

Four Teleworking Myths

(and How to Power On)

By Megan McKoy-Noe

Outages, we can handle. But working from home on a sunny day? This doesn't feel right. Welcome to the world of social distancing.

Many utility staff started working from home last month, some for the first time. Before COVID-19 shifted social norms, 3.6% of Americans worked from home.

Struggling with the shift? As a teleworker myself, here are four working-from-home myths and ways you can be successful in a social distance-driven world.

Myth 1: We can work anywhere.

When I started working from home in 2012, I had dreams of writing from coffee shops, my couch, or the kitchen table. I quickly learned I needed a real, defined (and tidy) working space to keep my mind in the right place for teleworking.

Try not to work where you relax. Instead, create a space you will identify with work. Take the time to make sure you have the tools you'll need, including a ring light webcam (I use a Kiyo Razer) for meetings.

"Be patient with getting the right setup," advises Pioneer Utility Resources

Graphic Designer Duy Mai. "The first day or two setting up a home office was the most stressful time for me working for Pioneer. After working with IT, we got it smoothed out. Having a second monitor helps big time, too."

Once you have a space, set a work schedule. Do you have to wake up early each day? No. But be careful not to slip into weekend mode. To get fully in character, get dressed, walk outside your house then come back in and go straight to your office space to start the day. Might seem unnecessary, but it helps you shift into work mode, especially in your early telework days.

Myth 2: We wear PJs. A lot.

I kid you not: a utility member asked one of my peers if he was wearing pajamas yesterday. We laugh, but we've all thought about it. Why dress up if you're not leaving the house?

Do not give in to temptation. The way you dress impacts your work performance. Trust me, I've tried both approaches. Pajamas are comfy, but I'm not as productive when I don't dress the part. A 2015 psychology study found the way you dress impacts the way you think.

Do I wear heels and a jacket at home? No. But neither do I stay in my pajamas all day. Wear something comfortable but professional. Your clothes set the tone for your day.

Myth 3: We're less productive.

Some people assume it's hard to stay focused when you are surrounded by personal to-do lists. Yes, you may be tempted to fold laundry or clean dishes. If you have children in the house during the day (as many of us do right now), you may have to plan activities, wake up earlier than usual for quality quiet time, or invest in a good lock.

But there's a bright side. When working from home, skipping your commute saves an average of an hour every day. You also don't have coworkers knocking on your door all day, interrupting your focus for small talk.

Set (and follow) a schedule, dividing up your work time and home time. Then create a to-do list in your home office space and let the Zen begin.

Will you have hours of solid writing time each day? No. Expect interruptions and distractions. But can you be productive at home? Yes. If anything, you'll find you're producing more than usual to prove to peers you're hard at work.

Myth 4: We are hermits.

Teleworkers get a bad rap sometimes. Let's be clear: I miss people. After a few days of working from home you will, too. It doesn't matter if you are an introvert like me or an extrovert like my daughter.

Talking to people is something we take for granted until it's gone.

I miss my linemen, and I haven't worked in a utility office for more than a decade. I miss peeking over a cubicle to say good morning to a neighbor. I miss getting coffee with a peer while we brainstorm. You will miss people.

Last month I traveled to Pioneer's new office in Hillsboro, Ore. The first thing I did was visit Publications Administrator Linda Wiseman. She's my rock at the office—the person I call to vet an idea or when I think I'm not reading something right. She's my reality check, and she's essential.

Find at least one person you can call to talk to about work, even if it's just a weekly call to check in with each other. Teleworkers need a buddy system.

Ready to telework?

Remember to invest time in yourself.

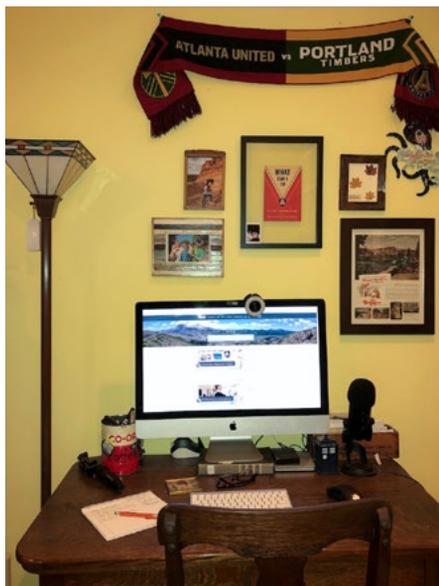
Working from home could be a great time to attend digital conferences and explore online education resources, including:

- NWPPA Learning on Demand: Short videos address popular topics such as security, human resources, and communications in the field—plus much more! Find them at http://bit.ly/NWPPA_LoD.
- NWPPA pandemic-related webinars: NWPPA is offering a series of free webinars that are designed to help you navigate through this crisis. Register for them at www.nwppa.org/upcoming-webinars/.
- Pioneer video tutorials: We pulled several public power communication best practice videos together for you and you can find them at <https://vimeo.com/showcase/6875976>. Grab a cup of coffee, find a topic you're interested in, and press play.
- IBM Think 2020: This May 5, 2020, event was slated to happen in San Francisco, Calif. COVID-19 precautions mean you can attend from the comfort of home. Register for a free pass at ibm.com.

Welcome to teleworking.

We may be apart, but we'll get through this together. **NWPPA**

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Our home isn't big enough for me to have an office, but I turned a corner of my bedroom into a quiet, defined working space.



Teleworkers need a buddy system. Linda Wiseman, right, is the person who helps me when I work away from the office.



New COVID-19 Graphics

We're all struggling with how to respond to COVID-19, balancing how to keep our community powered and employees safe. Luckily, we're not alone. Public power communicators always work together to solve anything that comes our way.

When the first utility lobby closed to protect community health, Pioneer Utility Resources created a set of free social media posts and graphics. We've added 10 graphics to these resources, including square graphics for Instagram and some layered Photoshop files for easy editing. You can find those at www.pioneerutilityresources.com/pandemicprep/. In partnership with NWPPA, we've also created a leadership editorial addressing COVID-19 as part of our More Powerful Together toolkit for members (available at www.nwppa.org/mpt). Finally, download our free COVID-19 resources at www.pioneerutilityresources.com/covid/.