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How to succeed in working from home

By Carole Spiers, Special to Gulf News
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It is well-known that holidays cause stress, and the recent, unexpected public holiday in Dubai, during President George W. Bush's visit, must have raised the blood-pressure of more than a few corporate executives, having to cope with an interrupted work-schedule at such short notice, and suffering even more frustration if they ventured on to the jammed-up roads.

Stranded at home, they might be forgiven for wondering whether they would be better-off employed as one of those teleworkers who are allowed to perform a full-time job in the peace and privacy of their own study.

Those very words provide the first clue to the hidden pressures of teleworking. 'Your own study' is just a notional zone, where peace and privacy are not at all guaranteed. If you have a family, it may take a big psychological leap for them to perceive you as being 'at the office' when they can clearly see you, perhaps casually dressed, in what they regard as home territory. Neighbours too will not realise why you should be off-limits through the day; indeed, some of them will be taking advantage of you in the most irresponsible fashion.

Or if you're solo, you may experience the opposite effect - unnatural isolation. Even trivial office routines you hardly notice, like hanging up your jacket and remarking on the weather or the news, become curiously ingrained, and your working day can feel eerily different without them. But there is also the more formal peer-group interaction and networking, sometimes lubricated by office parties, which helps to define your image in the organisation. Again, this is something you don't particularly notice - until it's suddenly not there. Then you begin to feel lonely and forgotten, as though you've been shunted off a main road. (Interestingly, you can now join special teleworkers' clubs, where sufferers can compare their woes!)

One way to minimise unnecessary stress is to ensure that you do fully understand the terms of your new 'virtual' day's work, away from notice-boards and supervisors. Roles and responsibilities need to be spelt-out much more clearly than they would back at the office. Also, before applying to be a teleworker, be sure that the company is suitably geared for it - with the necessary IT support that enables remote access to internal systems and networks.

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But the biggest factor about any form of homeworking is that you have to be the right kind of character and personality to make it work.

Self-discipline is obviously the prime quality - you simply have to be able to summon yourself to that desk, whatever the distractions or other excuses for failure. You will also see the need for a formal time management philosophy.





If all these factors are in favour, then your move into teleworking could indeed remove a lot of the daily pressure of commuting and traffic jams and enable you to enjoy a new, stress-reduced working life.

Key points: Homework

- Homeworking allows you to do a full-time job in peace and privacy.
- 'Virtual teamwork' also carries a risk of isolation or family conflict.
- Crucially, you need to be the right kind of character and personality for it.

- *The writer is a BBC broadcaster and motivational speaker, with 20 years' experience as CEO of Carole Spiers Group, an international stress consultancy based in London.*

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