Thanks to advances in technology and a seemingly limitless number of real-time communication channels, the options for and success of remote working have exploded over the past five years. While some fields and professions have embraced these changes more than others (think engineering), professional service providers, including lawyers, haven’t been as quick to adopt remote working practices.

It should come as no surprise that the legal industry has been historically resistant to technological change – the field is highly personal and involves significant social interaction. However, just because working remotely doesn’t happen frequently doesn’t mean it can’t be done effectively. In this post, we’re sharing three tips for lawyers and law firms who engage in remote work, whether for the first time or as part of your regular routine.

Keep a structured schedule

Some people incorrectly believe that working from home opens the door to a work free-for-all, where schedules are long forgotten (as is the dress code). This is an easy assumption to make – you don’t have a commute to contend with, your work attire can likely be a bit more casual than usual, and you have the ability to work late into the night because your office is in your dining room. Why bother with keeping a schedule?

However, keeping a regular schedule isn’t just good for your productivity, it’s good for your mental health and well-being, too. Keeping a structured work schedule will allow you to devote more focused time to executing necessary tasks. As much as possible, try to have your remote working habits and schedule mirror your in-office practices – your body and your brain are already trained to work this way, so don’t force them to make new habits.

Additionally, maintaining a proper work-life balance is incredibly important for those working from home. You need to carve out time to physically and mentally unwind – if you keep working off and on well into the night, you never get a chance to recharge. So, as much as possible, set regular working hours for yourself, and when you’re able to wrap up work, close your laptop, leave the room, and truly relax.

Stay connected with essential tools and software

As mentioned above, the ability to work remotely is easier than ever before, thanks to the ever-increasing number of personal and collaborative productivity and practice management tools available to lawyers. In fact, many of these were created specifically to help law firms share documentation with colleagues and clients across great distances.

Before you start working from home or another remote location, make sure you have access to all the tools you need to conduct business away from the office and stay connected to colleagues and clients. This could include, but is certainly not limited to:

a. Secure document sharing services
b. Practice management tools
c. Timekeeping and billing software
d. Internal and external email accounts
e. Internal communication channels (intranet, Slack, Skype, etc.)
f. Company shared drives or file servers
g. Secure document signing services
h. Online notarization

Let your clients pay online

Of course, one part of your job that you can’t forget about when working remotely is accepting client payments. Whether you need to replenish an evergreen retainer or get paid at the end of a case, you need a reliable, secure, and easy way to get paid, and nothing fits the bill (literally!) better than an online payment solution.

Online payment solutions have the benefit of letting you not only get paid from practically anywhere, but get paid significantly faster than traditional means. Before online payments, attorneys would generally send their invoices by mail. Factor in the time it takes for the mail to arrive, the client to write the check, send the check to the attorney, and then depositing the check after it arrives – you’re looking at well over a week to get paid (if the check arrives at all). With an online payments solution, studies have shown that 85 percent of electronic invoices are paid the same week they are sent out, and as much as 57 percent of them are paid the same day they are sent to the client!
Not only that, but your clients will likely prefer being able to pay online. They don’t have to track down their checkbook, they don’t have to drive to your office, and they don’t even have to walk to the mailbox to pay their invoice. They can pay you from any internet-connected device, at any time. You’ll find that putting that power in their hands will not only breed good will from your clients, but also result in you getting paid faster and more reliably.