

HOMEWORK

Work...home...work...home...are your boundaries blurring?

BY KNEEZ BUKHARI

There have been some revolutionary changes in the workplace in the last few decades, especially with respect to flexibility for the working parent. Companies have now fully caught on to the fact that allowing workers to more easily balance their home and work lives is not only good for family life but also for business. It's good for office morale, improves employee retention and is an added incentive to do well in a job.

The recent 'rise of the machines' only adds to the possibilities for today's worker. You can now dial in to your office PC remotely, check your emails on your phone and log meetings into your palm pilot. But as work possibilities expand, so does the need to be able to manage your time effectively so you're not actually overcompensating by doing more work at home. A recent study shows that those working from home may not be quite as happy as those who separate their home and work lives. If you're not careful, home-working could mean you end up doing more hours as

well as having to deal with a more hectic family life.

Work can quite easily take over your family life if more than you can reasonably fit into a working day is being asked of you. By the same token, it may be easy to slip into the role of parent or partner during a working day if you don't set your boundaries clearly enough to your family.

So what do you do when the boundaries blur? And how can you ensure that when you work from home, the emphasis stays on 'work', rather than 'home'?

DIVIDE AND CONQUER

Make sure you separate your working and family life at home by whatever means work for you. This can be as simple as sticking a notice up on your door when you don't want to be interrupted, or as complicated as getting dressed for work, walking out the door, around the block and back into your front door to get you into 'work mode'. Whatever works; as long as your family knows that you are assuming a different role to the one they usually associate you with.

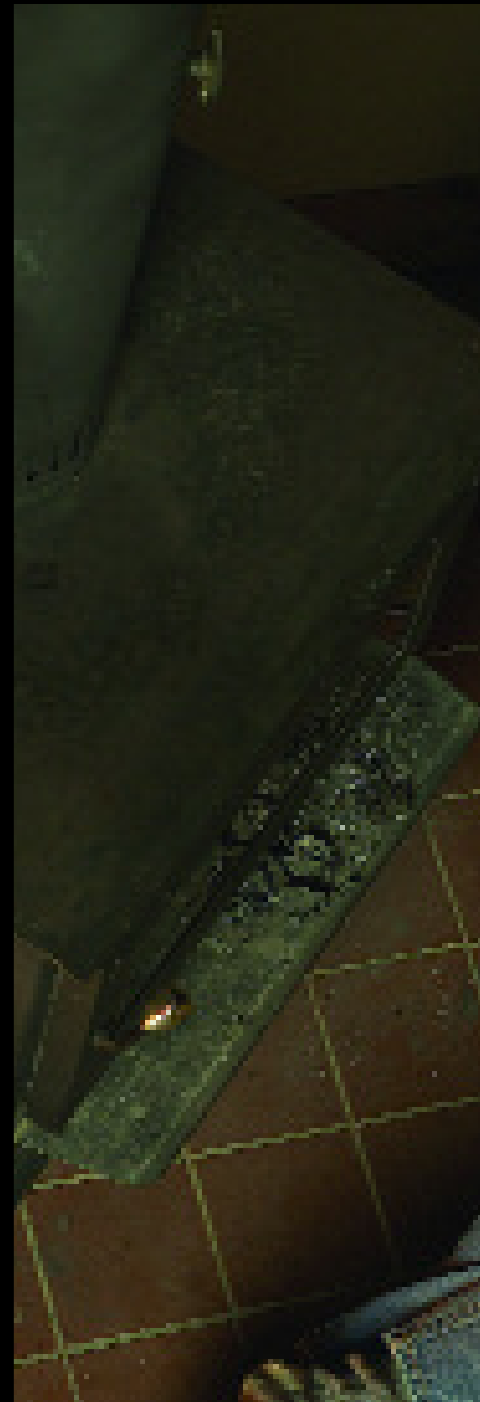
SPACE YOURSELF


Make sure you have a dedicated 'office space'. This can be a home office, a desk in an allotted room, even your shed. Just ensure that you don't end up finishing your financial report on the sofa while balancing a plate of nachos on your knee and trying to ignore hubbie watching Question of Sport.

TOOL UP

Choose the right equipment for your home-office, and make sure it's reliable. There is a multitude of available technology and accessories out there designed specifically for the home-worker, and a little investment now could save you a major headache down the line. Don't forget filing systems, office furniture and security measures – back up everything in your home office, just as you would at work.

Working from home is an opportunity and if you plan it well and make the most of it, you really could have the best of both worlds. ■



A photograph of a woman with short blonde hair, wearing a dark blue sweater and blue jeans, sleeping peacefully in a dark-colored armchair. Her eyes are closed, and her head is resting on a large, dark, textured pillow. A laptop computer is open on her lap. The room is dimly lit, with a patterned rug visible on the floor to the left. A white-bordered text box is overlaid on the left side of the image.

HOW can you ensure that when you work from home, the emphasis stays on 'work', rather than 'home'?