



# Best Practices for Remote Work



Illinois Center for Specialized Professional Support,  
Illinois State University, College of Education

Supporting the system during  
COVID-19

March 25, 2020

Presented by Jennifer Phillips and Aimee Julian, PhD  
Illinois Center for Specialized Professional Support



- Phone lines will be muted for better sound quality
- Please 'introduce' yourself by typing your name in the chat box
- Please use question box to ask questions
- We will answer unanswered questions in a forthcoming FAQ

# What We Will Cover Today

1. Best practices that you can put to work immediately
2. Quick review of technology to enable remote work
3. Questions

## Future webinars in this series

- Tips for Leading a Virtual Team
- Bringing Your Best Self to the Virtual Workplace

## More resources and tutorials

- Materials will be posted on ICSPS website
- Tips sheets will be available for download

# Best Practices for Remote Work



Reprioritize and focus on output



Get your WFH infrastructure set up



Create workspace(s)



Adhere to routines



Set work boundaries



Be strategic about communication



Focus on positives



Don't neglect workplace culture



Learn new skills

# Reprioritize and Focus on Output



- Do your job wherever and however you can – be proactive
- Streamline – identify essential work and areas of focus that can be done while working remotely
- Eliminate non-essential meetings
- Consolidate to fewer collaboration tools – don't try too many
- Be disciplined! Clarify team rules and make sure everyone knows them
- Learn to be more efficient with meetings (see resources for more info)
- Consider creating a list of what you will deliver by the end of the day (Pro-Tip: [analyze your to-do list](#)).

“In a remote work environment you’re entirely judged by the volume, quality, and timeliness of your output. In this way, remote work is a great equalizer, and you may find it gives you an opportunity to shine.”

-Kari DePhillips, the fully remote CEO of [The Content Factory](#) and cohost of the [Workationing podcast](#)

# Get your WFH Infrastructure Set Up



- WFH? Stands for WORK FROM HOME
- Does your organization have IT Help Lines open?
- What can you order online that could help? Example: setting up docking stations to TVs as second monitors.
- Headphones, your new best friend
- Technology tools - more coming on that...
- How's your internet?
- Don't forget how powerful your phone is - mobile apps

“You have to bring the discipline to keep these distractions away from you at home just like you would in the office,”

Michael Dermer, the founder of [The Lonely Entrepreneur](#)



# Create Workspace(s)



- Your head is your most important workspace. You will need to have your head in the game to stay focused and avoid distractions.
- Where can you reasonably work? What is your ideal work environment?
- Where can you work when multiple people are in the house?
- Do you need to close a door for calls?
- Do not work in your bed!
- Avoid distractions, e.g., the news, dirty dishes, etc.

# Adhere to Routines



**Develop rituals and have a disciplined way of managing the day.**

Schedule a start and an end time. Have a rhythm. Take a shower, get dressed, even if it's not what you'd usually wear to work, then get started on the day's activities. If you're used to moving physically, make sure you build that into your day. If you're an extrovert and accustomed to a lot of contact and collaboration with others, make sure that still happens. Ask yourself: How will I protect myself from feeling lonely or isolated and stay healthy, productive, and vibrant? Create that for yourself.

From Harvard Business Review: [15 Questions about Remote Work Answered](#)

# Five Important Routine Do's and Don'ts

**Do: Take regular breaks from looking at your computer screen.**

Don't: Insist on powering through an entire 8-hour day while staring directly at your computer screen.

**Do: Set up a stationary workstation in your home.**

Don't: Work while in bed.

**Do: Keep regular work hours- including breaks!**

Don't: Take 2 hours to cook lunch and then make up the lost time at the end of the day.

**Do: Wrap up your day and check out completely. Go for a walk. Do a meditation. Change into sweatpants.**

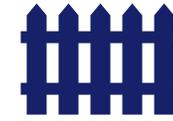
Don't: Continue to work in the evening because you're near your computer and can't think of anything else to do.

**Do: Stay engaged socially.**

Don't: Let physical isolation send you into an emotional slump.

*"The Do's and Don'ts of Working from Home."* Nuun, <http://nuunlife.com/blogs/news/the-do-s-and-don-ts-of-working-from-home>.

## Set Work Boundaries



- Try to set office hours and let your supervisor and colleagues know
- Don't over-promise
- Learn how to say 'no' well
- Keep your calendar up to date
- Time block for tasks and use your calendar to block non-meeting work time as a signal to colleagues
- Take necessary breaks just as you would at the office
- Don't shortchange mental health (upcoming webinar)

Routines set tone for the day, and thus, your productivity. When you're away from the office, it's more important than ever to set specific hours—and stick to them.

One way to ensure you stay on track is to create time blocks. It could look like this: checking email during the first and last blocks of the day, only holding calls between certain windows, and managing the hours when you feel the most alert.

[https://www.fastcompany.com/90476020/working-from-home-7-smart-tips-to-help-you-get-more-done?partner=rss&utm\\_source=rss&utm\\_medium=feed&utm\\_campaign=rss+fastcompany&utm\\_content=rss?cid=search](https://www.fastcompany.com/90476020/working-from-home-7-smart-tips-to-help-you-get-more-done?partner=rss&utm_source=rss&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=rss+fastcompany&utm_content=rss?cid=search)



*"I can't remember—do I work at home or do I live at work?"*



Time is a precious commodity now. We've read and reviewed articles, so you don't have to. But this one is worth reading. Here are some highlights:

*"Consistent behaviors help others predict what we do, and in turn help them to understand us — and we all benefit from being understood. You can make that easier for others by establishing a clear personal etiquette and sticking to it consistently."*

There has never been a time when this is truer than NOW.

- ❖ Don't conflate brief communications and clear communications
- ❖ Don't bombard your team with messages
- ❖ Establish communication norms
- ❖ See the hidden opportunities in written communications
- ❖ Create intentional space for celebration

COLLABORATION

## How to Collaborate Effectively If Your Team Is Remote

by Erica Dhawan and Tomas Chamorro-Premuzic

February 27, 2018



Hulton Archives/Hayon Thapaliya/Getty Images

Remote communication isn't always easy. Do you recognize yourself in any of these examples?

*At 10 p.m., a corporate lawyer gets a text from a colleague and wonders (not for the first time) if there's a protocol about work-related texts after a certain hour.*

<https://hbr.org/2018/02/how-to-collaborate-effectively-if-your-team-is-remote>

**PRO-TIP:**

Create some acronyms and etiquette norms

- NNTR: NO NEED TO RESPOND
- 4HR Response
- Confirming receipt
- If not using chat, use email subject lines INTENTIONALLY

**Communication channels are crucial for remote working**

Channel	Best for...
 1:1 Call / VC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual catch-ups and building relationships</li> <li>• Discussing sensitive and difficult topics</li> </ul>
 Video conference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Problem solving and co-creation using shared screen or whiteboard</li> <li>• Weekly planning and review sessions</li> <li>• Decision meetings</li> <li>• Workshops and trainings</li> <li>• Team talks and retrospectives</li> </ul>
 Chat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Process syndication</li> <li>• Urgent questions and seeking guidance</li> <li>• Keeping up to date in real-time</li> <li>• Social team talk</li> </ul>
 Video captures & voice notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Showcasing and explaining work</li> <li>• Guidance to the team from managers with limited time</li> <li>• Debriefs after meetings that some may have missed</li> </ul>
 eMail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Updates and status to large groups of people</li> <li>• Formal communication inside and outside the company</li> </ul>

**Communication considerations**

Time to create vs time to process information

Synchronous vs Asynchronous

1:1, 1:N, or N:N

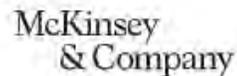
Structured vs stream

Formal vs chatty

Urgent vs important

Visual vs spoken vs written vs non-verbal clues

Source: McKinsey & Company analysis



## Focus on Positives



“One of the biggest challenges with remote working is being 100% responsible for your own experience, which – with the right attitude – can be a blessing (think complete flexibility) as opposed to a burden. Don’t be afraid to seek out a change in scenery when necessary.”

- Figure out what energizes you
- Take micro-breaks
- Take advantage of re-claimed time
- Be flexible, especially with kids at home

<https://www.achurchconsulting.com/virtual-teams/new-to-working-virtually-9-tips-for-surviving-the-first-90-days/>

## Be Kind to Yourself

"With so many people working from home, the bottom line is we probably won't be as productive as we're used to being. To minimize frustration, it's important to reset your expectations around what productivity looks like. All productivity doesn't go out the window, but you do need to be flexible and adapt."

[https://www.oprahmag.com/life/work-money/g31617024/tips-for-working-from-home/?utm\\_source=facebook\\_arb&utm\\_medium=cpm&utm\\_campaign=arb\\_fb\\_opr\\_m\\_am\\_g31617024&slide=20](https://www.oprahmag.com/life/work-money/g31617024/tips-for-working-from-home/?utm_source=facebook_arb&utm_medium=cpm&utm_campaign=arb_fb_opr_m_am_g31617024&slide=20)

# Don't Neglect Workplace Culture



Create a “**virtual water cooler.**” The image of co-workers gathering around a water cooler is [a metaphor for informal interactions](#) that share information and reinforce social bonds. Absent explicit efforts to create a “virtual water cooler,” team meetings tend to become very task-focused; this means important information may not be shared and team cohesion may weaken. One simple way to avoid this: start each meeting with a check-in, having each member take a couple of minutes to discuss what they are doing, what’s going well and what’s challenging. Regular virtual team-building exercises are another way to inject a bit more fun into the proceedings. Also enterprise collaboration platforms increasingly are combining shared workspaces with [social networking features](#) that can help team members to feel more connected.

[Research](#) on emotional intelligence and [emotional contagion](#) tells us that [employees look to their managers for cues](#) about how to react to sudden changes or crisis situations. If a manager communicates stress and helplessness, this will have what Daniel Goleman calls a “[trickle-down](#)” [effect](#) on employees. Effective leaders take a two-pronged approach, both acknowledging the stress and anxiety that employees may be feeling in difficult circumstances, but also providing affirmation of their confidence in their teams, using phrases such as “we’ve got this,” or “this is tough, but I know we can handle it,” or “let’s look for ways to use our strengths during this time.” With this support, employees are more likely to take up the challenge with a sense of purpose and focus.

<https://hbr.org/2020/03/a-guide-to-managing-your-newly-remote-workers>  
<https://hbr.org/2013/06/making-virtual-teams-work-ten>  
<https://hbr.org/2018/02/how-to-collaborate-effectively-if-your-team-is-remote>

# Learn New Skills



- Give yourself more time to get things done, and budget time to seek out help for any technical issues.
- If you have been wanting to brush up on skills or learn new ones, this is the time



# Technologies to Facilitate Remote Work

- Office Essentials
- File Sharing
- Virtual Meetings
- Instant Messaging/Chat
- Project Management Platforms

**icsps**

Technologies to Facilitate Remote Work  
Information and Online Tutorials

**Office Essentials**

**Microsoft 365:** Word, Excel, Outlook, PowerPoint, Publications  
**Google Suite:** Docs, Sheets, Forms, Slides

**File Sharing**

**Microsoft One Drive:** OneDrive is a cloud storage service from Microsoft that allows you to store all your important files securely in one place and then access them virtually anywhere. It works just like a traditional hard drive, but it's on the internet, and you get access to additional features.  
**Microsoft SharePoint:** SharePoint is a web-based collaborative platform that integrates with Microsoft Office.  
**DropBox:** DropBox is a personal cloud storage service (sometimes referred to as an online backup service) that is frequently used for file sharing and collaboration.  
**Google Drive:** Drive lets you keep all your work in one place, view different file formats without buying extra software, and access your files from any device.

**Virtual Meetings**

**Zoom:** Zoom offers an easy, reliable cloud platform for video and audio conferencing, collaboration, chat, and webinars across mobile devices, desktops, telephones, and room systems.  
**Google Hangouts:** Google Hangouts is a unified communications service that enables text, voice, or video chats, either one-on-one or in a group. Hangouts is

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built into Google+, Gmail, YouTube, and Google Voice, plus there's Hangouts apps for iOS, Android, and the web.  
**Cisco Webex:** Cisco Webex offers a range of video conferencing, webinars, team collaboration (chat), cloud file sharing, and more.  
**Go-To-Meeting:** GoToMeeting is a web-hosted service created and marketed by LogMeIn. It is an online meeting, desktop sharing, and video conferencing software package that enables the user to meet with other computer users, customers, clients or colleagues via the internet in real time.

**Instant Messaging/Chat**

**Microsoft Teams and Google Hangout both have a chat function.**  
**Slack:** Slack is a collaboration hub that can replace email to help you and your team work together seamlessly. It's designed to support the way people naturally work together, so you can collaborate with people online as efficiently as you do face-to-face.  
**Cisco Jabber:** Jabber is an all-in-one communications tool for businesses. Use it to send instant messages, make phone calls, join meetings, and manage your contacts. Take a look for yourself and see how easy it is to get started.

**Project Management Platforms**

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**Basecamp:** Basecamp is a project management app that you can access in your browser and on your phone. It gives you the tools you need to set up to-dos, a schedule, create and upload documents and files, message and chat with your colleagues, and check in regularly with your group—all in one place.  
**Trello:** Trello is a collaboration tool that organizes your projects into boards. Trello tells you what's being worked on, who's working on what, and where something is in a process. Imagine a white board, filled with lists of sticky notes, with each note as a task for you and your team.  
**Asana:** Asana is a web and mobile application designed to help teams organize, track, and manage their work.

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Visit Illinois Center for Specialized Professional Support at <https://icsps.illinoisstate.edu/> for Technologies to Facilitate Remote Work Tip Sheet

# Free or Low-Cost Remote Work Technologies

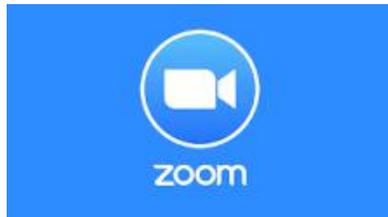
## These 5 Tech Companies Are Providing Free Remote Working Tools During the Coronavirus Outbreak

As many companies ask employees to stay home, these five are making their services available to others.

in f t



By Jason Aten Tech columnist @jasonaten



Aten, Jason. "These 5 Tech Companies Are Providing Free Remote Working Tools During the Coronavirus Outbreak." Inc.com, Inc., 5 Mar. 2020, [www.inc.com/jason-aten/these-5-tech-companies-are-providing-free-remote-working-tools-during-coronavirus-outbreak.html](http://www.inc.com/jason-aten/these-5-tech-companies-are-providing-free-remote-working-tools-during-coronavirus-outbreak.html).

# Free or No Cost Internet

## Can I get no-cost internet during the COVID-19 outbreak?

You can get no-cost, in-home internet for up to two months during the new coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak if you qualify for certain low-income internet programs or have a student living in your household. Here's a list of the internet providers offering limited, no-cost internet services during the outbreak.

Provider	Service	Who qualifies	Offer	How to get it
Altice Optimum	Internet up to 30 Mbps	New customers with K-12 or college students in household	No cost for first 60 days	Call 1-866-200-9522
Altice Suddenlink	Internet up to 30 Mbps	New customers with K-12 or college students in household	No cost for first 60 days	Call 1-888-633-0030
Charter Spectrum	Internet up to 100 Mbps and no installation fees	New customers with K-12 or college students in household	No cost for first 60 days	Call 1-844-488-8395
Comcast Xfinity	Internet Essentials package with speeds up to 25 Mbps	New Xfinity customers who are eligible to public assistance programs	No cost for first 60 days (\$9.95/mo. after)	<a href="#">Learn more</a>
Cox	Internet up to 15 Mbps through Connect2Compete program	New Cox customers with at least one K-12 student in household who qualifies for public assistance programs	No cost for first 30 days (\$9.95/mo. after)	<a href="#">Learn more</a>

<https://www.highspeedinternet.com/resources/internet-guide-during-coronavirus-outbreak#no-cost-internet>

# Office Essentials

- **Microsoft 365:** Word, Excel, Outlook, PowerPoint, Publications

- **Google Suite:** Docs, Sheets, Forms, Slides

## Office 365 basics - video training

# File Sharing (if you don't have access to VPN)

**Microsoft One Drive:** OneDrive is a cloud storage service from Microsoft that allows you to store all your important files securely in one place and then access them virtually anywhere. It works just like a traditional hard drive, but it's on the internet, and you get access to additional features.

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# File Sharing Examples

Acme Inc > Design

Name	Modified	Members
Assets	--	6 members
Creative briefs	--	6 members
<b>Design all hands 3-22.pptx</b>	3/20/2017 3:15PM by Alex	9 members
Q4 Budget.xls	3/17/2017 10:33AM by Robin	8 members
Staff review.docx	3/15/2017 1:28PM by Kate	6 members

Acme Inc  
34 Members

SharePoint | Newsfeed | SkyDrive | Sites | Administrator

Project Site

Project Summary

Get organized. Edit the task list.

Today  
July 20 13 | August 2013

Add tasks with dates to the timeline

Get started with your site

- Share your site.
- Working on a deadline?
- Add lists, libraries, and other apps.
- What's your style?
- Your site. Your brand.

# Virtual Meetings

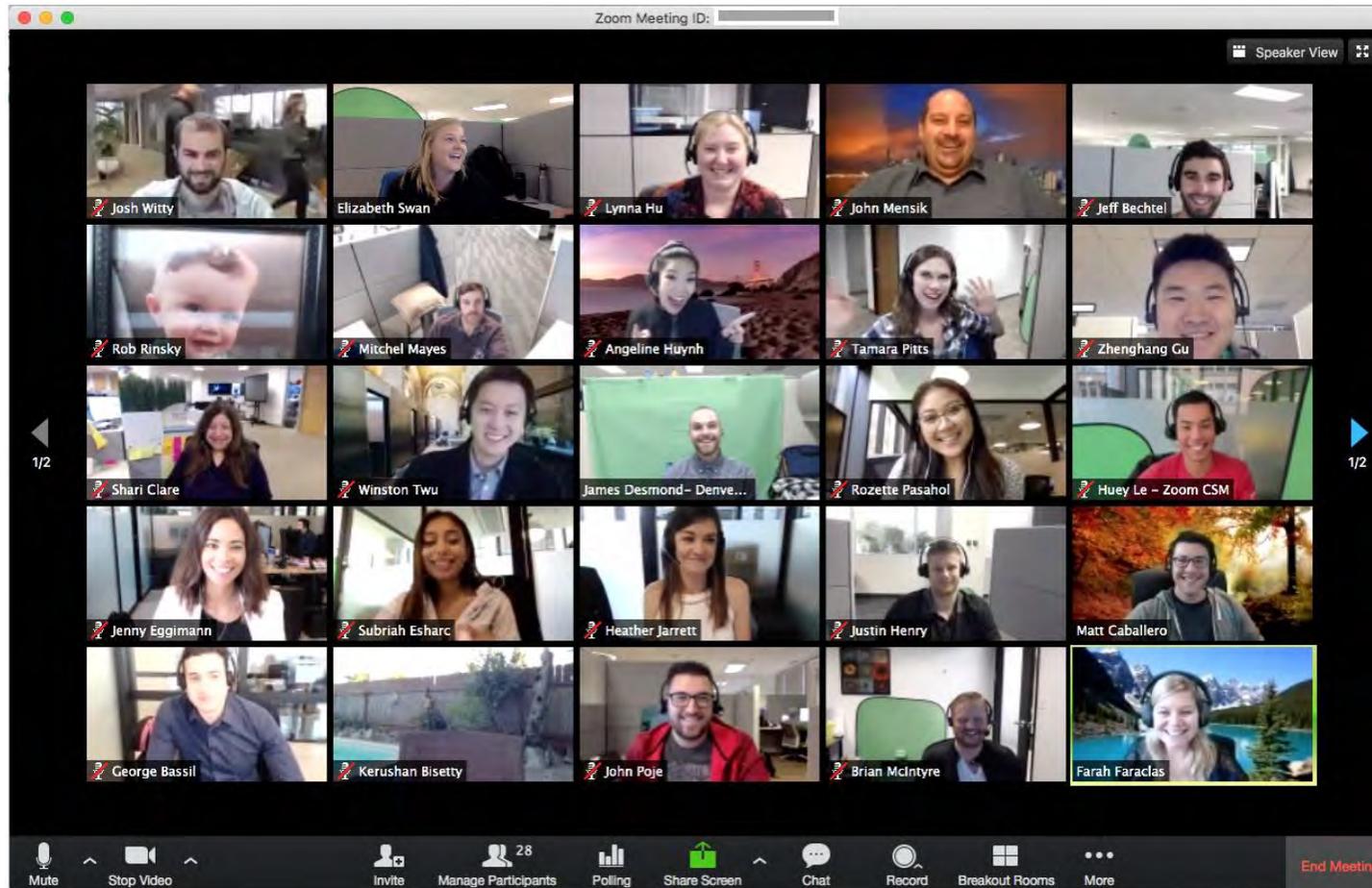
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# Zoom Video Call Screenshot



**Pro-Tip:** In [Zoom](#) you can change your background and in [Teams](#) you can blur your background

If you need a laugh, check out this [zoom video](#):

# Instant Messaging/Chat

*Microsoft Teams and Google Hangouts both have a chat function.*

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# Save Precious Time and Prevent In-box Overflow with Chat Function

The screenshot displays a Slack workspace for 'Acme Corp'. The left sidebar shows a list of channels, with '# sales-leads' selected. The main chat area shows a conversation in the '#sales-leads' channel. The channel header includes '148' members and '1' topic: 'Customer marketing matters'. The date is 'March 6, 2019'. The conversation starts with Alex Saunders asking 'Rose, is the attached order doable?' and attaching an email. The email content is: 'From: Harry Boone <harryboone@zumfuria.com> To: Alex Saunders <alexsaunders@acmecorp.com> Subject: Swingline in red'. The email body says: 'Hi there, I was wondering if you offer staplers in red? I'd like to place an order for 250 staplers. Is this possible? Please find a purchase order attached with our budget and exact specifications. Thanks, Harry'. A PDF attachment 'Quote request.pdf' (325kB) is shown. Rose Cahill replies: 'We've been getting lots of requests for red. Our vendor says it's doable.' Alex Saunders replies: 'Great! I'll pass that along.'



# Project Management Platforms

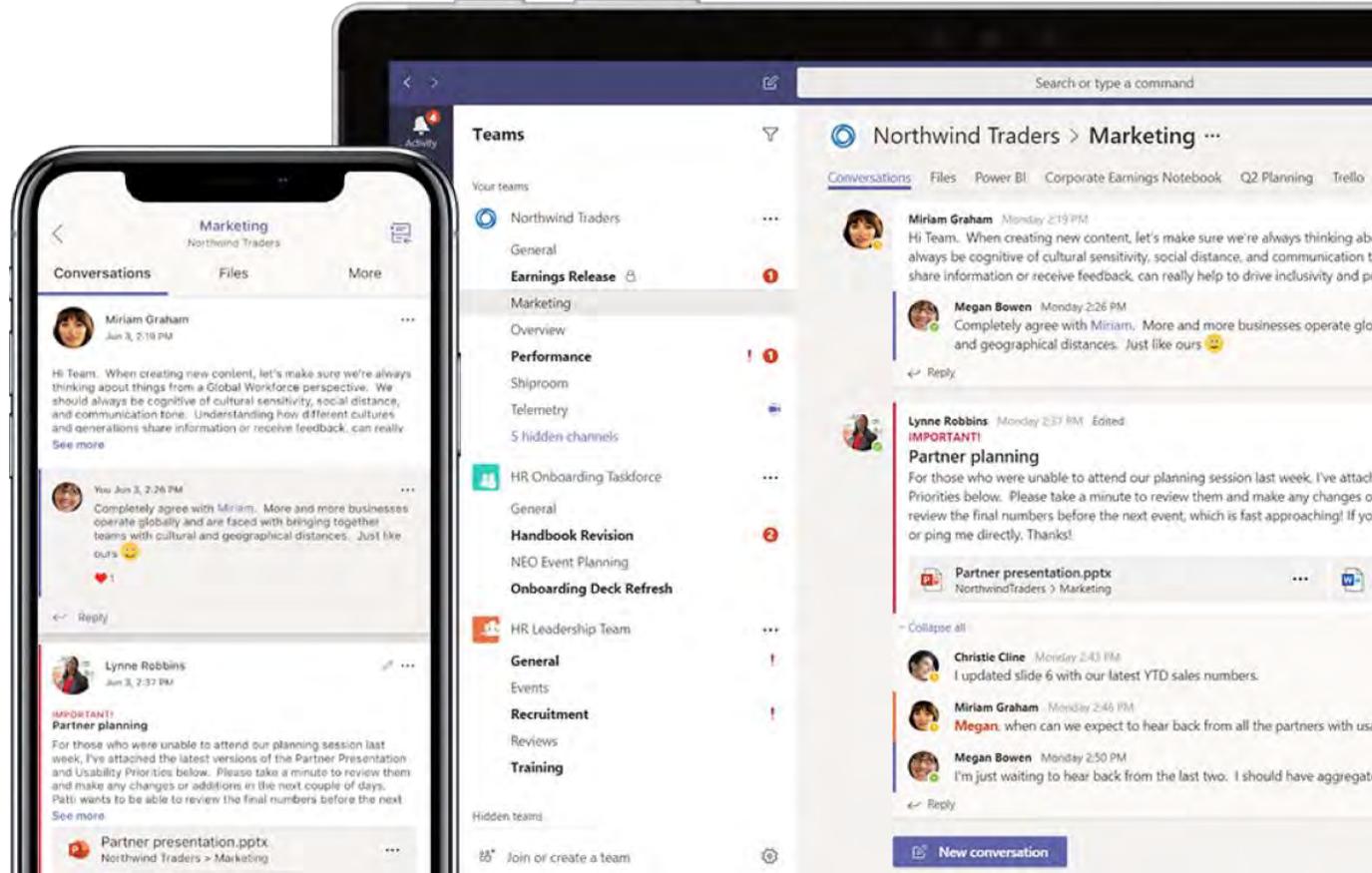
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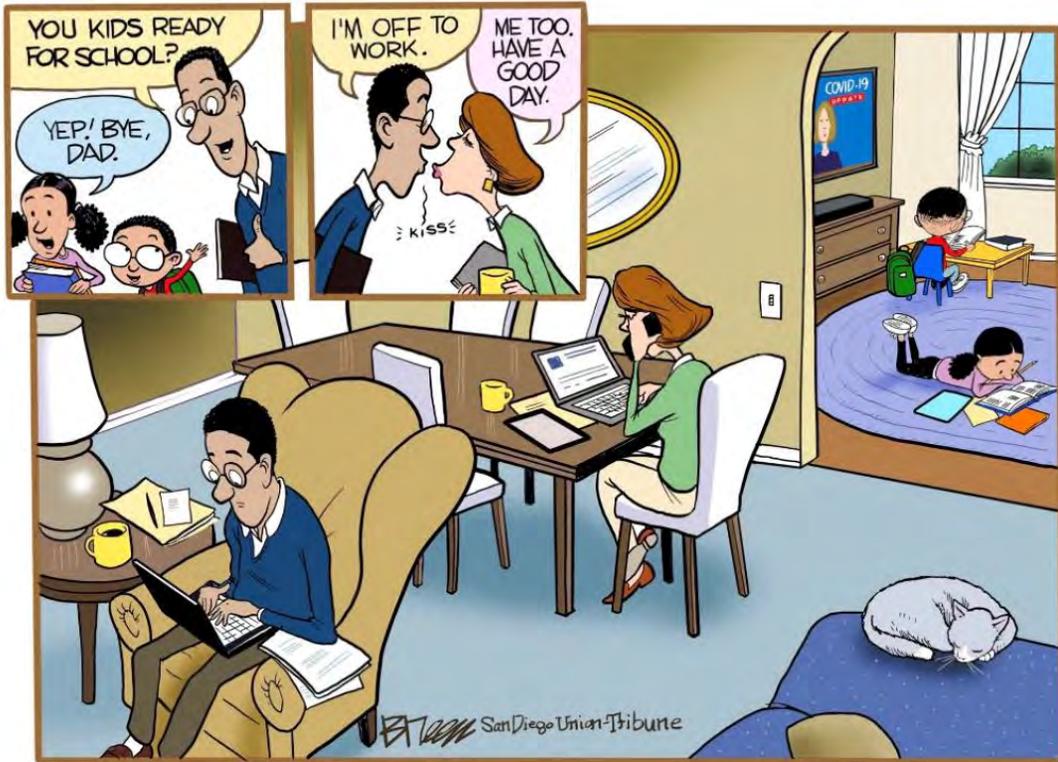
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**Asana:** Asana is a web and mobile application designed to help teams organize, track, and manage their work.

# Platforms Bundle Multiple Functions



# Questions?



Given the number of people attending this webinar, we will field as many questions as we can through the question box.

We will log all questions and produce a *Your Questions Answered* the coming week that will be available on the ICSPS website.

## Future Webinars in This Series



### Tips for Leading a Virtual Team

Wednesday, April 1, 2020

10:00 a.m.

### Bringing Your Best Self to the Virtual Workplace

Wednesday, April 8, 2020

10:00 a.m.

Register at Illinois Center for Specialized Professional Support <https://icsps.illinoisstate.edu/>

# More Resources Available... and More to Come

Neeley, Tsedal. "15 Questions About Remote Work, Answered." *Harvard Business Review*, 23 Mar. 2020, [http://hbr.org/2020/03/15-questions-about-remote-work-answered?referral=03758&cm\\_vc=rr\\_item\\_page.top\\_right](http://hbr.org/2020/03/15-questions-about-remote-work-answered?referral=03758&cm_vc=rr_item_page.top_right).

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Pollak, Lindsey, and Eileen Coombes. "23 Essential Tips for Working Remotely." *Inc.com*, Inc., 17 Mar. 2020, [www.inc.com/lindsey-pollak-eileen-coombes/remote-work-home-productivity-communication-self-care-morale-team.html](http://www.inc.com/lindsey-pollak-eileen-coombes/remote-work-home-productivity-communication-self-care-morale-team.html).

About the author(s) Raphael Bick is a partner in McKinsey & Company's Shanghai office. "A Blueprint for Remote Working: Lessons from China." *McKinsey & Company*, [www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/mckinsey-digital/our-insights/a-blueprint-for-remote-working-lessons-from-china](http://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/mckinsey-digital/our-insights/a-blueprint-for-remote-working-lessons-from-china).

# Resources Worth Bookmarking if You Want to Keep Up with Remote Work



<https://blog.techsoup.org/posts/nonprofit-resources-for-remote-work-during-the-covid-19-outbreak>



<https://www.mckinsey.com/>



<https://hbr.org/>



<https://www.fastcompany.com/>



<https://www.inc.com/>