

The background features stylized, light gray outlines of houses with gabled roofs and chimney-like structures. A large, solid orange rectangle is positioned on the left side of the page, containing the main text. The overall design is clean and modern.

HOME ALONE

MAKING WORKING FROM HOME WORK



LEE SILBER

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Lee Silber

DEDICATED TO

Andrea Silber

DEEP IMPACT PUBLISHING

leesilber@leesilber.com

www.leesilber.com

858-735-4533

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DESIGNED BY

Lee Silber



Working From Home Has Its Advantages, and . . .

IT'S WHAT WE ALWAYS WANTED, SO WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

Who wouldn't want to sleep in, show up for work in their Sunday *worst*, and sip a “soda” by the pool while they work? Take it from me, working remotely is great, but not without its challenges. The minute we don't check in on time, act unprofessionally, and start letting our weekend bleed into our weekday, we're in trouble.

This mini book is about how to be the best at-home, remote worker possible. To be able to shine when the light isn't always on us, and to prove we're the professionals we were hired to be—and be able get things done and have fun. Honestly, what's the point of working from home if we can't make it work . . . for us?

The tips and techniques (and tricks) in this booklet have all been battle-tested and work—so put them to work for you.

Mirror, mirror on the wall . . . ?

Since we will be communicating in ways that don't include visual cues, it's important that we put a "face" on what we say. Having a mirror in front of us when we talk on the phone (and e-mail, text, and direct message) makes us more aware of how what we "say" is received by the person on the other end. Smiling when we talk is one way to come across as being believable and sincere.

Surround yourself with success.

When working from home, we tend to forget about our greatness. In our workspace we should hang up positive press, rave reviews, awards, and anything else that inspires and motivates us .

Clear your in-box, clear your mind.

It seems impossible, but it's probably the best thing you can do for your mental health . . . clear your in-box. Yes, it can be done. Having files and folders within your e-mail system are the solution to the problem, making it possible to save and store valuable information.

Shoes make the person.

The benefit of working from home is that every day is casual day. Or is it? Yes, dress comfortably, but also professionally. Getting dressed for work is part of the mindset of going to work. If we wear a bathrobe and slippers to work, we aren't ready to work. When you feel good, you do good work. If you must dress down, at the very least, wear shoes.

Switch lanes, but keep moving forward.

If you know you are going to be on a long call, get out of the house and go for a long walk—walk and talk. When you are put on hold or are on a conference call, hit the mute button and have simple tasks at hand that you can do while listening and learning. Make switching off or downtime a positive use of your time instead of a distraction.

The Power of Three.

Pick three things you will do today, and do them first. It's a simple thing that makes sure you don't get distracted. Put the piles or files on your desk so these projects and priorities are the first things you see.

Fold Your Things-To-Do List in Half.

The temptation of your personal priorities getting in the way of your professional ones is very real. Make a to-do list with a clear distinction between what you need to do, and want to do—and trust me, suddenly things you hated to do become more appealing now that you are working from home. So use these chores as a reward for getting your work done. I know, you’re saying, “That’s crazy.” However, I know that cleaning the bathroom (something I’m not thrilled to do) is easier and more desirable than writing a 500-word article.

Can you hear me now?

This will *sound* like a silly recommendation, but it’s actually an important point. We should invest in a good pair of headphones with a microphone feature. First of all, we can “zone out” when needed, but we can also be present when on a conference call, webinar, or talking to the boss. A mute button is also key—nobody wants to hear annoying background noise. This allows you to work anywhere without worry about the ambient noise others will hear. This allows you to work at a library (encouraged) or a coffee house, both of which gets you out of the house so you don’t go stir crazy.

Redundancies are redundant (See what I did there?)

Usually, there's no IT person at the ready when we work from home. So have duplicates of the things we use the most. I'm not saying we should stockpile toilet paper, but having what you need means there is no excuse to run to the store (which was once a dreadful task, but now seems like a welcome relief).

No person is an island.

You will feel isolated while working remotely, so reaching out to co-workers and counterparts is important for our mental health and the synergy of working together (when not together) should not be discounted. Even virtually, accountability can keep us on track.

How am I doing?

Millennials crave positive feedback (everyone gets a trophy) but we all want to know if we're on the right track and doing things the right way. Setting up a system to communicate with other remote workers helps.

A standing ovation?

Finally, we can decide what our workspace looks like. It's proven (okay, I don't have the facts to back this) but standing while working is better than sitting down all day. Also, instead of working under unnatural light (fluorescent lights) it's far better to have natural light, plants, and a workspace surrounded by things (and pets) that make us feel good—which is good for business. Also, having a yoga mat or weights out could lead to impromptu workouts or working out while we work.

Seeing is believing.

Creating a dream board, making your ambitions and dreams seem real, and putting projects and priorities up where you can see them is the best bet. Use Post-it Notes, a bulletin board, white board, or a desktop calendar in addition to a digital planner. It's a way to know what's next, what's important, and what you need to do now.

Is it hot in here?

Believe it or not, the ideal work temperature is 73 - 75 degrees.

There's magic in the music.

When working alone you can play any kind of music you want. Heavy metal, classical, or classic rock—it's your call. The best music to work by is baroque. I hear ya, if baroque is *not* on your go-to playlist, choose songs that inspire you, help you focus, or make you want to sit still and work. Certainly there are certain songs that make you feel good—play those. Match the music to your mood—maybe you need to calm down, or pump up—music can make that possible. You can also use a playlist as a timer. You can agree to hunker down and work while the 45-minute playlist plays, and then “play” for 15 minutes when it ends. Along the same lines, certain smells can stimulate you to work longer and harder (Hint: Vanilla makes us want to eat, and bacon does, too. Just sayin'.)

Cleanliness is next to . . .

There's something to be said for having a place for everything and having everything in its place. That said, I believe if you can find what you need when you need it, you're organized. The most important organizing principal is to keep the things you use the most, the most accessible. Put the things you need to work on first on your desk or chair so it's the first thing you see in the morning.

Out of site is out of mind.

Be seen. As much as you'd like to isolate yourself, your co-workers and boss will assume you are goofing off (the truth hurts) so you need to stay connected and let others know you are “on the job”. Use whatever technology available to stay within the loop (gossip included) so you feel connected to the office. Embrace technology to stay connected—regardless of how you look.

Everyone is watching you.

Do you ever have that sneaking feeling that people are watching you? Well, you may be right. When you are on a video conference call, you should be aware of what's in the background (and foreground). Like newscasters, dress up from the waist up.

Work is where the home is.

Having a dedicated work space works. If you choose the corner of your kitchen table as your work space, uh, good luck. The best home “office” is a dedicated work space as far away from the chaos as possible.

Rituals rule.

One of the things that make a work day a “work day” is the routine. If you get your morning coffee at your usual spot, maybe start a new ritual—coffee or tea at the usual time, if not the usual place. Having a time to show up (and leave) work is important for those who have only punched a time clock. In fact, create a “time sheet” to track the hours you are actually working. There are several apps available to track your time—and your phone is the best time tracker of all.

Brain dump.

So many distractions, so little time. Have a pad of paper, a notebook, or a digital equivalent to jot down the things you need to do (around the house or of a personal nature) so that you can get back to work while not letting your personal projects short circuit your professional goals. Along the same lines, get your ducks in a row and complete the quick and easy projects that keep you from focusing (and relaxing) at home.

Browse this.

Use a different browser for work (and e-mail, too) to limit distractions.

Aloha.

When I lived in Hawaii and was doing business, a meeting took twice as long as I thought it would because we would “talk story” before we got down to business. When we meet people in person we often shake hands (yikes) and ask how they are. Now that we are connecting virtually, we need to start with something personal instead of jumping right in with what’s on your mind. Along the same lines, it’s easier to read people when meeting face to face. When we communicate online, what we mean is not always what we mean, so be careful what you “say” in your e-mails and texts. Emojies only go so far . . .

Pretend you’re not home . . . alone

If there is one thing that I can say that will help those who are working from home for the first time it is this—pretend you’re not home alone.

Pretend like you have a disorder.

Most of us (me included) have ADD or ADHD or some form of wanting to do a million things at once. I'm gonna own it—especially when it comes to working from home. As they say, “it” happens, so work in short bursts and anticipate that other people’s priorities will trump yours (Think: kids). Knowing that you will be interrupted and annoyed is the first step to being able to handle each “crisis” like a champ. Build in white space to your daily “plan” so you can act and react when things go sideways. The good thing about working from home is your “work” hours are flexible. All people care about is if do what you were supposed to do when you were supposed to do it.

The commute stinks.

Suddenly, we find ourselves with a commute of a few feet—from our bed to the coffee maker—and no traffic. I don't know about your house, but in mine, I'm usually in a traffic jam of two (my wife and I). I will say, having a morning ritual isn't something to be forgotten. If you relish your morning commute (I know, crazy) then replace it with a new one. Walk a few blocks to get your morning coffee and a bagel with cream cheese (what, is this just my morning thing?) or watch the sunrise (not me), check the surf (me), or walk around the block (not me, again).

End on a high note.

End the day with the easiest things to finish so you have a series of wins. There is something to be said for completing a task on a to-do list, and checking off a bunch all at once is downright intoxicating.

Start strong.

Okay, the last tip was to end the day with tackling a bunch of the easy stuff all at once. What about the the hard things to do? Do them first. The expression is there os magic in the morning. Maybe. The truth is if we don't get done what we need to do before lunch, chances are we will never get it done. Leave out what you need to do first, make a to-do list of the things you will do—with an emphasis on getting the key things done first, and plan your day an work the plan. No plan equals no chance of getting the important (but not urgent) things done.

I can see clearly now.

Having a wall, bulletin board, or desktop calendar to post your projects and priorities on is as good as a digital one—both are best.

It's your prime time.

Good or bad, you will now know when your prime time is. I can hear you saying, “I never had a prime time.” I get it, but when you work from home, it becomes obvious when you are the most alert, motivated, and productive. For most of us, it's the morning hours when we get the most done. For others, the afternoon is the time to shine. The key is to know when we're at our best and not waste that time. Some people when working from home for the first time will try to get their ducks in a row before beginning their real work day. As admirable as that sounds, if you don't get “real” work done until mid-morning and waste the morning doing chores, chances are you will never have your priorities right. Use the afternoons as a reward for getting your important tasks done first. Also, block time to make time to do your work or else other tasks and will take over your to-do list. The good news is for many things you can push them into the afternoon. So, depending on when you wake up, you have the morning to “make hay” before your days goes to . . . Guard your prime time and don't let other people's priorities pull you from yours.

If it's not on a list, it doesn't exist

Create a master list of events for the whole family and post it for all to see. Knowing who is supposed to be where (and when) is a necessity.

White space.

Leave time and space for things to go to amok. It happens, and as the person at home, you will likely have to deal with these unexpected emergencies. The good news is, knowing that this disruption of your day will make you hyper focused when you have uninterrupted time. So, work extra hard when you can knowing that any moment the sky is falling and you may have to drop everything and rush to save the world (or so it will seem). Work extra hard when you have the chance so you can be guilt-free when you have to drop what you're doing to save the day.

The butt of jokes is no joke.

Have you ever been to a fast food restaurant and realized the seats are not comfortable? There's a reason for that. When places don't want you to hang around, they make it uncomfortable. For our home office, a comfy chair is a must. You can make the extra chair a place where you pile paper if you don't want others to sit there, but your chair needs to be something and somewhere you can plant your butt for hours at a time.

Pad your experience

Keep a pad of paper to write down the things you'll do around the house.

It's all in the cloud.

Working remotely means you make the most of technology—especially the cloud. The good news is with cloud-based computing, everything and anything is available at any time so you can work when you want to. Just make sure you sync up, protect yourself from prying eyes, and get the things done you need to do on “time”.

Drive time.

The temptation is to think how much time is saved by not having to commute back and forth to work, not being forced to communicate with co-workers, and not being beholden to a time clock. The truth is you will (and should) still take your breaks—including lunch—and still get in an eight-hour workday. The key is not waste your time watching television and making your “water cooler” conversations with your neighbors last longer than it would or should.

Cook because you can.

Using the laundry (or the oven) as a natural timer makes sense. You can even make a playlist of songs that stimulates you and tells you it's time to take a break—which is a big benefit of working from home, you can jump in the ocean (or a pool or lake) and it is timely and invigorating.

In plain view

Put a clock where you can see it so you are more aware of time.

The early bird . . .

The benefit of making your own schedule is as long as you get your work done you can start early, stay late, and leave time in the middle of the day for the things you want to do while it's still light out.

Pile with a purpose.

Now that nobody is watching—or cares—take advantage of your natural tendencies. If piling (with a purpose) make you more efficient, do it.

Take advantage of technology

Scheduling, connectivity, and productivity can all be enhanced with on-line tools. Know what tools make working remotely more efficient.

Lee Silber

Webinar Specialist

In the past 30 years of being a sought-after keynote and breakout speaker, Lee finds himself doing something he was destined to do—present remotely through webinars and other means. He can speak on a dozen different topics—virtually.



Making Working From Home Work

How to Work Remotely Efficiently and Effectively

The Gift of Gab

Turning Small Talk Into Big Opportunities

New and Improved

The Power of Compound Innovation

Powerful Powerpoint

Creating Incredible Slide Decks That Blow People Away

Lee Silber

Home-Based Business Guru

As someone who has worked from home for over 25 years, Silber has a lot to say about being productive and professional—while making time for personal projects. To prove his point, Lee has written 25 books—all while living steps from the beach (no small feat). To learn more, go to: www.leesilber.com.



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LEE SILBER

www.leesilber.com

leesilber@leesilber.com

858-735-4533

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