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# Working From Home: Overcoming the Challenges, Leveraging the Advantages

by Josh Christie



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The decision to become a Freight Agent can be one of the most rewarding moves in an entrepreneur's career. However, working independently and most of the time remotely, can have challenges that if not supported by the right back office can lead to major obstacles in your path to success.

In our article [The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Freight Agents](#), we covered the full range of successful habits, from goal setting and planning to listening, learning, and communicating. While those habits are challenging when you're working from home, the habits of networking and teamwork can be even more complicated. This article addresses those challenges and explores leveraging the advantages of working from home.

## Overcoming the Challenges of Working from Home

We've covered a wide range of challenges in the list below, along with ways to overcome them.

- Isolation.** This comes with the territory of working from home. Plus, when you're an Independent Agent, there's no on-premise company leadership team to help with support unless you are part of a fantastic Freight Agency program. But, as an Independent Agent, you can pick up the phone and call people to keep connected. Use video conferencing not only for business follow-ups but also to say hi and chat. Like all things, it's a matter of setting aside time for this critical task.
- Networking.** As we noted in our earlier article, networking is one of the habits of highly successful Freight Agents. Take to heart the notes above on picking up the phone and trying video conferencing. But don't neglect in-person conferences and events. Especially when they are attended by customers in a niche industry you service. There are also local business networking groups that can be very helpful in connecting with potential customers. Networking can grow your business and help you overcome isolation. Find those events and get them on your calendar.
- Teamwork.** This one is on our list of habits for effective Freight Agents. It's all about involving your team to engage them in a work hard, play hard attitude that makes for a fantastic workplace. If you're flying solo, that's where your Freight Broker can shine. Their entire back-office team and leadership should be a big part of your team. Make sure you leverage those resources. And, if you don't have those resources with your current Freight Agency program, it may be time to [move your Freight Agency](#).
- Distractions.** No self-respecting list of work-from-home challenges would leave out distractions. Of course, distractions in the office aren't much different, from 'that guy' in the cubicle a few inches away to impromptu hallway meetings carried on at earsplitting levels just a few feet away. The nature of the distractions at home is different, from the dog that needs to be walked to any number of chores that await. But the answer is the same, use noise-cancelling headphones to block the sounds, and perhaps at home, you've got a door that you can close. Just the act of sitting down at your office computer should be a signal that now's the time for entirely focusing your attention on work.
- Work-Life Unbalance.** Some call this forgetting to clock out. You're no longer leaving the office, winding down on the drive home, and entering a new space with friends and family. Instead, you might be turning around on your swivel office chair and watching television. It's way too easy to turn back to your computer and dash off a few messages from time to time. It would help if you consciously broke from work at the end of the day and for the weekend. It's a good idea to take a few breaks throughout the day. Also, try eating lunch in the kitchen rather than sitting at your desk. Work in highly concentrated 'sprints' with items from your priority list. Sometimes these highly-focused pockets of productivity with a pre-designed start/stop time can be very effective in determining a successful day.
- Taking Vacation.** Related to work-life unbalance is the need to work not only 24/7 but for the full 365 days. Yet leaving your business for a day, let alone for a week or two, is almost impossible for a Freight Broker. That's where a top-notch Freight Agent program can help. Often, they can support your business while you and your family take time for a much-needed break.
- Technical Support.** As a Freight Agent, most of your workday is spent on a computer using everything from load boards to a TMS. Then there's email and the usual list of office software. Working from home often requires you to take on IT support and systems administrator roles. Some of those challenges are relatively easy to overcome; a quick Google search can often lead to a step-by-step solution for standard software. But for our specialized transportation industry software, you need fast and intelligent support. That's where your Freight Agency program can prove its value. Don't have that level of support? Perhaps it's time to assess whether your [current program still meets your needs](#).

Another way to overcome work-from-home challenges is to join online discussion groups to share problems and solutions with others in a similar situation. But, of course, be wary of spending too much of your time on the group, as it can quickly become a time trap.

## Leveraging the Advantages of Working from Home

There are quite a few advantages of working from home. Here are our thoughts on how best to leverage those advantages.

- Commuting Time Savings.** The first thought might be, 'oh great; I can work more now.' Well, that's true, but it would be better if you took that time savings and applied it to your family and overall mental well-being. Of course, you can also use it to schedule those prospecting phone calls or, just as good, phone calls and video conferences to catch up with people. Further, you can attend local business networking meetings and events. Add them to your calendar and whether it's for your family or your work, schedule it and make it happen. Make full use of your extra time to leverage the advantages of working from home.
- Flexible Work Schedule.** One advantage of a flexible work schedule is that if your best work happens at night, you can make that happen. Plus, it can also allow you to match better your customers' work schedules in another time zone. But don't forget about your family. Helping your kids off to school or checking in with other family members regularly can help your family and your own attitude when it comes time to go to your home office and concentrate on work.
- Fewer Disruptions.** As we pointed out above, the disruptions are often family and friends rather than co-workers and bosses. But at least that narrows the likelihood of disruptions from hundreds of people at the office to just a few at home. But as we noted above, it's important to fence off your workspace and go to work.
- Work-Life Balance.** This is listed above as a challenge, but it can also benefit if you focus on the flexible work schedule, the absence of commute time, and fewer disruptions to spend more time with your family. Finding a work-life balance can often be easier said than done. It does take some thought and scheduling family time on your calendar to get things started. Think of it this way, if you spend a considerable amount of your time working and your days are tightly controlled through schedules, utilize this same process for scheduling time for events and people you value. It may seem rigid on the surface but could ultimately free you up to be present when these scheduled times occur.

## Dealing with Clients Who Work from Home

Many of your clients also have challenges. That includes work from home-based shippers, warehouse operators, and truck drivers who have no choice about working from home or a remote office. Working from home, you can certainly relate to their challenges. This should further give you insight into how to better connect with them. Although they may not be in a traditional home-like setting, they also aren't surrounded by the constant presence of a team environment.

Start with discussing shared challenges and sharing how you've overcome them. This could lead to an enhancement of your existing relationship with those clients. Ask how you can help alleviate any challenges specific to their freight needs. Evaluate your own processes to see if there is flexibility to improve their experience without disrupting your own efficiencies. This simple act can be seen as a true 'partnership' attempt on your part.

Perhaps the good news is that you're not alone in working remotely. Freight Agents were pioneers in the work-from-home world. With the intervention of a pandemic, [Findstack](#) reports a 159% increase in remote workers, with many job seekers reporting they're only looking for remote work. You're already there and developing your work-from-home skills, expertise, and experience.

Of course, you still need support from a Freight Agency program that knows what you're facing and is already providing the help you need to a wide range of Freight Agents. For more on this, see our article [What to Look for in a Freight Agency Program](#).

We're biased. We feel that our Freight Agency program is the best in the business. To see for yourself, look at our [Agent Opportunities page](#). You can also [hear directly from our successful Agents](#). Then, get in touch, and we can get started.

Call toll-free: 866.559.0203. Or complete the form at [D&L Agent Requirements](#).

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