



ONLINE SMART WORKING GUIDEBOOK

**SMART WORKING,
SMART LIFE:
THE ULTIMATE
GUIDE TO
WORKING BETTER
FROM ANYWHERE!**



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INTRODUCTION

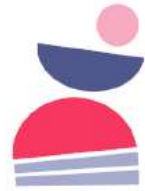
In an increasingly connected and digital world, the concept of Smart Working has gained traction, radically transforming the way we work. As described by Emmanuel Carrère in his book "Yoga," there is a Sanskrit term, *vrutti*, which indicates the continuous activity of the mind, a phenomenon that has become even more pervasive today. The mind never stops working, even when we are not at our desks: in the bathroom, in bed, in front of the mirror, or while talking to a friend. The mind copies, pastes, cuts, chooses between what is useful and what is not, moves, photographs, saves, and deletes.

On January 3, 1983, Time magazine dedicated its cover to the "Man of the Year," created by George Segal. The "Man of the Year" was the personal computer, with the slogan "The Computer Moves In." During the lockdown weeks, that cover and slogan became a reality. In the Time photo, the plaster man appears intimidated, as if he were in the presence of a new employer. The plaster man makes himself available to the machine to receive instructions and commands, an image of life consumed in front of the computer. (Carozzi, 2022)

Wake up at 8, spend the whole day on calls, eat poorly, have sleepless nights, and then the cycle starts again. The triangle of time, budget, and scope becomes the focus of our days. During calls, we must remain calm, but then we vent, perhaps by punching the table. In Smart Working, you cannot share stress and anxiety with colleagues; everything is amplified because it is no longer possible to share moments of difficulty. You are alone, you work a lot, you have no comparison, you cannot vent, or you vent with your family.

The psyche and language have changed. We say 6 PM, not 6 o'clock. An effect on the psyche and language caused by cell phones and an atomic division of time due to online work. We check work emails from our phones, starting at 6 AM after having checked them just before falling asleep. Information is now constantly traveling, we no longer sleep, we are forced to wake up and respond (Carozzi, 2022).

The guide is divided into 2 sections to provide comprehensive insights into Smart Working for both companies and employees.



The first section is aimed at companies and employers, detailing how they should organize Smart Working for their employees. It covers essential aspects such as setting up remote work policies, ensuring data security, and providing the necessary tools and resources for effective communication and collaboration. Additionally, this section offers practical tips on managing remote teams, fostering a positive work culture, and maintaining employee engagement and motivation.

The second section is dedicated to employees, serving as a sort of handbook on how to organize their work in a Smart Working environment. It includes guidelines on creating a productive home office setup, managing time effectively, and balancing work and personal life. This section also addresses common challenges faced by remote workers and provides solutions to overcome them, ensuring that employees can thrive in a Smart Working environment.

In addition, the guide includes an appendix that identifies some best practices in the field of smart working and analyzes the legislation on smart working in the two countries of the project consortium, namely Italy and Portugal.



SECTION 1

A Comprehensive Company Netiquette for Smart Working

Remote work, or smart working, offers significant advantages in terms of flexibility and autonomy. However, without a well-defined netiquette, these advantages can be undermined by issues like blurred boundaries between work and personal life, constant connectivity, and increased stress levels. A comprehensive company netiquette is crucial for fostering a healthy and productive remote work environment. It not only promotes employee well-being but also enhances communication, collaboration, and overall organizational effectiveness.

I. Core Principles of a Smart Working Netiquette:

1. **Respect for Personal Time:** The fundamental principle is respecting employees' non-work hours. Flexibility should never equate to constant availability. The right to disconnect is paramount. The focus shifts from "time worked" to "objectives achieved." Clearly defining core working hours (not necessarily rigid, but indicative) and respecting the right to disconnect outside of these hours is crucial. Performance measurement is based on results, not hours spent online.
2. **Clear and Transparent Communication (Objective-Oriented):** Communication should be clear, concise, and timely, but above all, oriented towards achieving objectives. Avoid ambiguity, excessive communication, and information overload. Every communication should have a clear purpose and contribute to the achievement of pre-set goals.
3. **Appropriate Use of Communication Channels (and Asynchronous Communication When Possible):** Define which communication channels are suitable for different types of interactions (e.g., email for formal communication, instant messaging for quick questions, video conferencing for meetings and discussions). Encourage the use of asynchronous communication (e.g., email, task management tools) to reduce the need for real-time



interactions and allow everyone to manage their time efficiently. This supports objective-based work.

4. **Promotion of Work-Life Balance (and Focus on Objectives):** Actively encourage employees to maintain a healthy work-life balance by setting clear boundaries and promoting disconnection outside of core working hours. Performance evaluation is based on the achievement of objectives, not online presence. This allows employees to organize their work flexibly, as long as the objectives are met.

5. **Mutual Respect and Professionalism:** Maintain a professional and respectful tone in all online interactions, regardless of the communication channel. This includes respecting individual work styles and schedules, understanding that flexibility means different things to different people, and avoiding making assumptions about someone's availability based on their online status. Focus on collaborative achievement of objectives, rather than policing time spent online.

6. **Objective Setting and Performance Measurement:** This is a crucial addition. Clearly define objectives for each role and project. Performance should be measured against these objectives, not against hours worked. Regularly review progress towards objectives and provide constructive feedback. This principle underpins the entire netiquette, allowing for a truly flexible and results-oriented work environment.

7. **Accountability and Ownership:** While flexibility is key, it's also important to maintain accountability. Employees should take ownership of their work and be responsible for achieving their objectives. Clear communication about progress and potential roadblocks is essential for maintaining trust and ensuring successful outcomes.

II. Detailed Guidelines for an Effective Netiquette:

1. **Working Hours and Availability:**

- ✓ **Establish Core Working Hours:** Define core working hours to provide structure and facilitate collaboration. While flexibility is important, having a general overlap in working hours is beneficial for team interactions.
- ✓ **No Meetings Before 9:00 AM or After 5:00 PM (or similar reasonable times):** Avoid scheduling meetings too early in the morning or late in the



afternoon/evening. This respects employees' personal time and allows for a smooth transition between work and personal life. Explicitly prohibit meetings on Friday afternoons to encourage a prompt start to the weekend.

- ✓ The Friday no meeting after 2:00 PM
- ✓ "Right to Disconnect" Period: Implement a mandatory "right to disconnect" period, for example, between 1:00 PM and 2:30 PM for lunch, and after 8:00 PM in the evening. During these times, employees should not be expected to respond to work-related communications.
- ✓ Limit Communications Outside Working Hours: Discourage sending emails, messages, or calls outside of established working hours unless it's a genuine emergency. Emphasize that delayed responses outside of working hours are acceptable and expected.
- ✓ Respect Time Zones: Be mindful of different time zones when scheduling meetings or sending communications.

2. Email Communication:

- ✓ Clear and Concise Subject Lines: Use descriptive subject lines that accurately reflect the email's content.
- ✓ Concise and Focused Content: Keep emails brief and to the point. Avoid lengthy emails unless absolutely necessary.
- ✓ Appropriate Use of "Reply All": Use "Reply All" judiciously. Only use it when the information is relevant to all recipients.
- ✓ Establish Reasonable Response Times: Define expectations for email response times. Immediate responses are not always necessary. A response within 24-48 hours is often acceptable.
- ✓ Use Out-of-Office Replies: Encourage the use of out-of-office replies when employees are unavailable, specifying their return date and alternative contacts if necessary.

3. Instant Messaging and Chat:

- ✓ Use for Quick and Informal Communication: Reserve instant messaging for quick questions, informal updates, and non-urgent matters.
- ✓ Avoid Sending Messages Outside Working Hours: Refrain from sending messages outside of working hours unless it's a critical emergency.
- ✓ Respect Response Expectations: While instant messaging implies quicker responses, it's not necessary to respond instantly to every message.



- ✓ **Use Status Indicators:** Utilize status indicators (e.g., "available," "away," "busy") to communicate availability.

4. Video Conferencing:

- ✓ **Schedule Meetings in Advance:** Avoid impromptu video calls unless absolutely necessary. Send calendar invites with clear agendas and objectives.
- ✓ **Start and End Meetings on Time:** Respect everyone's time by starting and ending meetings punctually.
- ✓ **Use Video Strategically:** Encourage participants to use video when appropriate for interaction and discussion, but don't require it for every meeting.
- ✓ **Mute When Not Speaking:** Encourage participants to mute their microphones when not speaking to minimize background noise.
- ✓ **Provide Clear Agendas and Materials:** Share meeting agendas and any relevant materials in advance to allow participants to prepare.
- ✓ **Consider Meeting Fatigue:** Be mindful of the potential for video conferencing fatigue and limit the number and duration of video meetings.

5. Training and Education:

- ✓ **Provide Comprehensive Training on Smart Working Best Practices:** Companies should invest in providing comprehensive training programs for all employees transitioning to or already engaged in smart working. These programs should cover:
 - ✓ **Effective Communication Strategies:** Training on clear and concise written and verbal communication, appropriate use of different communication channels, and techniques for avoiding miscommunication in a remote setting.
 - ✓ **Time Management and Productivity:** Strategies for managing time effectively, prioritizing tasks, and maintaining productivity while working remotely.
 - ✓ **Digital Well-being and Work-Life Balance:** Training on setting boundaries between work and personal life, managing stress and preventing burnout, and maintaining physical and mental health while working remotely.



- ✓ **Cybersecurity and Data Protection:** Education on best practices for cybersecurity and data protection when working remotely, including secure password management, safe internet browsing, and data privacy.
- ✓ **Company Netiquette and Policies:** Clear explanation and reinforcement of the company's smart working netiquette and related policies.
- ✓ **Regular Refresher Courses:** Offer regular refresher courses to reinforce key concepts and address any emerging challenges related to smart working.
- ✓ **Manager Training:** Provide specific training for managers on how to effectively manage remote teams, including communication strategies, performance management, and fostering a sense of team cohesion.

6. General Recommendations and Enforcement:

- ✓ **Lead by Example:** Managers and team leaders should model the desired behavior and adhere to the netiquette guidelines.
- ✓ **Regularly Review and Update the Netiquette:** The netiquette should be a living document, reviewed and updated periodically to reflect the evolving needs of the company and its employees. Gather feedback from employees to ensure the netiquette remains relevant and effective.
- ✓ **Promote Open Communication and Feedback:** Encourage open communication and feedback regarding the netiquette and any related concerns.

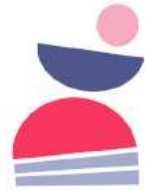
III Promoting Happiness at Work and Smartworking Training

1. Flexibility and Productivity

- **Flexible Management:** Adopting a more flexible management of work times and locations can increase productivity by 15% to 20%, reduce company real estate costs by 20% to 30%, decrease absenteeism, and improve the company climate.
- **New Corporate Culture:** It is essential to develop a new corporate culture that values flexibility, paying attention to avoid missing the positive results expected.

2. Preparation for Smartworking

- **Preventive Training:** During the pandemic, many found themselves working from home without any preparation. It is crucial to provide adequate training for smartworking to avoid it being perceived as a day off or employees being unable to organize themselves.



- **Autonomy and Responsibility:** Promote autonomy and responsibility among employees to ensure that smartworking is effective.

3. Socialization and Well-being

- **Avoid Alienation:** Remember that we are social beings and that socialization in the workplace is important. We cannot completely eliminate it.
- **Promote Socialization:** Create opportunities for socialization even in smartworking mode, such as virtual meetings and online team-building activities.

4. Smartworking Training

- **Distinguish Individuals:** Recognize that each employee is different and has different needs. Customize smartworking training based on individual characteristics.
- **Prevent Technostress:** Provide support to prevent technostress, accompanying workers in a process of growth and adaptation.
- **Create Reciprocal Bonds:** Encourage the creation of bonds based on mutual trust and support among colleagues.

5. Monitoring and Feedback

- **Evaluate Impact:** Monitor the impact of the measures adopted and collect feedback from employees to make any necessary improvements.
- **Continuous Adaptation:** Be ready to adapt strategies based on the results obtained and emerging needs.

IV BENEFIT For Companies:

- ❖ **Increased Productivity:** Studies have shown that employees working remotely can be more productive due to fewer distractions, greater autonomy, and the ability to work during their peak performance times.
- ❖ **Reduced Overhead Costs:** Companies can save on office space, utilities, and other operational costs by having a smaller physical office or allowing employees to work remotely full-time.
- ❖ **Wider Talent Pool:** Smart working allows companies to hire talent from anywhere in the world, expanding their recruitment options and access to specialized skills.



- ❖ **Improved Employee Retention:** Offering flexible work arrangements can increase employee satisfaction and loyalty, reducing turnover and associated recruitment costs.
- ❖ **Enhanced Business Continuity:** Remote work capabilities enable businesses to continue operating during unexpected events such as natural disasters, pandemics, or office closures.
- ❖ **Better Employer Branding:** Companies that embrace smart working are often seen as more progressive and attractive to potential employees, improving their employer brand and ability to attract top talent.
- ❖ **Reduced Absenteeism:** Employees working remotely may be less likely to take sick days for minor illnesses, as they can often continue working from home.
- ❖ **Improved Environmental Impact:** Reduced commuting translates to lower carbon emissions and a smaller environmental footprint for the company.

V Benefits for Workers:

- ❖ **Improved Work-Life Balance:** Smart working offers greater flexibility in managing work and personal responsibilities, leading to a better work-life balance and reduced stress.
- ❖ **Increased Autonomy and Flexibility:** Employees have more control over their work schedule and environment, allowing them to work when and where they are most productive.
- ❖ **Reduced Commuting Time and Costs:** Eliminating or reducing commutes saves time and money spent on transportation.
- ❖ **Greater Job Satisfaction:** The flexibility and autonomy offered by smart working can lead to increased job satisfaction and motivation.
- ❖ **Improved Focus and Concentration:** Working from a comfortable and personalized environment can minimize distractions and improve focus.
- ❖ **Better Access to Job Opportunities:** Remote work opens up job opportunities that may not have been accessible due to geographical limitations.
- ❖ **Enhanced Well-being:** Reduced stress, improved work-life balance, and greater autonomy can contribute to overall well-being and mental health.
- ❖ **More Time for Personal Pursuits:** The flexibility of smart working allows employees to dedicate more time to hobbies, family, and other personal interests.



SECTION 3

Smart working recommendations – protecting yourself from technostress

Introduction

Smart working, while offering numerous benefits, also presents challenges, particularly in terms of well-being and technostress. Therefore, this section provides recommendations for smart workers to protect their well-being and avoid technostress, while also highlighting the importance of self-assessment in determining one's suitability for smart work. By following these recommendations, workers can create a balanced and productive work environment that supports both their professional and personal lives, continuously evaluate, and adapt to ensure long-term success in a smart working setup.

Recommendations for smart workers

1. Establish clear boundaries

Set clear boundaries between work and personal life to avoid work creep and maintain a healthy work-life balance. This involves creating physical and temporal distinctions between your work and personal spaces. By establishing these boundaries, you can improve focus during work hours and fully disconnect during personal time, leading to increased productivity and reduced stress levels.

✦ Our top three tips:

- Create a dedicated workspace at home and stick to defined working hours. By designating a specific area in your home solely for work, you ensure it is separate from your relaxation spaces. Additionally, establish and communicate clear working hours to both your family and colleagues, mimicking a traditional office schedule to maintain structure and routine.
- Use visual elements to signal work mode, e.g., wear specific work clothes or use a particular light setting in your workspace to indicate to yourself and others that you are in work mode.
- Implement a shutdown ritual by creating a consistent end-of-day routine, such as closing all work-related tabs, setting an out-of-office message, or taking a short walk, to mentally transition from work to personal time.



💡 Ask yourself:

- Am I able to switch off from work when my day ends, or do I find myself frequently checking emails or thinking about unfinished tasks during personal time?
- Do I find myself constantly thinking about work tasks during my personal time and, if so, how can I better compartmentalise my thoughts?
- How effectively am I communicating my work boundaries to colleagues, family, and friends, and are they respecting these boundaries?

🔍 Learning from an example:

Sarah, a marketing manager, converted a spare room into a home office. She enters this space at 9am and leaves at 5pm, symbolically 'commuting' to and from work. This helps her mentally separate work from personal time. To reinforce this boundary, Sarah has established a morning routine that mimics her previous office commute. She wakes up at her usual time, gets dressed in work attire, and takes a short walk around the block before entering her home office. At the end of the day, she closes all work-related applications, shuts down her computer, and takes another brief walk to decompress. This routine, combined with her dedicated workspace, has significantly improved her ability to maintain a healthy work-life balance and increased her overall job satisfaction.

📺 Smart working in action: <https://youtu.be/4SCrXqbhmCY>

2. Practice digital detox

Regularly disconnect from digital devices to reduce technostress and improve mental well-being. This practice involves intentionally setting aside periods of time where you completely disengage from all work-related technology, allowing your mind to rest and recharge without the constant influx of digital stimuli.

✦ Our top three tips:

- Implement tech-free times during your day, especially before bedtime. This practice can significantly improve sleep quality and reduce overall stress levels by allowing your mind to unwind without digital stimulation.
- Use apps or build-in phone features to track and limit your screen time, setting daily goals for reduced usage. This can help you become more aware of your digital habits and gradually reduce dependency on devices.



- Create tech-free zones in your home, such as the dining area or bedroom, to encourage face-to-face interactions and better sleep hygiene. Establishing these zones can help reinforce boundaries between work and personal life, promoting more meaningful offline experiences.

💡 Ask yourself:

- How frequently do I find myself checking work-related communications outside of designated work hours, and what impact does this have on my ability to fully engage in personal activities and relationships?
- Am I setting clear expectations with colleagues about my availability outside of work hours, and do I feel comfortable not responding immediately to non-urgent messages?
- In what ways can I create a more structured transition between work and personal time to reduce the temptation of checking work-related communications during off-hours?

🔍 Learning from an example:

John, a software developer, sets his work phone to 'Do not disturb' mode after 7pm and does not check work emails until he starts work the next day. This helps him relax and recharge in the evenings. To further enhance his digital detox routine, John has established a set of evening rituals. After activating 'Do not disturb', he places his work phone in a drawer in his home office, physically removing it from his living space. He then engages in a 30-minute workout or meditation session to transition from work mode to personal time. Johan has also configured his personal devices to block notifications from work-related apps during off-hours. This approach has not only improved his sleep quality but has also led to increased creativity and problem-solving abilities during work hours, as his mind is fully refreshed each morning.

🎥 Smart working in action: <https://youtu.be/LT3SMwSzjiw>

3. Prioritise physical education

Incorporate regular physical activity and ergonomic practices in your daily routine. This not only helps counteract the physical strain of prolonged sitting and screen time but also boosts overall energy levels, mental clarity, and productivity throughout your workday.

✦ Our top three tips:



- Take short breaks every hour to stretch or walk around. This practice not only helps prevent muscle stiffness but also refreshes your mind, leading to improved focus when you return to your tasks.
- Invest in ergonomic equipment such as an adjustable chair, standing desk, or ergonomic keyboard to maintain proper posture and reduce physical strain during long work hours.
- Practice the 20-20-20 rule: every 20 minutes, look at something 20 cm away from at least 20 seconds to reduce eye strain associated with prolonged screen time.

💡 Ask yourself:

- How often do I find myself sitting for extended periods without movement, and what physical sensations or discomfort do I notice in my body by the end of my workday? Are there specific areas of tension or pain that consistently arise?
- Am I incorporating enough variety in my physical positions throughout the day, such as alternating between sitting, standing, and moving? How can I introduce more movement into my daily routine?
- Have I created an ergonomic workspace that supports good posture and reduces physical strain? What adjustments could I make to improve my work environment's ergonomics?

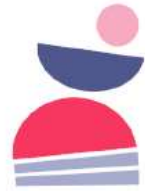
🔍 Learning from an example:

Maria, an accountant, sets a timer to remind her to stand up and stretch every hour. She also invested in an ergonomic chair and standing desk to alternate between sitting and standing throughout the day. To further enhance her physical well-being, Maria has created a mini workout routine that she performs during these hourly breaks. It includes simple exercises like desk push-ups, leg raises, and neck rolls. Additionally, she keeps a yoga mat and resistance bands near her workspace for quick strength-training sessions during longer breaks. Maria has found that this approach not only alleviates physical discomfort but also boosts her energy levels and mental clarity, leading to improved productivity and job satisfaction.

🎥 Smart working in action: <https://youtu.be/EBxV9YDEtAk>

4. Maintain social connections

Actively seek out social interactions to combat feelings of isolation often associated with remote work. Regular social engagement not only improves mental well-being



but also fosters a sense of belonging and can lead to increased job satisfaction and productivity in a smart working environment.

★ Our top three tips:

- Schedule regular virtual coffee breaks with colleagues or join online professional networks. These informal interactions can help maintain workplace relationships and provide opportunities for knowledge sharing.
- Participate in or initiate virtual team-building activities, such as online games, book clubs, or hobby-sharing sessions, to create shared experiences with colleagues.
- Use collaborative tools and platforms that encourage spontaneous interactions, mimicking the casual conversations that would occur in a physical office space.

💡 Ask yourself:

- How often do I engage in meaningful interactions with colleagues or peers in my field, and how do these interactions impact my sense of connection to my work and organisation?
- Am I proactively reaching out to maintain and build professional relationships, or am I waiting for others to initiate contact?
- In what ways can I contribute to creating a more inclusive and socially connected remote work environment to myself and my team?

🔍 Learning from an example:

Tom, a remote project manager, organised a weekly virtual lunch with his team where work talk is off-limits. This helps maintain team cohesion and provides a social outlet. To further enhance social connections, Tom has implemented a buddy system where team members are paired up each month for regular one-on-one catchups. He also created a dedicated Slack channel for sharing personal achievements, hobbies, and non-work-related discussions. These initiatives have significantly improved team morale and collaboration, with team members reporting feeling more connected despite the physical distance. As a result, Tom's team has seen an increase in both productivity and creativity in their projects.

🎥 Smart working in action: <https://youtu.be/Or1PS2Gz7Ek>



5. Develop digital competence

Continuously improve your digital skills to reduce technology-related stress and increase efficiency. Developing digital competence not only enhances your productivity but also boosts your confidence in navigating the ever-evolving landscape of smart working tools and technologies.

✦ Our top three tips:

- Allocate time each week for learning new digital tools or improving your skills with existing ones. This consistent practice helps you stay connected with technological advancements and increases your overall digital fluency.
- Participate in online courses or webinars focused on digital skills relevant to your sector. Many platforms offer free or low-cost options for professional development in various digital competencies.
- Create a personal learning network by connecting with tech-savvy colleagues or joining online communities focused on digital skills. This network can provide support, share resources, and offer solutions to common tech challenges.

💡 Ask yourself:

- Do I feel confident using the digital tools required for my job, and what specific areas of technology use cause me the most stress or difficulty?
- How proactive am I seeking out opportunities to enhance my digital skills, and what barriers might be preventing me from doing so more regularly?
- In what ways could improving my digital competence positively impact my work performance and overall job satisfaction?

🔍 Learning from an example:

Lisa, a teacher new to online instruction, dedicates 30 minutes each day to explore features of her school's learning management system. This has significantly reduced her stress during live online classes. To further enhance her digital competence, Lisa joined an online community of educators sharing best practices for virtual teaching. She also enrolled in a short online course on creating engaging digital content. As a result, Lisa has not only mastered her school's learning management system but has also introduced innovative digital tools into her lessons, such as interactive quizzes and virtual field trips. Her students' engagement has noticeably improved, and Lisa now confidently troubleshoots technical issues that arise during classes. Her newfound digital skills have transformed her teaching approach, making her online classes more interactive and effective.



🎥 Smart working in action: <https://youtu.be/8szF-RhCzNo>

6. Manage time effectively

Develop strong time management skills to maintain productivity and reduce stress. Effective time management not only helps you accomplish more in less time but also allows for better work-life balance and reduces the likelihood of burnout in a smart working environment.

✦ Our top three tips:

- Use time-blocking techniques to structure your day and prioritise tasks. This method helps you allocate specific time slots for different activities, ensuring a balanced and productive workday.
- Implement the two-minute rule, i.e., if a task takes less than two minutes to complete, do it immediately rather than adding it to your to-do list.
- Use digital tools like project management software or time-tracking apps to monitor your productivity and identify areas for improvement in your time management.

💡 Ask yourself:

- Am I able to consistently meet deadlines without feeling overwhelmed, and if not, what specific aspects of my time management need improvement?
- How effectively am I distinguishing between urgent and important tasks, and am I allocating my time and energy accordingly?
- In what ways can I create more buffer time in my schedule to accommodate unexpected tasks or challenges without derailing my entire day?

🔍 Learning from an example:

Alex, a freelance writer, uses the Pomodoro Technique, working in focused 25-minute blocks followed by 5-minute breaks. This helps him maintain concentration and avoid burnout. Additionally, he has implemented a weekly planning session every Sunday evening. During this time, he reviews upcoming deadlines, breaks larger projects into manageable tasks, and allocates specific time blocks for each task throughout the week. He also uses a digital board such as Trello to visualise his workflow and track progress. This approach has not only increased Alex's productivity but has also reduced his stress levels significantly. He now completes project ahead of schedule, allowing time for personal development and maintaining a healthier work-life balance.



Clients have noticed the improvement in both the quality and timeliness of his work, leading to more referrals and higher-paying projects.

📺 Smart working in action: <https://youtu.be/xgp6eELYY1M>

7. Create a supportive home environment

Optimise your home workspace to support productivity and well-being. A well-designed home office not only enhances your work performance but also contributes to your overall mental and physical health, creating a positive environment that inspires creativity and efficiency.

✦ Our top three tips:

- Ensure proper lighting, ventilation, and noise control in your work area. These environmental factors play a crucial role in maintaining focus and reducing fatigue throughout the workday.
- Incorporate elements of nature into your workspace, such as plants or natural materials, to improve air quality and create a calming atmosphere.
- Personalise your workspace with items that inspire you, such as artwork or meaningful objects, to create a motivating and enjoyable work environment.

💡 Ask yourself:

- Does my home workspace energise me or drain me, and what specific elements contribute to these feelings?
- How effectively does my current workspace setup support my daily work routines and tasks? Are there any ergonomic improvements I could make?
- In what ways can I make my home office more adaptable to accommodate different work modes, such as focused work, collaborative sessions, or creative tasks?

🔍 Learning from an example:

Emma, a graphic designer, positioned her desk near a window for natural light and installed noise-cancelling curtains to minimise street noise. These changes significantly improved her focus and mood during work hours. To further improve her home office, Emma invested in an adjustable standing desk and an ergonomic chair to promote better posture and allow for movement throughout the day. She also created a small inspiration corner with a pinboard displaying colour swatches, magazine clippings, and client feedback, which helps spark creativity during brainstorming



sessions. Additionally, Emma set up a small air purifier and added several low-maintenance plants to improve air quality. The combination of these elements has transformed her home office into a space that not only boosts her productivity but also supports her overall well-being.

📺 Smart working in action: <https://youtu.be/fqf9hRgaXeo>

8. Practice mindfulness and stress management

Incorporate mindfulness techniques and stress management strategies into your daily routine. Regular practice of mindfulness not only helps reduce work-related stress but also improves focus, decision-making abilities, and overall emotional well-being, leading to a more balanced and productive working experience.

✦ Our top three tips:

- Start your day with a short meditation or deep breathing exercise. This practice sets a calm and focused tone for the day ahead, helping you approach your tasks with clarity and purpose.
- Implement the ‘mindful minute’ technique, i.e., take brief pauses throughout your workday to focus on your breath and reset your mental state, especially before important tasks or meetings.
- Create a stress-relief toolkit with items like stress balls, essential oils, or calming music that you can easily access during moments of tension.

💡 Ask yourself:

- How do I typically respond to work-related stress? What healthy coping mechanisms can I develop to better manage these situations?
- Am I able to recognise early signs of stress or burnout in myself? How can I become more attuned to my mental health and emotional state throughout the workday?
- In what ways can I integrate small moments of mindfulness into my daily work routine to maintain a sense of calm and focus?

🔍 Learning from an example:

David, a project manager, uses a mindfulness app for a 10-minute guided meditation during his lunch break. This helps him reset and approach afternoon tasks with renewed focus. Contributing to his stress management is David’s ‘mindful transitions’ practice, in which before an after each virtual meeting he takes 30 second to practices



deep breathing, helping him shift mental states more effectively. He has also created a designated zen corner in his home office, featuring a small indoor fountain, a yoga mat, and a collection of inspiring quotes. When feeling overwhelmed, David takes short breaks to this area for quick stretching or meditation exercises. Additionally, he has started a 'gratitude journal' where he notes three positive aspects of his workday every evening. These combined practices have significantly reduced David's stress levels, improved his sleep quality, and enhanced his ability to handle complex projects.

📺 Smart working in action: https://youtu.be/WER5_VDxHWY

9. Set realistic expectations

Establish realistic goals and expectations for yourself and communicate them clearly with your team and supervisors. Setting achievable goals not only helps manage stress levels but also promotes a sense of accomplishment and motivation, leading to improved performance and job satisfaction.

✦ Our top three tips:

- Regularly review and adjust your workload and goals with your manager. This ongoing dialogue ensures alignment between personal capacity and organisational expectations, allowing for timely adjustments when necessary.
- Use the SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-Bound) framework when setting goals to ensure they are well-defined and attainable.
- Implement a personal task prioritisation system, such as the Eisenhower matrix, to help balance urgent and important tasks effectively.

💡 Ask yourself:

- Am I setting achievable goals, or am I consistently overcommitting? What patterns can I identify in my goal-setting behaviour?
- How effectively am I communicating my progress, challenges, and capacity to my team and supervisors? Are there areas where I could improve this communication?
- In what ways can I better align my personal goals with the overall objectives of my team and organisation while maintaining a realistic workload?

🔍 Learning from an example:

Rachel, a sales representative, has a weekly check-in with her manager to review her targets and discuss any challenges. This open communication helps prevent unrealistic expectations and reduce stress. Adding to her goal-setting process, Rachel has



implemented a monthly self-assessment routine. She reviews her performance against her targets, identifying areas of success and opportunities for improvement. Before her weekly check-ins, Rachel prepares a brief report outlining her progress, any obstacles encountered, and proposed solutions. She also maintains a stretch goal alongside her primary objectives, allowing her to push her boundaries without feeling overwhelmed. This has not only improved Rachel's sales performance but also increased her job satisfaction.

📺 Smart working in action: <https://youtu.be/26nqHDX1IiE>

10. Organise your office at home

Establishing a productive and stress-free home office is crucial for individuals engaged in remote work. An organised and structured workspace enhances focus, minimises distractions, and supports overall well-being. Whether you have the advantage of a dedicated room or must make use of a smaller area, careful planning can transform your workspace into an environment that is both inspiring and efficient.

✦ Our top three tips:

- Choose the right spot by choosing a quiet area with good natural light and minimal distractions. Position your desk near a window for natural light, but avoid glare on your screen.
- Prioritise comfort and ergonomics by investing in a supportive chair and adjustable desk to maintain good posture. Use ergonomic accessories such as wrist rests and monitor stands to reduce strain.
- Keep it tidy and inspire with organisers, shelves or storage boxes to keep your workspace tidy. Add personal touches such as plants, artwork or a motivational quote to make the space welcoming.

💡 Ask yourself:

- Do I use ergonomic furniture and accessories to help keep working comfortable?
- How can I incorporate natural elements or personal touches to make it pleasant to work in?
- Do I regularly clear out my workspace to keep it organised and functional?

🔍 Learning from an example:



Sofia, a professional graphic designer, converted a corner of her living room into a practical and efficient home office. She strategically placed her desk near a window to take advantage of natural light while installing noise-canceling curtains to minimize distractions. To add a personal touch, she incorporated a small indoor plant and an inspiration board showcasing her design ideas. By investing in an ergonomic chair and maintaining a clutter-free workspace with innovative storage solutions, Sofia successfully created a comfortable and motivating environment that enhanced both her creativity and productivity.

📺 Smart working in action: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F8_ME4VwTiw

11. Cultivate work-life integration

Instead of strict separation, aim for a harmonious integration of work and personal life that suits your individual needs and preferences. This approach recognised that work and personal life are interconnected and seeks to create a fluid balance that enhances overall life satisfaction and productivity.

✦ Our top three tips:

- Identify your peak productivity hours and structure your day accordingly, allowing for personal tasks when energy is low. This tailored approach helps maximise efficiency and ensures personal needs are met.
- Use technology to your advantage by setting up automated reminders for both work and personal tasks, helping you seamlessly transition between different aspects of your life.
- Practice ‘micro-transitions’ between work and personal activities, such as a short meditation or physical exercise, to help your mind shift more effectively.

💡 Ask yourself:

- What does an ideal work-life integration look like for me? How can I move towards that vision in practical, incremental steps?
- How well do my current work patterns align with my personal energy levels and life commitments? Are there adjustments I can make to create a more harmonious flow?
- In what ways can I leverage the flexibility of smart working to enhance both my professional productivity and personal fulfilment?



🔍 Learning from an example:

Michael, a software engineer, is most productive in the early morning and late evening. He structures his workday with a long break in the afternoon for personal activities, then returns to work in the evening when his focus is high again. To further optimise his work-life integration, Michael has implemented a colour-coded calendar system that includes both work and personal commitments. He starts his day at 6am with focused coding work, then takes a break at 10am for a gym session and lunch with family. In the afternoon, he handles less intensive tasks like emails and documentation and runs errands or attends to personal appointments. From 7pm to 10pm, he returns to complex problem-solving tasks when his creativity peaks again. This flexible schedule allows Michael to meet work deadlines while also being present for his family and maintaining his health. This personalised approach to work-life integration has not only improved Michael's overall well-being but has also inspired his team to explore similar flexible arrangements.

🎥 Smart working in action: <https://youtu.be/O0yxJH2ioDE>

Am I ready for smart working?

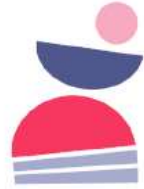
Not all workers have the profile or conditions suitable for smart working. So, how would you know if you are ready for smart working?

This is why at Smarter Less Stress we have developed a Smart Working Self-Assessment Tool (SAT) available at https://smarterlesstress.eu/qsm_quiz/sat/ to evaluate your readiness for this work style, through which you can assess various aspects, including your ability to manage time independently, your home working environment, your digital competence, your communication skills, your capacity for self-motivation, your stress management abilities, and your work-life balance preferences.

If you are already working remotely or in a hybrid format, we urge you to regularly reassess your smart working capabilities using the SAT to ensure you are maintaining a healthy and productive smart working lifestyle. But remember: the SAT is a tool for self-improvement, not a pass/fail test. Thus, you should use it to guide your personal development in smart working.

How to use the SAT?

1. Before transitioning to smart working, use the SAT to identify your strengths and areas of improvement.
2. Based on your SAT results, develop a personalised action plan to address any weak areas.

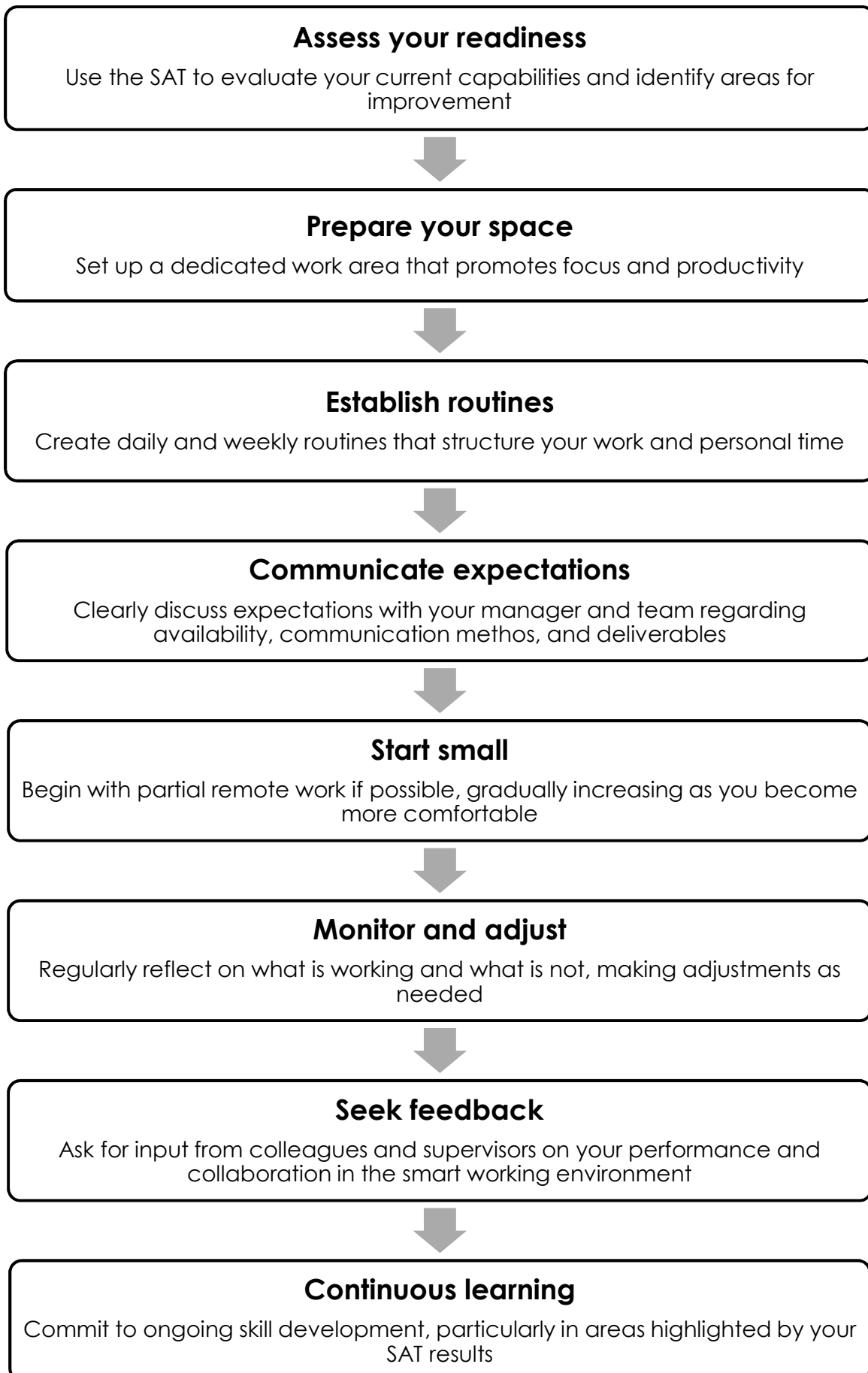
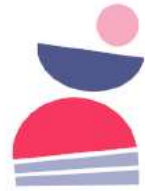


- 3.** Retake the SAT every 3-6 months to track your progress and identify new areas for development.
- 4.** If the SAT reveals significant challenges, do not hesitate to seek support from your manager or HR department.

Smarter Less Stress



A step-by-step guide on how to implement smart working





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Smart Working: A Double-Edged Revolution

In a hyper-connected world, Smart Working has reshaped our lives, blurring the lines between work and personal time. Our minds never switch off—jumping from calls to emails, cutting, pasting, selecting, deleting. The computer has moved in, becoming both our tool and our master. Wake up at 8, endless calls, poor meals, sleepless nights—then repeat. Stress and anxiety grow in isolation, with no colleagues to share the burden. Even language has changed: time is now measured in digital fragments, dictated by notifications.

Are we in control, or have we become slaves to the machine? This guide explores the hidden costs of Smart Working and how to reclaim balance in the digital age.

*Smart Working:
Freedom or Digital
Cage? Discover the
Hidden Costs and
Reclaim Your
Balance!"*

