



Happy Halloween!

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microTECH Times

Covered I.T. 24/7—Never Worry Again!



13 Tricks To Make Working From Home A Treat

Working from home is difficult. One would assume you need some amazing witches brew with exotic ingredients, like the eye of a newt and wing from an albino bat, just to make it through the day. But, we're here to give you 13 tricks to make working from home a just a little sweeter.

We're all toads in a pot that is slowly reaching the boiling point. Have you ever heard the old fable about the boiling frog? We toss this one in a newsletter every so often because it's a great reminder to stay on our toes. The fable describes a frog being tossed into a boiling pot and jumping right out but, if he is slowing heating up in a pot of water he would not perceive the danger surrounding him and eventually he would just boil. Working at home is much like this. We sit in our atmosphere and don't realize how it truly impacts our work, productivity, or collaboration efforts until it may be to late. Take a look at these 13 tricks to put your most professional foot forward, create a more efficient workspace, and truly make working at home a treat.

1. Nothing in your world is supernatural.

Give your coworkers and conference attendees a heads up if there are potential interruptions in your world. Start off your meetings or calls with a quick introduction to yourself, your environment, and any time restrictions you may have.

Video or phone, let the participants know what to expect. A simple, "Hey everyone, my grandson is visiting today. While my Niece is caring for him during meetings, you may hear some extra noise since he's 22 months old. Also, my next meeting starts at 11:30am. Thank you." Being upfront about call disruptions and time restraints will help others accept additional activity and keep them from being offended or put-off by your actions.

2. Your atmosphere may actually be wicked.

Consider your background atmosphere. The general imagery may be a wicked distraction. Bright colors, large windows with glares, and frequently used spaces such as front doors or kitchens with constant activity can be terrible for video conferencing. Consider using a background image or decorate with more neutral colors in a low traffic area of your home.

3. "We've all got both light and dark inside..."

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Lil'Cackles

Why are skeletons so calm?

-Because nothing gets under their skin.

Why don't mummies take vacations?

-They're afraid to unwind.

Where does Dracula keep his money?

-In a blood bank.

Why do skeletons have low self-esteem?

-They have no body to love.

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Nothing Can Stop This Iconic Holiday!

Over the centuries governments, invading armies, churches, reformers and iconoclasts have tried to stop it. The Puritans of early America banned it and even through the time of burning witches, nothing has stopped Halloween. Until COVID-19?

There may be no Halloween this year

and if there is, it will be quite different. If you think about it, this is pretty strange because now we are all encouraged and even legally pressed to wear a mask. Halloween should be easy, right?

Even in the most celebratory cities, changes are afoot.

In Salem, Massachusetts, once known for its 17th century witch hysteria, the city of 43,000 celebrates its macabre history on Halloween, when citizens and tourists roam the streets for the whole month of October, reveling in costumes and treats.

Not this year. Governor Charlie Baker of

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13 Tricks To Make Working At Home...

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What matters is the part we choose...

I know, we are twisting J.K. Rowling's words from Harry Potter just a smidge. Really, it was just to get your attention. Lighting in your space is extremely important! Anything too bright or too dark can create discolored and sometimes even disfigured images on video. Be sure your lighting is appropriate to show your facial expressions for conference calls.

4. Stop when a black cat crosses your path... don't just take it as a sign, pause your video conference and address the issues at hand. I've literally had my two cats start a fight behind me and right when I was reaching the height of my explanations, my co-worker interrupts me to say, "Would you mind backing up to those last statistics please? I was watching your cats going at it behind you. Sorry, I missed all that."

5. Establish a leader of your coven.

All digital interactions should be hosted by one facilitator. It is easy to get a bit off course if everyone is cooking up their own agenda. Make sure, even if you're hosting the meeting in the application that everyone knows who is facilitating. The facilitator and host don't have to be the same person, especially if you require assistance with videos or websites.

6. Describe the potion before you get started.

Before you even start your collaborative session, let participants know the goal and topics for discussion as well as a list of the attendees. The best communications are guided with a

platforms for presentations or notes.

7. Be ready with your ingredients.

Prepare ahead of time so you have what you need to successfully present your ideas. Test your meeting a few minutes early to ensure everything will display and play when you need it.

8. Address concerns right off the bat.

If you're meeting with coworkers, clients or prospects, ask what the biggest concerns are and make sure to acknowledge them and address them in the current meeting or schedule a new meeting to work through any extensive issues.

9. Shoot for brevity. I don't know about you but pulling a two hour video conference is just exhausting. Keep your telephone calls and video conferences brief. 15 to 30 minutes is the norm. Set a duration with attendees in advance and be sure to offer other times for review of additional topics.

10. Use the right tools. Be sure you're ready with a noise canceling headset that includes a microphone for the best reception. Be careful to pay attention to where your microphone sits so there aren't added noises from rubbing on your shirt, hair or beard.

11. Use an extra monitor for meetings. If you're use to working on a bigger screen than just your laptop at home, try using your TV as a second monitor. Generally, all you need is an HDMI cable and your all set.

12. Give yourself queues. Set an alarm to sound for breaks, wrap up Q&A times at the ends of your meetings, and even lunch or end of day. This will help you stay on a regular schedule and feel more at ease.

13. Everyone deserves to fly.

If you're having trouble accessing the data you need from the office or just worried about security, give us a call today for your Network Security Audit. Let your business take flight with secure remote access to your network.

Punishment For Being Too Smart

Was this man too smart or not smart enough? We will let you be the judge.

A security researcher had a brilliant idea. He would take out a vanity license plate reading NULL. To everyone around him, it would be a joke. To the California DMV, it would give him a free pass, right?

The idea was that if the DMV computer system saw a plate with "NULL", it would assign all tickets attributed to the waste bin. However, he was a little too smart for his own good because the opposite happened. He was immediately assigned every ticket for an un-plated car, he told the conference Def Con. In no time at all, he had about \$15,000 in traffic tickets.

The police and the DMV told the snarky researcher to change his plate. He refused. So, the private company that administers the database removed the fines, but fines are still showing up.

Since fines are now being removed...

Bruce Schneier, of Schneier on Security, is now wondering if he really did find a great way to get rid of all his traffic fines permanently.



Nothing Can Stop This...

(Continued from page 1)

Massachusetts recently tightened restrictions on indoor and outdoor group gatherings. But, will a governor or virus really stop the festivities? We will see.

According to the results of a Morning Consult/Harris poll, 63% of adults believe that people would "find creative, fun, and safe ways to celebrate Halloween" this year. The Harris poll, conducted in mid-June, found that 74% of millennial mothers said Halloween was more important than ever this year.

Drastically pared down but not cancelled. Candy sales are still expected to soar this Fall. So, don't let the dreary conditions in the community stop your spirit. Here are a few fun tips to celebrate safely this Halloween:

1. Pumpkin Carving Contest with neighbors and family.
2. Try pitching a community trunk-or-treat so everyone can see one another at a safe distance.
3. Decorate your home and work spaces to the hilt.

However you choose to celebrate this year, have a safe, healthy and Happy Halloween!

Who's Lurking Around On Your Wi-Fi?

Is your Internet slow as molasses? Worried about neighboring businesses stealing your Wi-Fi? Take a look at this new application to help you monitor your Wi-Fi and boot off unwelcome visitors.

Don't pay for neighboring businesses to browse. Many companies have Wi-Fi available these days for their workers and patrons. However, often times, this is easily exploited. Be aware of who is accessing your network. If your Wi-Fi is unsecured, you may be leaving an open door for hackers to waltz right in and take what they want.

Make sure devices connected to your network are from sources you trust. Even if you have some bandwidth to spare at work or home, leaving

your access point open may mean you're sharing a whole lot more than just the Internet. Wireless Network Watcher for Windows users, allows you to see every active device on your network so you can identify safe ones and kick off any unknown users. There are a variety of programs like this to help you monitor your network available for Mac and Windows users alike.

Setup a "guest" connection.

Most routers allow for a feature called a "guest network". This creates a separate connect for visitors, restricting them just to the Internet. No additional network resources are left open. You can even setup a QR code for your guests to simply scan the code at the receptionists desk when they arrive and they are in.

Covid-19 Looting Causes Struggles For Businesses

Months of COVID-19 restrictions killed sales on Chicago's Magnificent Mile, but will repeat rioting finally kill business? I think most of us are just watching and waiting to see how the landscape for our business will change.

The Magnificent Mile is no exception; one the world's most well-known and fashionable shopping areas, sparkles in the heart of downtown Chicago. The 13-block strip boasts some of the finest mix of five-star hotels, condos, restaurants, sightseeing, and about 460 stores, drawing both city and tourist traffic to a beautiful downtown built around the Chicago River. But mass looting in May and August have taken a toll, possibly one more severe than COVID-19 restrictions.

Economic impact. Nearly every aspect of the intertwined economy that once twinkled with prosperity is changing: the resident population, tourism, shopping and hotels. In the August round of rioting, at least 200 stores were looted, many for the second time in three months, by mobs of young people who weren't burning down their own neighborhoods and instead traveled downtown to loot, according to the Chicago Tribune. One owner of a smaller business reported that looters took everything, including the soap in the bathrooms. The Chicago Tribune also re-

ported that one restaurant was able to open the next day because in May they purchased plywood to cover their windows for the next riot. New protocols, he said. But how do tourists and city residents, who patronize these shops and restaurants, respond? They stay away. In the aftermath of the looting, foot traffic in the Magnificent Mile was down 70 percent.

Even Chicago's famed jazz and blues clubs have been hit, but it's the anti-riot curfew that shuts down their businesses. At least in the short-term, the city entertainment scene will be impacted. Meanwhile, commercial space and retail is changing. Some speculate that stores will remodel without windows that can be smashed during looting, which they expect to continue.

It's no surprise that our cities are hurting. While the impacts of Covid and all the new regulations may have been suspected, the fall out is truly hurting our cities and therefore their residents in a variety of ways. Looting in many cities across our nation has dramatically changed the landscape for all business owners. It seems that keeping our businesses afloat will mean a shift in our primary sources of revenue, marketing efforts, working habits, and of course overall adaptability.



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Inquiring Minds...

PPP Loans May Be Forgivable, Tax Exempt.

The Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan, which gave small businesses help to pay salaries and expenses during the coronavirus crisis, will be forgiven so long as companies retained employees and used the funds for covered expenses.

The PPP money must have been used at least 60% for payroll, or no more than 40% for covered expenses such as mortgage, rent, and utility payments. PPP can be forgiven if employers continue to pay salaries as normal during the eight weeks after the loan is taken out.

Employers will have to do a loan forgiveness application.

You can find that at: <https://www.sba.gov/document/sba-form-paycheck-protection-program-ez-loan-forgiveness-application>

If the PPP loan is forgiven, it is exempt from tax. But, employers might find that their deductible expenses are lower. So, if you used PPP to pay \$1,000 in utilities during the 8-week PPP period, you can't also deduct the \$1,000 amount as a utility expense on your taxes.

How Phones In Trees Motivate Workers.

Phones dangle from trees outside Amazon and Whole Foods delivery stations, but not as some kind of high-tech prank. It's really about work! The phones are key to a clever job-jumping strategy that snags orders faster for a network of drivers and cuts competing drivers out of jobs.

At Whole Foods, drivers compete for fast-delivery Instant Offers. These require an immediate response and take from 15 to 45 minutes to complete, according to Crain's Business. An automated system uses driver smartphones to detect which drivers are closest to the delivery station. Nearby drivers have only minutes to accept the offer. Since the automated system at Whole Foods can detect phones from about 20 feet away, drivers connected to the devices in trees can accept offers before drivers parked in lots or blocks away.

At Amazon, the plot thickens. Amazon Flex Account drivers are paid a neat \$18 per route. Phones in trees evidently serve as multiple master devices controlled by an secret person or computer that acts as an intermediary between Amazon and drivers. It dispatches routes and charges drivers a fee, which violates Amazon policies, according to Crain's. It also allows unauthorized drivers (those without a license or those not authorized to work in the U.S.) to accept Flex routes by paying an hourly fee to an unknown person. Although against Amazon policies, this activity has either not been fully understood or is simply allowed to continue.

Branch Out Your Security!

Suspicious about activities on your network? Worried there may be open access points? Concerned there may not be enough in place to keep your company safe?

Stop the insanity! Give us a call today for your Network Security Audit. We will review your entire network from top to bottom and present you with custom security solutions to resolve any current issues and plan for the future.

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