

Technology Considerations for Remote Work

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The COVID-19 pandemic has redefined work in the 2020s. Virtual everything has become the norm, and tech companies have invested in and improved technologies enabling remote work. For many professionals, anything from paperwork to client meetings can be handled through a computer.

Legal professionals have made the same transition to an even higher degree than some other fields. According to a survey from the American Bar Association, 87% of workplaces allow lawyers to work remotely. And many lawyers push for more allowances in virtual capabilities, such as remote court-ordered mediations, depositions, pretrial hearings, and even bench trials. As the landscape continues to change, legal professionals should consider improvements to this new form of work.

This article will explore the makings of a good home setup, from your physical setup to your daily software. Each section will discuss an element of a home setup and recommend a product for a remote legal professional.

The Physical Components of a Motivating Office Space

In the office, an employee has limited control over their environment and has little incentive to upgrade that environment. Remote work has flipped this around, and workers now have complete control over their setup and are incentivized to improve it for any future work they do. With that in mind, the following subsections will explore individual elements of a physical setup and make recommendations for those looking to improve their experience and productivity when working at home.

Monitors

An extra monitor at your disposal can improve your home experience more than any other addition to your setup. A study from Jon Peddie Research found that monitors boost productivity by as much as 50% in certain cases. If you find yourself switching between tasks and software frequently, consider making this investment.

Recommendations

Personal preference will play a role in any purchase, but there are a few things everyone should consider when buying a new monitor. Size and resolution are two of the most important traits, and they are related. For example, a 34-inch monitor with 1080p resolution may look grainy or pixelated to most users. If price is important, it's best to stick to a reasonably sized monitor so the image quality still looks nice at a lower resolution. Below are some baseline specs for a new Dell 27 USB-C monitor, which costs about \$300.

- 27" display
- 4K resolution / 75Hz refresh rate
- Height adjustable

Ergonomic Considerations

It's important to find a monitor that fits into your space without causing unnecessary stress to your body. A monitor should be placed appropriately to prevent muscle fatigue and joint pain throughout the workday. Here are two important considerations when positioning a monitor: height and distance. To keep from straining to see the top of the screen, try to keep the top of the screen at eye level. Additionally, put the monitor about an arm's length away, and out of any glare-causing light sources.

Mouse and Keyboard

Laptops come equipped with a keyboard and touchpad, but many people prefer to have a separate keyboard and mousepad. A desktop computer will require these items to be operable. With appropriate selection and placement, the separate pieces can improve posture. They also provide an opportunity to make a home setup unique with custom products.

Recommendations

It is most important to place the keyboard and mouse in a comfortable position. Separating the keyboard and mouse allows them to be positioned more freely, but it also requires adequate desk space. The placement should let your arms rest in a neutral position to reduce stress throughout the workday. Most keyboards will work, but an adjustable design is preferred. Split keyboards should be considered if your wrist position feels awkward or uncomfortable.

Office Chair

Similar to the mouse and keyboard, an ergonomic office chair can yield important benefits for posture and reduce injuries. Outdated and unsafe furniture can result in musculoskeletal disorders and reduce productivity. A standard office chair will be recommended, but a standing workstation can solve these issues too. A standing position is more natural and engages employees more as they work.

Recommendations

Sitting at a desk for hours can wear on a person's joints. A good office chair should support a worker's posture throughout the day. Here are some of the most important considerations for finding the right chair:

- **Adjustability** – The chair should allow you to change its height and adjust the armrest and backrest. It should be possible to rest your feet on the floor, with your hips at the same level. Arms should be able to relax naturally.
- **Swivel Base** – A more mobile chair is less restrictive to your natural movements. If you need to adjust throughout the workday, even just to look at different monitors, a swivel base will prevent strain on the neck and body.
- **Comfort** – A comfortable chair can indicate whether the chair supports you adequately. A cushioned seat and armrests can help distribute pressure evenly on your body.

Other Accessories

The previous sections explored some of the key components of any home office. Many additional accessories can enhance your work experience. These items will be introduced here, but you should do further research before investing in any of them.

Notebooks

Sometimes, the easiest way to work through a complex issue is to visualize it. A notebook helps you track your thoughts throughout the day and gives you a running log to refer back to. Consider a digital notebook to avoid continual expenses and increased storage requirements.

Lighting

A well-lit work environment can transform the way you perform throughout the day. Good lighting will increase visibility in your workspace and reduce strain on your eyes. This may already be achieved by your existing lighting fixtures, but there are still valuable ways to incorporate additional light. Consider an additional light to illuminate your face for video calls or a therapy lamp to improve mood and energy.

Cleaning Supplies

A clean desk space can increase productivity and reduce stress. However, it's not always fun or easy to stay tidy, especially when work picks up. To this end, it may be beneficial to invest in cleaning items that make it easy to keep your space in order. A desk vacuum is a small device that helps sweep up crumbs and dust. Meanwhile, an automated cleaner such as a Roomba can keep the rest of the office floor clean.

Decorations

Finally, decorations can help motivate you in your work. If you make your space inviting and comfortable, you will have an easier time being productive. Let this be a chance to make your space unique, by choosing the decorations that suit you best. Consider plants to freshen up your surroundings or posters that animate the room.

Software To Boost Productivity at Home

Technology makes working from home possible, but it can do even more for the average worker. Today's market provides lots of helpful software that legal professionals can use for boosted productivity and organization. The following sections will look at the types of tools offered and some of the specific services provided by software companies. Although many companies will already have an established set of tools, these services are often free and useful for your personal tasks.

Scheduling Tool

There are a variety of services that help you keep track of your tasks and projects. Below are some of the distinct services provided, which can be used in tandem.

Calendar

Rather than getting a new physical calendar every year, there are many free services that you can use on your devices. A calendar is helpful for keeping track of your events and reminding you at a time of your choosing. Consider using a service that is compatible across multiple devices, so that you can check your calendar no matter what you have on hand.

To-Do Lists

A to-do list should be used as a daily tool, tracking your goals for the day in finer detail. It may be helpful to find a service that can provide a to-do list and a calendar feature, so your organization can remain in one app. Checking items off a to-do list can provide extra motivation to complete them and make you more productive each day.

Artificial Intelligence

If you are looking to take advantage of the most cutting-edge tools, consider integrating an AI assistant to help you schedule. Tools like Reclaim AI can be used with existing calendar apps and help you optimize or reorganize your schedule.

Accountability Apps

If your home environment offers distractions that keep you from your goals, consider using an accountability app to keep you on track. Focus apps like Freedom can block websites and apps that derail you and even works across multiple devices. Habit-tracking apps encourage you to keep progressing towards your goals – work or personal.

Virtual Notes

Notes keep track of crucial information to keep you on track each day. Good note-taking software can take your organization to the next level, making it simple to store important notes and track them down later. Find a system for creating and sorting notes by their purpose (meetings, lists, roadmaps, etc.). Online tools make it easy to test multiple note strategies to find one that works for you.

Communication Platforms

One of the challenges of remote work comes from the lack of in-person connection in the office. Many communication platforms have been created to overcome this, offering live video calls, instant messaging, and other features to close the gap between remote employees. If you are leading a team, it is essential to take advantage of these platforms, which are often free. When you choose, consider your team's experience with each service and the data policy of that company.

File Sharing

Services like Google Drive and Dropbox provide platforms to easily share files with your team. Although you can send files in a variety of ways (email, messaging...), these services allow you to organize files that will be frequently accessed over time. These tools provide varying levels of security, speed, and ease of use. For each project, carefully consider requirements and change between tools as necessary.

References

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