

Working from home

by BRIAN LOCKHART

?Get well, get well, we wish you get well soon!?

That was the song that drove Elaine Benes over the edge when it came to office relationships.

Later in the same show she quipped, ?I had to take a sick day, I'm so sick of these people!?

Working in an office environment can be a happy place away from home with people you like, an okay place where you're just there to make a living and like half the people, or a living nightmare if you happen to work in a place with a micro-managing boss who blames others for his incompetence and an office manager who has been there for 40 years and demands you do your job her seriously outdated way because ?that's the way we've always done it.'

I heard a radio commercial the other day with a voice-over that started ?By now, most of you are probably working from home.?

It followed up with some statement about working at home being the ?new normal.'

I don't know where this whole idea of everyone now working from home started, but in the long run it simply won't work.

GOING to work is half the job.

For starters, I would imagine the majority of people can't work from home even if they wanted to.

I don't think I would want to visit a dentist office where the dentist works from home. What is he going to do? Give you instructions on how to put a filling in by remote camera and hope your nickname isn't ?Shaky? for a reason? Same with the dental hygienist.

In fact the entire medical world has to be at the job site, to do their job. You can't give a tetanus shot by telephone. That's also why we call them essential workers.

Every person working in the trades must show up on the job. Plumbers, electricians, carpenters, bricklayers, paving guys, roofers, and landscaping guys, can't send their work in over the internet.

Truck drivers, who deliver the goods that keep the economy and indeed the country, running, can't phone in their delivery, and neither can the people who offload the trucks, drive the fork trucks to store it in a warehouse, or put the fruit in the baskets for sale at the grocery store.

The people who work for the towns and cities can't work from home. Do you want a water plant manager, city work crews, or police officers calling it in from home?

Obviously the reference to ?working from home' is geared toward people who have desk type jobs and can use their home computer and telephone to do business. That does make sense for some people if you can actually complete that task at hand in your home office.

Some people do have jobs where their entire work performance is based on what is done on a computer screen, however spending five days a week working from home ? well that would just drive you nuts.

You will never be as productive just working at home ? no matter what people tell you. Even the most driven people can be

distracted by a telephone call, a travelling sales person at the door, the next door neighbour who decides to drop by for coffee, or the dog that decides it's time to play fetch.

I would think that the majority of people who do considerable work from home, have had enough time in with a company that they know their co-workers, their supervisors, and other people who do business at the office.

That social interaction is a big part of office life, and for many people a part of their social bubble as well.

Would an employer really feel comfortable hiring a new associate, welcoming them to the firm, then plan on not seeing them in person again? Planning a once per week video conference is not the same as interacting with co-workers when working on a project together.

I've read quite a few stories about the lost employee who started working from home.

?Say, is Ollie Kerplutnick still on payroll??

?Lets, see.... yes, he's working remotely on the Johnson Rod project.?

?Didn't we finish that project five years ago??

Finally, there's something to be said about getting up, getting dressed and going out into the world rather than spending your morning wearing pajamas, staring at your computer and drinking copious amounts of coffee.

There are definite advantages to doing some of your work at home, but the ?new normal?

I hope not.