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What I've Learned From Working Remotely

It is nearly July, and we are still working remotely here in the New York metropolitan area. It has been more than three months since I started taking care of SMPTE and HPA business from my home. Even as we slowly transition to living more like “normal,” I remain personally cautious about how widely I travel outside my local triangle between the grocery store, pharmacy, and post office.

But what have I learned by working remotely for such an extended period? For one thing, I have been impressed with how well the staff have transitioned to a completely remote-working environment. While not all of our team have the perfect “home office,” complete with a separate room, desk, and all the necessary accoutrements, we all have the devices that allow us to work as if we are side-by-side in the office. We have worked remotely for shorter bursts of time before, specifically in November 2012, when hurricane super storm Sandy swept through

our area, eliminating the region’s power supply for over a week. So, when the coronavirus pandemic hit, we were pretty much ready to go straight home and fire up the laptops. For any business, a continuity plan is vital to ensure that it can operate through a crisis.

Working from home has made us all busier, and perhaps more productive. I’m not traveling right now, so all the time I normally spend driving to and from the airport and flying from here to there is now spent at my desk. Like many others, I spend a lot of time on video calls, meeting about this or that. In many ways, I spend more time with colleagues now than before, as we work through the challenges of running our business during challenging times.

Another thing that I’ve learned is that working from home is not a picnic. To separate home and work life, one has to be very disciplined. When life was normal, I had a morning routine that allowed me to walk to and from the office. These daily 30 minute breaks allowed a perfect amount of separation time to think about what I had to do for the day ahead, or what was up for

tomorrow, or to think about what was in the news or happening with my family. The key was to have some time in the day, away from the computer, phone, and e-mail. With working from home, that 30 minute walk was no longer necessary. It took me a couple of weeks to realize what I was missing, so I incorporated the walks back into my daily routine. Now, I get up a few minutes earlier in the morning to add a 2.25-mile walk to my day. If I’m lucky, I can add another walk in the evening, thereby completing my daily 10,000 steps. It’s been therapeutic for body and soul.

But for me, the most pleasant aspect of this moment in time is the way our neighborhood has spilled out onto the street. We have always been a very dog-friendly neighborhood, with a range of dogs and their owners, but we now also see families outside riding bikes or children playing in the garden. In the high-tech age that we live in today, it is wonderful to see some old-fashioned living to remind us all of what is truly important. I hope you and your families are staying safe and that we’ll be together again soon.

