around me needing my attention.
  - b. Somewhat. If it gets too loud or interesting in my work area, I lose focus.
  - c. Not much at all. Once I get started on something, I tend to push through to the end.
4. Are you flexible with your time?
  - a. No, I need clear boundaries around work time and other life responsibilities.
  - b. Somewhat. I need certain work hours designated but can shift that slightly either way.
  - c. Yes, I am very flexible and can move things around as needed by work or by other life demands.
5. Do you find it easy to move between tasks if you need to?
  - a. No. I become overwhelmed if I am interrupted too often when trying to complete a task.
  - b. Somewhat easy. I have times when I am working on tasks that don't demand my full attention and other times when I need to be focused.
  - c. Yes, I can easily move between tasks if I need to. Even if it is a task I am focused on, I can handle an emergent issue and then return my focus back to the task at hand.
6. Are you aware of your own reactions to things, people, events as they happen?
  - a. No, I don't pay attention to things like that. I just do what I am supposed to do.
  - b. Somewhat. I notice when things get really great or really bad.
  - c. Yes, I am very aware of how things affect me and how I can use them to change an situation.
7. Are you aware of things that bother you, motivate you, interest you, and bore you?
  - a. No, I don't see the point in knowing that much about myself. It's rather selfish, isn't it?
  - b. Somewhat. I can tell what bothers me and what interests me
  - c. Very much so. I am motivated by \_\_\_\_\_ and bored by \_\_\_\_\_.

8. Would your friends and family (and coworkers) say that you are aware of their responses to different things, people and events?
  - a. No, I am often hearing that I don't understand or am not paying attention.
  - b. Somewhat. My closest family members would say I do.
  - c. Yes, very much so. My friends notice how attentive I am to their needs and wishes.
9. Do you love what you do and have a passion for it that sometimes goes beyond your work day?
  - a. I do my job and leave it at the office.
  - b. Sometimes I find an interesting article or television show related to my work and it grabs my attention.
  - c. Very often I find myself seeking out information that relates to my job. I love talking it over with like-minded friends and coworkers.
10. Are your friends and family supportive of you working from home?
  - a. They are not aware that I am considering it. I don't think they care either way.
  - b. Some of my closer friends and family know that I am considering it and say they are supportive of my efforts.
  - c. I have discussed it with family and friends and they are prepared to help me as they can

If you answered mostly A's, then you are probably not the best candidate for working from home as a permanent option. A short period doing this would probably be fine but I wouldn't recommend doing it as a career move.

If you answered mostly B's, then you could probably make this work if you are willing to work on some of the areas that cause you most concern. If not, then you can probably do this for interim periods but shouldn't consider it a full time move.

If you answered mostly C's, then you will love working Out of Office. This is your space and you know how to maximize it to get the most from the opportunity.

*This page intentionally left blank*

# Index

## A

- access to funds as requirement for business travelers, 93-94
- accessories for home offices, choosing, 79-85
- accountability, as obstacle to working Out of Office, 69-71
- achieving balance in work and personal life, 139-140
- Adams, Douglas, 147
- adaptability, importance of, 130-132
- advantages of working Out of Office, 31-32
  - childcare, 44-45
  - community involvement, 37
  - control of the environment, 32-35
  - cost savings, 37-38
  - flexibility, 48-49
  - recruitment, 47-48
- reduced stress, 35-37
- setting your own working hours, 41-43
- airports, 15
- “always on” technology, advantages of, 127-128
- Amon, Faith, 78
- Asaro, Adrienne, 76
- assigning value to time, 145-146
- availability, controlling, 99

## B

- Baier, Mary, 77
- balance
  - achieving in work and personal life, 139-140
  - defining, 139
  - and multitasking, 141-142
  - setting priorities, 140-141
  - work/life integration, 142-143
- benefits of working Out of Office, 31-32
  - childcare, 44-45
  - community involvement, 37
  - control of the environment, 32-35
  - cost savings, 37-38
  - flexibility, 48-49
  - recruitment, 47-48
  - reduced stress, 35-37
  - setting your own working hours, 41-43
- Blackberry smartphone, 123
- BLS (Bureau of Labor Statistics), 10
- bodyripped.net, 100
- Box, 181-182
- Bram, Thursday, 76
- Branson, Richard, 146
- Breaker, 186-187
- Brewster, 112-113
- breaking your rules, 134-136

building relationships with clients, 60-61  
 business cards, trading, 111  
 business travelers, 91  
   availability, controlling, 99  
   eating on the road, 101-102  
   essential items, 91-97  
     *access to funds*, 93-94  
   Internet connectivity,  
     locating, 61-62  
   loss of business data,  
     preparing for, 92  
   luggage, selecting, 118-119  
   maintaining your health,  
     100-102  
   organization, 107-114,  
     117-120  
   receipts, collecting, 119  
   rewards for traveling,  
     102-104  
 BYOD (bring your own device), 35

## C

CamCard, 111  
 Capollupo, Adrienne, 162  
 Carrol, Edward, 56  
 challenges to working Out of Office, 51  
   accountability, 69-71  
   childcare, 55-57  
   client offices, 21-23  
   culture change, 25-26  
   distractions, 14-16  
   domestic chores, 59-60  
   interruptions, 57-58  
   isolation, 14, 62-63  
   lack of family support,  
     52-54  
   meetings, 11-12  
   need for team contact,  
     24-26  
   personality type, 9-14

  pets, 54-55  
   space restrictions, 17-21  
   support tasks, 63-64  
   technology, 64-66  
 childcare  
   as benefit of working Out of Office, 44-45  
   as obstacle to working Out of Office, 55-57  
 choosing  
   accessories for home offices, 79-85  
   luggage, 118-119  
   VAs, 63-64  
   workspaces, 20-21  
 Citrix, support for Out of Office work, 27  
 cleaning your workspace, 109  
 client offices, as obstacle to working Out of Office, 21-23  
 Clooney, George, 34  
 cloud computing, 46  
   Dropbox, 114  
   iCloud, 183  
   Microsoft SkyDrive, 183  
 Coffee Break, 185  
 coffee shops, 15  
 Cole, Kenneth, 24  
 collaboration tools  
   Box, 181-182  
   Dropbox, 179-180  
   iDoneThis, 182  
 collecting receipts, 119  
   Neat Receipts, 177-178  
 communal work spaces, 162  
 communication  
   impact of technology on,  
     123-124  
   sharing your rules, 133-134  
   “unplugging,” 124-125  
 community involvement, as benefit of working Out of Office, 37

company-supplied computers, 85-86  
 Consear, Pam, 42  
 contingency plans for work interruptions, 57-58  
 control of the environment,  
   as benefit of working Out of Office, 32-35  
 controlling availability, 99  
 Cooper, Arthur, 84  
 corporate support for Out of Office workers, 27  
 cost savings, as benefit of working Out of Office, 37-38  
 co-working spaces, 19,  
   162-163  
 creating a rule set, 129-136  
   breaking your rules,  
     134-136  
   importance of flexibility,  
     130-132  
   indispensable versus valued employees, 129-130  
   sharing your rules, 133-134  
   work ethic, 132-133  
 culture change  
   as obstacle to working Out of Office, 25-26  
   office politics, 35

## D

deadlines, managing, 40  
 Dell, Michael, 146  
 desks, choosing, 82  
 diets, maintaining on the road,  
   101-102  
 distractions  
   as impetus for in-office work, 165  
   as obstacle to working Out of Office, 14-16, 57-58

support tasks, 63-64  
 technological solutions  
 to, 14  
 tuning out, 16  
 domestic chores, as obstacle to  
 working Out of Office, 59-60  
 Dropbox, 46, 114, 179-180  
 Drucker, Peter, 2

## E

eating on the road, 101-102  
 education, assigning value  
 to, 146  
 efficiency, impact of  
 technology on, 125-127  
 electronic data, managing, 114  
 email versus face-to-face  
 interaction, 160  
 employee retention, 163-164  
 ergonomics, 79  
 establishing priorities, 39-40,  
 140-141  
 expenses  
 opportunity cost, 128  
 receipts, collecting, 119  
 writing off, 108-109

## F

FaceTime, 173-174  
 face-to-face interaction  
 versus email, 160  
 need for, 12  
 family support as challenge to  
 working Out of Office, 52-54  
 flexibility  
 importance of, 130-132  
 jelly working, 62  
 in performing daily tasks,  
 150-152

and priorities, 143-144  
 of work arrangements, 161  
 flexible working hours as  
 benefit of working Out of  
 Office, 41-43  
 FOMO (fear of missing out),  
 123  
 Foursquare, 98  
 furnishing your office, 79-85  
 room planners, 114-116

## G

Gates, Bill, 146  
 Glass project, 128  
 Google Docs, 45  
 Google Glass project, 128  
 Google Hangout, 174-175  
 GoToMeeting, 175-177  
 Grafman, Jordan, 141  
 Grid-It, 119

## H

health  
 maintaining, 100-102  
 sources of stress, 35-37  
 hiring VAs, 63-64  
 home-based workers,  
 1, 73-88  
 Horowitz, Shel, 82  
 hot desking, 19  
 hotels, 15  
 as workspace, 23  
 hotspots (Wi-Fi)  
 security of, 61-62  
 Hussein, Ruksanah, 78

## I

iCloud, 183  
 iDoneThis, 182  
 indispensable versus valued  
 employees, 129-130  
 information workers, 2  
 in-office work, transitioning  
 to, 155-168  
 reasons for, 159-160  
 integration, whole life  
 approach to, 142-143  
 Internet connectivity  
 on company-owned  
 computers, 87  
 effect on urban drift, 74  
 locating, 61  
 interruptions as obstacle to  
 working Out of Office, 57-58  
 isolation  
 as obstacle to working Out  
 of Office, 62-63  
 isolation as obstacle to  
 working Out of Office, 14  
 IT support as obstacle to  
 working Out of Office, 64-66  
 Itkoff, Adam, 41

## J-K

jelly working, 62  
 Jobs, Steve, 146  
 Kale, Sheila, 165  
 knowledge workers, 2

## L

lack of control in public  
 spaces, 18-19  
 lack of family support as  
 challenge to working Out of  
 Office, 52-54

lack of routine as source of stress, 42

laptop computers, 116-117  
power chargers, 119

Ledbetter, Donna, 101

lighting, importance of, 77

locating Internet connectivity, 61

location of office as indicator of status, 26

*The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* (Sillitoe, Alan), 62

loss of business data, preparing for, 92

luggage, selecting, 118-119

## M

---

Mac-and-Cheese effect, 45

MacDonald, Steven, 159

Maiden Voyage, 95-97

maintaining health, 100-102

managing  
deadlines, 40  
electronic data, 114

Maslow's hierarchy of needs, 148

Mayer, Marisa, 86

McCaskey, Katie, 74

McPherson, Lori, 77

meetings  
as obstacle to working Out of Office, 11-12  
parts of, 159  
videoconferencing  
*FaceTime*, 173-174  
*Google Hangout*, 174-175  
*GoToMeeting*, 175-177  
*Skype*, 172-173

Microsoft SkyDrive, 183

Microsoft Word, 45

Mikolski, Pavel, 35

Miller, Jacque, 93

Miller, John, 80

Miller, Kim, 165

Miriani, Briana, 77

mobile devices  
advantages of "always on" technology, 125-127

Mophie Helium charging case, 178-179

multitasking, 141-142

multiuse space, 17

## N

---

Nagel, Eric, 81

Neat Receipts, 177-178

need for team contact as obstacle to working Out of Office, 24-26

nerdfitness.com, 100

## O

---

obstacles to working Out of Office, 51  
childcare, 55-57  
client offices, 21-23  
culture change, 25-26  
distractions, 14-16  
domestic chores, 59-60  
interruptions, 57-58  
isolation, 14, 62-63  
meetings, 11-12  
need for team contact, 24-26  
personality type, 9-14  
pets, 54-55  
relationship building, 66-69  
space restrictions, 17-21  
support tasks, 63-64  
technology, 64-66

OCR (optical character recognition), 111

office politics, 35

office space  
location of as indicator of status, 26  
renting, 22

opportunity cost, 128, 148

organization, 107-114  
for business travelers, 117-120  
managing electronic data, 114  
receipts, collecting, 119  
room planners, 114-116  
storage, 117  
workflow, 114-117

Out of Office, corporate support for, 27

## P

---

Pearce, Robert, 94

Pearson, Carolyn, 95

personal life, balancing with work life, 139-140

personality type  
as obstacle to working Out of Office, 9-14  
work style self-assessment, 27-29

pets as obstacle to working Out of Office, 54-55

Phone Stack, 126

planning  
for in-office work, 155-168  
for work disruptions, 57-58

Pottery Barn room planner, 115

power chargers, 119  
Mophie Helium charging case, 178-179

preparing for loss of business data, 92

priorities, establishing, 39-40, 140-141. *See also* time management

Pritchser, Jamie, 43

productivity, impact of technology on, 125-127

productivity assistants  
Breaker, 186-187  
Coffee Break, 185  
RescueTime, 183-184

public spaces, lack of control in, 18-19

## Q-R

Racoma, Lidia Varesco, 160

Ramirez, Dan, 84

receipts, collecting, 119  
Neat Receipts, 177-178

recruitment as benefit of working Out of Office, 47-48

reduced stress as benefit of working Out of Office, 35-37

relationship building  
as critical skill set, 60-61  
as obstacle to working Out of Office, 66-69

renting office space, 22

RescueTime, 183-184

Research in Motion, 123

restaurant.com, 104

retaining Out of Office workers, 163

retention as benefit of working Out of Office, 47-48

returning to in-office work, 155-168  
reasons for, 159-160

rewards of traveling, 102-104

Rogers, Wes, 46

room planners, 114-116

rule set, creating, 129-136  
breaking your rules, 134-136  
importance of flexibility, 130-132  
indispensable versus valued employees, 129-130  
sharing your rules, 133-134  
work ethic, 132-133

rural drift, 74

## S

saving money as benefit of working Out of Office, 37-38

scanning business cards, 112

scheduling domestic chores, 59-60

security of Wi-Fi hotspots, 61-62

selecting  
accessories for home offices, 79-85  
luggage, 118-119

self-discipline, tuning out distractions, 16

separating work and domestic life, 78, 166

setting priorities, 39-40

sharing  
rule sets, 133-134

SkyDrive, 183

Skype, 172-173

smartphones, 97-99, 125-127  
“always on” technology, advantages of, 125-127  
apps, 113  
Blackberry, 123  
managing electronic data, 114  
Mophie Helium charging case, 178-179  
power chargers, 119  
unplugging, 124-125

social-oriented workers, 9-14

solopreneurs, 1, 8  
accountability groups, 70  
loss of business data, preparing for, 92  
relationship building, 68-69

sources of stress, 35-37

space restrictions as obstacle to working Out of Office, 17-21

Steele, Dayna, 83

storage, 117

storing business cards, 111

stress  
lack of routine as source of, 42  
managing deadlines, 40  
sources of, 35-37

support tasks as obstacle to working Out of Office, 63-64

## T

tasks  
assigning value to, 145-146  
flexibility in performing, 150-152  
prioritizing, 143-144  
work/life integration, 149-150

tax implications of home offices, 77

team contact  
building relationships with clients, 60-61  
as obstacle to working Out of Office, 24-26

technological solutions to distractions, 14

technology  
advantages of “always on,” 127-128  
BYOD, 35



cloud computing, 46  
*iCloud*, 183  
*Microsoft SkyDrive*, 183

collaboration tools  
*Box*, 181-182  
*Dropbox*, 179-180  
*iDoneThis*, 182

domestic home  
 automation, 88

email versus face-to-face  
 interaction, 160

impact on communication,  
 123-124

impact on multitasking,  
 141-142

impact on productivity,  
 125-127

as obstacle to working Out  
 of Office, 64-66

smartphones, 97-99

version control for  
 documents, 45

videoconferencing  
*FaceTime*, 173-174  
*Google Hangout*,  
 174-175  
*GoToMeeting*, 175-177  
*Skype*, 172-173

telecommuters, 1, 8

time management  
 assigning value to time,  
 145-146  
 changing points of  
 reference, 147  
 domestic chores, scheduling,  
 59-60  
 flexibility of time, 143-144  
 opportunity cost, 148  
 productivity assistants  
*Breaker*, 186-187  
*Coffee Break*, 185  
*RescueTime*, 183-184  
 tasks, performing, 150-152

trading business cards, 111

trading vacation days for Out  
 of Office work style, 161

transitioning to in-office work,  
 155-168  
 reasons for, 159-160

traveling, rewards of, 102-104

trxtraining.com, 100

tuning out distractions, 16

## U

---

Uber, 98  
*Up in the Air*, 34  
 urban drift, 74

## V

---

vacation days, trading for Out  
 of Office work style, 161

value, assigning to time,  
 145-146

valued versus indispensable  
 employees, 129-130

VAs (virtual assistants), 63-64

Vavrinak, Mandy, 76

Vercillo, Kathryn, 62

version control for documents,  
 45

videoconferencing  
*FaceTime*, 173-174  
*Google Hangout*, 174-175  
*GoToMeeting*, 175-177  
*Skype*, 172-173

## W

---

websites  
 bodyripped.net, 100  
 nerdfitness.com, 100  
 restaurant.com, 104  
 trxtraining.com, 100

Weintraub, Haralee, 80

Westberg, Kirsten, 44

whole life approach to  
 balance, 142-143

Wi-Fi hotspots, security of,  
 61-62

work ethic, importance of,  
 132-133

work life, balancing with  
 personal life, 139-140

work style self-assessment,  
 27-29

workflow, 114-117  
 room planners, 114-116

working from home, 73-88  
 accessories for home  
 offices, choosing, 79-85  
 expenses, 108-109  
 organization, 107-114  
 tax implications, 77  
 time management,  
 changing points of  
 reference, 147

workout schedules,  
 maintaining on the road,  
 100-101

workshifTERS, 1, 8

workspaces  
 choosing, 20-21  
 cleaning, 109  
 communal, 162  
 co-working, 19  
 co-working spaces, 22-23  
 hot desking, 19  
 hotels, 23  
 organization, 110-114  
 renting, 22  
 room planners, 114-116  
 storage, 117

writing off expenses, 108-109

## X-Y-Z

---

Yahoo!, 156  
 Zbar, Jeff, 79