

Make Setting up an Effective Home Office Part of Your Pandemic Plan *H1N1 is here. Is your home office ready?*



TORONTO, Ontario – November 17, 2009 – H1N1 is here and causing havoc at home and in the office. **Ensuring employees can remain productive by working from home is a critical piece of any business continuity plan.** Health Canada suggests that as many as 35 per cent of Canadians could become ill during the H1N1 pandemic. They recommend that if you feel at all sick or are infectious (with H1N1 this can be up to ten days after the onset of symptoms) you should stay home. Add to this time needed to tend to children who are sent home due to illness or school closures, and employees feeling well enough to work could be out of the office for days or weeks leaving offices understaffed and productivity down.

For companies that understand the benefits of effective telework, some of which include a 22% increase in productivity, a 60% decrease in absenteeism and 20% decrease in employee turnover¹, it is a logical solution to facilitate work from home. However, even with the approval to telework, **many employees feel that they simply “can’t” work from home**, often from fear of distraction or a lack of self-discipline. Clare Kumar, Chief Organizer at Streamlife, an organizing company says, “Anyone can work from home if attention is paid to creating a healthy home office work environment with clear space and time boundaries, and establishing effective work habits.”

Streamlife provides a custom service for people wishing to set up or adjust a home office for maximum comfort and productivity. Taking a comprehensive look at the nature of the work, the physical space, office furniture and storage solutions, recommendations are made to optimize the environment for work at home.

The environment, however, is only half the challenge. It is also critical to develop habits specific to working from home to ensure success, such as forced breaks, transitions between personal and work time, and creating opportunities for social interaction.

For those that are already set up to work successfully from home, there will be less of an impact on productivity during this pandemic. “Because I am well-organized to work virtually, I was able to get my high priority work done even when my daughter was home with the flu. Knowing that I can manage my work and be there for my family gives me huge piece of mind.” says Maria Prairie of VereQuest Inc., a Toronto-based customer experience company.

Encouraging and facilitating more people to work from home safely and effectively will go a long way to maintaining Canada’s productivity. As Bob Fortier, President of The Canadian Telework Association suggests, “The teleworker needs a suitable home office. It makes little sense to telework if the employee's home workplace is inappropriate.” **Companies concerned about sustaining productivity through the pandemic and other work interruptions should assist employees in setting up for effective telework as part of their business continuity plan.**

¹ Source: International Telework Association and Council (now WorldatWork)

About Streamlife

Streamlife, an organizing company, helps people get organized at work and at home to be more productive and have greater peace of mind. Working one-on-one with clients including corporate and government employees, entrepreneurs and home owners, Streamlife develops customized solutions to help them better manage space, time and information. For more information, visit www.streamlife.ca.

About Clare Kumar

Professional Organizer Clare Kumar founded Streamlife in 2004 to help people reduce stress and lead more rewarding lives. With over 15 years experience in the corporate world, both in the office and teleworking, Clare understands the needs of today’s workplace. She inspires employees and entrepreneurs alike to make choices in support of personal and professional goals.

Clare has been quoted in national newspapers and magazines and has appeared on CBC Radio, Get Connected (Business News Network), and the Steven and Chris Show. Clare is a proud member of the Canadian Telework Association and an affiliate member of the Association of Canadian Ergonomists. She recently served as Director of Marketing for Professional Organizers in Canada.

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