

Hi everyone. This is Wayne Rivers at FBI, where *We Build Better Contractors*.

This week I want to talk about the eight downsides of remote work and earning the commute. A great concept that I just read about. First housekeeping, we're hiring, if you know people that are thinking about retirement from the construction business, but still want to keep their hand in, let us know. We'd like to talk to those folks. We prefer to hire construction industry insiders, but that doesn't have to be the case. If it's just some terrific person that you know that you think would be a good consultant for us, let me know. Second thing is our next Boot Camp class in Raleigh, February 9-10, 2023. It seems like a long way away, it's not. So let your folks nominate your folks so we can get them enrolled now.

This week, I need to credit my friend Arlin, you've heard me and Dennis talk about Arlin and his daily blog all the time. Also, an article from the CEO Network, so I want to put these two articles together. So Arlin said there are eight specific downsides to remote work, and I kind of tend to agree with these. I'd like to know in the comments if you agree with them too.

Remote workers actually take on more meetings than people that are live and in the office. So, they're actually a little busier. Second thing is because of that busyness, they're working longer hours. Because they're working longer hours and they're generally working from home, they have blurred boundaries. I think you can understand that. I mean, when you're in the office, you're doing home stuff, you might pay some bills or schedule a doctor appointment. Okay, that's fine. But most of the stuff you do in the office is work stuff. And when you go home, you may answer some emails, but most of the stuff you do at home is home stuff. The boundary is crystal clear. Family, you interact with family at home. You interact with your work family at work. It's crystal clear boundaries are clean.

The fourth thing, studies show that people who are working from home or some say working from anywhere, have more loneliness than people that come into an office. I mean, that's got to be true, doesn't it? It's hard to build trust in a remote environment. The virtual, I mean, yeah, okay. You're on video and people can see your face and all that stuff, but it's not the same. There's so many body language cues that you miss, posture, intonation, just even the look in people's eyes. I think being in person, you can just glean so much more information from all that body English stuff.

Collaboration is more difficult in the virtual world than it is in person. It's harder to form longstanding relationships when we're working in a virtual world and there's less ad hoc learning. These are Arlin's eight things. There may be others, it's harder to train new people, onboard new people. I mean, there may be a hundred things that represent downsides to remote work. I'd like to hear what you think about that.

Now, if in fact remote work is less productive in the long run, as some of us believe it is, how do you get your people back? That's the question. So, Steelcase, now Steelcase has a vested interest in getting people in the office because they manufacture office furniture. So, they want people back in the office. So, they went out and did a survey of about 58,000 people and they came up with this fantastic conclusion. And that is, you must earn the commute. When people found out that they didn't have to get up quite as early in the morning, they didn't have to drive five or fifteen or a hundred miles to work, they could save all that time, they could save all that cost, no wear and tear on the vehicle, not as much fuel cost. Hey, this is easy. I'm going to just work from home instead of going into the office. So, Steelcase says, "You've got to earn the commute. Because people see time and money costs in commuting and getting back to work."

They made another observation that I thought was really astute. People less than 30, want to be in the office for the most part. Because they know that they can advance their careers better, they can learn more, they can learn faster in an environment where other seasoned people are around. People like me, people over 50 are eager to get back in the office because that's what we've always done. I mean, I never knew what it was like to work from home, I'm not as productive at home. It's that age group between 30 and 50, thereabouts, those are the people that you need to earn the commute

to get back into your office. Those are the ones that are more easily aligned to working from home or working from anywhere.

So, Steelcase says, "What do employees want?" I know we talk about this all the time. Number one, they want a great culture and a decent boss. Not even a great boss, a decent boss. Steelcase says, "If they're working from home, they might be telling you two things. One of two things, maybe both. Number one, your culture's not that good. I don't like the culture. Or number two, I'm not that keen on my boss." Or maybe they're saying both. Either way, that's something for you to attend to and work on. The second thing is they want belonging. We used to work with a psychologist named Jean McClendon, and she said this all the time, people want to be involved in something bigger than themselves. They want to see that they have a role in making positive change. I think that being in the office provides that sense of belonging and big picture mission.

The third thing is they want concentration. Again, this is an office furniture manufacturer, so they want to have visual, acoustic and psychological privacy. They want a place where they can work. Parcel with that, I think, is the fourth thing and that's collaboration. So, we have a client VCC, and Sam and Derek were showing me around their new Dallas office and it's amazing. So, they've got the offices that you would expect to find in a construction company. But they also had a lot of open space for collaboration. The kitchen was enormous, and they were other informal spaces throughout, and they had exterior outside spaces in the same way. I mean, it was really amazing, really, really well thought out. That they provided for both the concentration, closed the door, really put your head down and work. But they also provided for, I would say probably 50% of their space was open to this collaboration, whether it was inside or outside. Really an amazing facility. If you're ever in Dallas, call Sam and Derek. Sorry, fellas. I know you're busy. Maybe you get by there and see it.

Number five. They want social support. If you can do things, simple things. If you could provide some access to childcare, if you could have the dry cleaners come to your place so people don't have to make a separate trip on the way to work or on the way home to the dry cleaners. Something we do is like car washes. We'll just have somebody come around and wash everybody's car once in a while, that's something they don't have to do themselves. If you can give them social support, family support kind of be a part of that network. Then that makes it more attractive to get back into the office. So, if you want people to come back, you've got to compete with the alternatives of working from home. What's worked for you? How are you getting people back into your office? What are you seeing that works? What are you seeing that doesn't work? What's your attitude about those eight downsides to remote work? Please share with us in the comments. This is Wayne Rivers at FBI. *We Build Better Contractors.*