



August 8, 26, 2021 Number 3

The Best is Still To Come

Toes in the sand; Mind engaged



Coaches Corner

We love *acronyms*! One of Patty's favorites is **Forever Acquiring Important Lessons.**

But here is yet another one for Coach: **Competency Outcomes Action Checking in**

As your coach, we will offer you hand-holding, shortcuts, and accountability. We will help you identify what is standing in your way of success.

If you would like more information on coaching with us, contact us at info@rptvirtualseervices.com.



Welcome!!

Welcome to our bi-weekly edition of our freelancing newsletter. In this newsletter, you will find interesting articles on freelancing, or life in Panama, or upcoming seminars or classes, and/or retirement. Be sure to look for us every other week in your inbox.

Ask Us Anything Wednesdays

Join us via a zoom call for our monthly "Ask Us Anything Wednesday" on the first Wednesday of the month. You can ask us a question on anything ... our move to Panama, life in Coronado, freelancing, coaching, being an expat, our collaboration with our partners at Panacific Relocation Tours, etc. If you are not able to join us you can email us your questions and we will gladly answer it and there will be a recording available for you to listen to at your convenience. We hope these calls will be informative and helpful to you. Here is the link for our weekly Wednesday call starting at 11am Central Daylight Savings Time: Join Zoom Meeting <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84906235298?pwd=VHpSQkxrMGJRSWhxV1JtNE9KS1IXdz09>



The next call will be September 1st, 2021

CHECK OUT THE QR CODE

FOR OUR WEBSITE

Now you can find our website quicker from your phone!! Thanks to Robert's daughter Chelsea who created our QR code for our website! Check out our website that Robert has been working on updating for the last couple of weeks. Send us your comments using the contact us link on the website and let us know what you think!



We are offering a FREELANCING COURSE for people to succeed with freelancing! It will consist of a PowerPoint presentation led by Robert and myself, along with SIX workbooks and some cheatsheets!

The Path to your Ultimate Freelancing Career

Watch for our next newsletter that will have all the details and when it will become available!

Keys to Successfully Working From Home

By Robert and Patty Thompson – Certified Barefoot Consultants®
Coaches

As an IT consultant, Robert had often worked from home when he did not need to travel to my client's location. However, now that Robert and Patty are both full-time freelancers and coaches, we have found that there are a lot of challenges from working at home together. For instance, they quickly realized that when they were both on the same call in the same room, they would have a very annoying echo between the computers. Even when they were on different calls, it was distracting



This article will discuss the lessons they have learned while working from home. As coaches helping people establish themselves as online freelancers, they have also seen the problems that face people who are just getting started with online work.

Here are some of the things we have learned

Do you have the right equipment?

Traditionally, most companies that allowed people to work from home have established policies for offsite work. In many cases, companies have provided laptops that can be used either in the office or at home. Company-provided equipment gives you access to all of the software that you need to do your job as well as secure access to



the corporate network. You just need to make sure that your network was secure.

In the last few years, many companies have created “Bring Your Own Device” (BYOD) policies that allow employees to use their personal equipment. This is especially prevalent with freelancers, many of whom work on projects that do not need access to the main company systems.

The need for social distancing has meant that many people are now working from home who have not been set up for remote work in the past. Some companies have never even set up policies for work at home. Even companies that have policies, but resisted BYOD are now finding that they need to implement new procedures because they cannot provide laptops and network access to all of their employees.

When you have to provide your own equipment, there are several things you must consider.

Internet Access

Your ability to safely access the internet is critical to working online. You may find that you need a faster connection than you did in the past, especially if you need to do online meetings. However, most people can get by making sure that they are not using the internet for unnecessary things while online. This may mean others in the house cannot be gaming or streaming videos while you are online for work. If you have a slow connection, you may be able to upgrade it with the equipment you already have. Some employers may pay the difference.



You also need to make sure your router is set up correctly. In particular, make sure you have a secure password for WIFI. Also, make sure you do not leave the default password on the router. Here is a link to some instructions that will help: <https://www.wired.com/story/secure-your-wi-fi-router/>



Computer

Your computer is your primary tool for doing work online. It needs to be up to the task.

Security software and network

All computers connected to the internet need some type of security software. Most computers come with a trial security package, but this needs to be activated to a paid subscription. Computer attacks are prevalent and continually changing, so you should keep your subscription active.

If you are on an unsecured network or working overseas, you should consider a VPN. Here is a link to an article that discusses this in more detail.

<https://barefootconsultants.com/naked-online-vpn-questions-answered/>

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You will probably need a video conferencing tool to talk with others. If you are working with a client, they may have a preferred tool. If you are doing your own meetings, the most common tools are skype and Zoom. Both have free versions that can be used. We use zoom because it has a broader array of features for business. There have recently been concerns raised about using Zoom. We have found that Zoom is safe as long as it is configured properly. Zoom has also changed their default settings to make sure that every meeting is secure. These changes include the use of a password and manually allowing attendees into the room.

Office Tools

The most common tool is Microsoft Office. It is available in an online or a standalone version. If you do not need to do a lot of writing, you may want to consider the google suite of tools that is free, but only available in an online version.

Email

If you have access to company-provided mail, you will probably need Microsoft outlook, which is part of Microsoft office. Most other workers should consider Gmail. Older mail services including Yahoo, live, and AOL are available but are missing many modern features

Work Environment

Work Area

If you are used to working in the office, you will need to find a place in your home to work. The ideal situation is to have a dedicated desk, but sometimes people have to work from a table or chair.



You should consider several things. A primary consideration is comfort and ergonomics. Working on a table or chair that is uncomfortable will quickly become painful. Using the computer in an awkward position for long periods can cause many problems, including muscle pain, and in some cases, cause injury.

Another consideration is the noise level where you are working. This is particularly true if you have online meetings. A blaring TV, children, pets, or loud road noise will make it hard for you to concentrate and to communicate.



One problem that many new at-home workers need to deal with is how to deal with family members who are not used to a work at home situation. The best solution is to have a private area where you can work away from the distractions of family. Sadly, for many people, it not possible to have a separate area for work.

Pets

Pets can be just as bad as children. Our dogs think that is we are talking to people on the computer, and it must mean that we want to interact with them. You may need to think of how you can isolate and entertain them while you are in a meeting, particularly if they tend to bark. Periodically rewarding them when they are good also makes it easier for them to bear with you.



Keeping Focused

One of the hardest things about working at home is staying focused on your work. It is easy to get lost or



distracted. Even when people are in an office, they can not be creative all the time. However, when you are home, it is much harder.

One of the biggest helps that I have found is to schedule my time. If I plan out times to work on a specific item, I am less likely to get distracted by other things.

This does not mean scheduling an 8-hour block of time. Instead, look to schedule short blocks where you can fully concentrate on your work. And don't forget to schedule times to deal with other things. When you are home, there will be things that you need to deal with. Scheduled time for them as well, so you don't get distracted worrying about them. If you tend to have visitors or deliveries, you must also plan for them in your schedule. And finally, don't forget to schedule some break times. It is easier to concentrate on work when you can look forward to a little time to yourself

Working at home is different than an office situation. While you may find it difficult to adjust initially, you will find that once you deal with the differences, working from home can be rewarding. And you may find you are more productive than you were in the office.

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