

Appendix C. Remote Work

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In the post COVID-19 world, having a stable home office where you can get work done is critical. Another factor is that remote-first optimizes outcomes. A significant issue with in-person environments is the “appearance” of progress versus actual progress. Getting dragged into meetings for hours that have no result is a good example. Having the “sales” team disrupt the developers writing code in an open office plan is another. When the focus is strictly on outcomes, then remote-first starts to make a lot of sense.

For the last several years, I have been continuously “hacking” my home office to accommodate teaching worldwide and at major top universities, as well as doing remote software engineering and consulting. You can see my setup in [Figure C-1](#). I want to walk you through how to set up your own work space so that you can be productive.



Figure C-1. Working from home

Equipment for Working Remotely

Network

Here is a brief, nonexhaustive list of things to consider if you work remotely. A reliable home network is probably the most critical item on any remote work checklist. Ideally, you can get a low-cost fiber connection for under 100 dollars. Fiber is ideal because you get the same speed both

down and up. Note that not only is 1GB fiber standard across many parts of America, 2GB fiber is also becoming widely available.

There are few necessary details to pay attention to in setting up your home network. Let's address these details next.

Physical home network

It is best to plug your workstation into the home fiber or cable network via Ethernet. This step eliminates a whole series of problems that can interfere with remote work, namely wireless issues. An excellent way to accomplish this is to buy an inexpensive network switch that can do 2.5 GB or higher and connect it with Cat6 network cables (which offer speeds up to 10 Gbps). Then if you have a 2GB fiber connection, you can directly take advantage of the full speed.

In addition to the wired network, a mesh network for wireless can pay huge dividends. A recommended wireless setup would be to use a mesh WiFi 6 router. These allow you to blanket your home, even covering areas over 5,000 square feet with wireless speeds that can exceed 1 Gbps. Modern mesh networks also allow for hundreds of simultaneous connections, which should be more than enough for a home network.

Power management and home networking

As your home becomes an actual permanent office, there are two essential things to consider: cost and reliability. For example, if you experience frequent power outages, you could lose significant business income. Likewise, your power bills could increase substantially.

You can help save the environment, lower your home utility costs, and tackle business continuity during power outages. With a solar home setup, you can do the following things. First, use UPS (Uninterruptable Power Supply) for storms and power glitches and plug your important home office and home network equipment into it.

Finally, a Tesla Powerwall battery, or similar batteries, can provide days of backup power as it recharges from solar. This type of setup allows you

to work despite any big storms. To further sweeten the deal, there are significant tax savings for a solar design.

Home Work Area

A standing desk, a widescreen monitor, a good microphone, and a good camera go a long way. The general idea is to buy equipment that leads to a more productive, and hopefully, shorter, day. An important thing to consider is to buy the best tools you can afford since they enable you to make money and be productive.

Health and work area

Can you incorporate a standing desk to decrease lower back injuries as well as promote more physical activity? What about doing 100 kettlebell swings via five sets of 20 each day? Can you schedule a daily walk right when your brain starts to feel overloaded? These things seem minor, but small things make for significant changes in enhancing your health, productivity, and happiness.

Finally, can you eliminate most corporate junk food habits and replace them with intermittent fasting coupled with healthy food? Read [Appendix F](#) on intermittent fasting to learn about my journey and research into it.

Home workspace virtual studio setup

Having a background that appears behind a camera can add a tremendous level of professionalism. This setup means having great lighting, some “staging,” and other items that add to the background. Note that having voice automation could be a huge plus in these setups as the large lights are not needed until you are on camera.

In [Figure C-2](#) my background is setup to look appealing for video conference calls . This is an often forgotten aspect of remote work.



Figure C-2. Studio background

Location, Location, Location

Can you move to a low-cost region where there is access to nature and good schools? In the post-pandemic world, we can expect that a new reality may allow data science-thinking remote workers to optimize health, quality of life, and cost. One driving factor is the cost of homeownership. In certain regions of the United States it doesn't make sense to build a workforce, like the Bay Area. The JCHS (Joint Center for Housing Studies) of Harvard University has many interactive data visualizations [that explains this](#). Are you working to live or living to work?

When you optimize your life around work-life balance, family, and health, you may find that an expensive mortgage may be counterproductive to your goals. Working remotely allows you to be thoughtful about your most significant expense: where you live. A good website that helps you decide where to live is [Numbeo](#); you can factor in weather, cost of living, crime, education, and other factors. In addition, there are many incredible places to live outside traditional tech hubs like New York and San Francisco.

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