

Tips to Sharpen Your People Skills While Working From Home

In my opinion, “people skills” are just (if not more) important than the skills it takes to do your job. Colleges and universities are filled with brilliant scholars who can’t get along with their peers, I find business leaders who are remarkably gifted, but make enemies at every turn. And even in churches, ministries and nonprofits, if you can’t engage positively with your co-workers, things won’t end well. And it’s particularly difficult for freelancers and those working from home. I worked for many years from my home and know that social contact can get very sparse. We need to keep up our people skills no matter what our situation, so I asked freelance writer Jenny Holt’s advice, and here are her thoughts:

If you have a home-based business and are considering hosting a live streaming event, commencing a commercial campaign or making a promotional video, you have probably already discovered one undeniable truth: that *communication is key for business success*. Even if your team works remotely and you are alone most of the day, you probably communicate with partners, freelancers, other home workers and clients via email, Skype, or telephone. The question is, do you have the interpersonal skills required to achieve your immediate and long-term goals?

What Interpersonal Skills Do Home Workers Need?

Interpersonal skills can be defined as the abilities you need to communicate or interact with others; they include communicating, cooperating, connecting and relating. It is not uncommon these days to see that recruiters are increasingly demanding that workers have the ability not only to shine on

their own, but also work well as part of a team. Working from home does not allow you to ignore these crucial abilities. Whether you are a home-based consultant, artist, writer or publicist, your product or service will never reach a wide audience if you don't get your point of view across effectively, know how to negotiate, relate to others' needs or opinions or influence others successfully—and of course, business success is only one of the many benefits bestowed by interpersonal skills.

Improving Interpersonal Skills from Home

Some of the most valuable communication tools you can hone from home, include presentation skills (speaking confidently via Skype or phone) and being optimistic (which will enable you to cope with stressors without negative thoughts or behavior affecting your work). These traits are difficult to acquire; one way to do so is to learn more about emotional intelligence and to use mindfulness-based activities (such as meditation or prayer) to equip your mind to deal with stress and tough-to-deal-with thoughts and emotions.

Making your clients or colleagues feel understood is a crucial pillar of communication; this involves, above all, being a good listener—really hearing what the other person is saying instead of hoping they will stop talking so you can get your point of view across. Within this category is empathy—the ability to truly understand someone else's point of view and receive their feedback in a non-judgmental manner so you can make necessary changes to your business. To make a person feel heard, you need to hone your 'active listening' skills by asking questions and building rapport. You should never be afraid to give or receive feedback; you want to learn the valuable opinion of clients and collaborators, but your opinion is just as valid and important.

If you work as part of team of freelancers or home-based workers, it is also vital to motivate others, so that they are

constantly reminded you are working to achieve the same goals. Humor is another quality you should use regularly—since it can diffuse tension and help you achieve what you want.

Improving interpersonal skills is a challenging aim that can be achieved through research, training and making a greater effort to listen to others in a non-judgmental way. Basic skills we should always aim to exercise include being clear, using non-incendiary language, seeking clarifications where appropriate, building trust by letting people know more about ourselves, showing empathy and using humor as a means of bonding and obtaining what we need. {eoa}

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