

Half way through the lockdown:

21 C's to stay focused during the second half

by

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Today at 12:00 noon we were half way through the lockdown (if it does not get extended). You have survived the first half after rearranging your home and work life in working from home. Although a lot of people have worked from home before, most people have not done it for such a long period, and of course not under the conditions and regulations of a lockdown. I have received a request to write an article on how you can stay focused when working from home, given the fact that it is so different from being at the office at your employer's workplace. To help you stay focused and to remember them easily, I am presenting some tips for you in the form of **21 C's** to fight the top **2 C's** in our lives at the moment – **Coronavirus** and **Covid-19**:

1. **Clear and clean:** Clear your desk and mind and start working. Ensure that your house, hands, work station, laptop, smart phone and other devices are clean and start working.
2. **Commitment:** Commit to your work and tasks by writing your goals down for the day. Stay focused throughout the day in achieving these goals and to complete all tasks associated with these goals.
3. **Customers:** Remind yourself of the importance of your customers. Send friendly and encouraging messages to your top ten customers, they will remember you for this act of kindness decades after the coronavirus pandemic has passed. Then respond to all your other customer needs, enquiries and expectations.
4. **Concentration:** Get your focus right by concentrating on your work, without being distracted by the news and family members, and remain focused despite the odd interruption.
5. **Colleagues:** Do occasional check-ins with your colleagues when it is really necessary. You are alone at home as an employee, but still part of a team of people who need to sustain the organisation.
6. **Communication:** Your most important skill at work and home is communication. Communicate continuously with customers, colleagues and suppliers, but don't over-communicate. Some people think that by sending hundreds of emails people will think they are busy. Communicate essential information in a succinct and clear way when it is really necessary. Avoid sending emails at night and over weekends, you are intruding on the privacy of other people by doing so when they receive your emails on their smart phones while being in front of the television or in bed already. Using social

media or meeting platforms is less intrusive and people can access it when it suits them or when meetings are formally scheduled.

7. **Collaboration:** Collaborate with the right stakeholders when you need them, and when they need you. We are now using new and innovative forms of collaboration across departments and institutions. Collaboration and collective intelligence will become the new normal after the lockdown.
8. **Caring:** The lockdown has created a more caring society. Care for your family, friends, neighbours, colleagues, customers and suppliers. Build a new brand for yourself as a kind and caring person.
9. **Compassion:** Focussing on being more caring and show compassion towards other people. It all starts with acts of kindness and compassion towards your fellow human beings. Send a kind message to your neighbour or co-workers.
10. **Competence:** Use a “can do” attitude to make things happen. Write down your competencies and practice them every day. If you lack in certain areas, google and learn online on how you can improve and build your competencies in areas requiring development.
11. **Compliance:** Remind yourself and your family members to comply with the lockdown regulations, in particular the top 4: Physical distance; Cover your cough and sneeze; washing your hands; cleaning surfaces. Also comply with all the other guidelines and rules provided by your employer and government departments.
12. **Calmness:** Being with the same people in the same space for 24 hours every day is not always easy and requires occasional breaks. As my one cousin said: You can choose your friends, but not your family. Stay calm at home with your family members, despite the terrible news you will get on a daily basis regarding the increasing number of infections and deaths. Manage your irritations and frustrations by maintaining a calm, pleasant and professional disposition. Be aware of your levels of anxiety, fear and panic and if necessary, arrange online counselling or telephonic help lines.
13. **Connectivity:** Remain connected with other people and make some new connections online, on social media and over the phone.
14. **Chores:** Share in the household chores, here is an opportunity to do your bit in sharing in the things that need to be done – washing the dishes, maintaining the garden, engaging the children, cooking food, making coffee or tea and cleaning the house and other activities necessary to maintain an orderly, clean and functioning household and work spaces at home.
15. **Courage:** Be positive and have courage to take risks with certain tasks. Continue to pursue opportunities and even reaching out to potential new customers as we are building a new relationship economy based on people-centred products and services.
16. **Control yourself:** You no longer have a boss looking over your shoulder, thus you are now in control of your work. Control yourself by being disciplined and focused.
17. **Contribution:** Evaluate your own contribution to the team and your organisation. Make yourself indispensable with your valuable contributions.
18. **Criticism:** During pandemics a lot of people become over-critical of government, hospitals, businesses, the police and other people. Do not fall into the trap of becoming cynical, over-sensitive or over-critical. But remain open to criticism from

others, and give criticism with sensitivity and respect in a balanced way. This is the time to learn and be balanced in your thinking and actions.

19. **Creativity:** Remember that creativity is one of the top 10 new world of work skills. Make time for creative work by generating new ideas of doing things better. We now need creativity to develop new and more innovative products and services if we want our companies and industries to survive the post-lockdown period. It will not be business as usual, and we therefore require extraordinary levels of creativity and innovation.
20. **Culture:** Create a new culture of a peaceful and well-functioning home and working from home culture for your organisation. Imagine how this could change your organisation into accelerating efforts of creating a future world of work.
21. **Completion:** At the end of the day, you want to be able to say that your day was productive and successful. Tick off all the tasks you have completed. Affirm your successes and make notes of your challenges to be addressed the next day or week. Show appreciation to your family members and other people who have helped you to achieve success in your work.

There you have it - 21 practical guidelines on how to become focused and to remain focused when working from home. Most of these tips will also be relevant to students, so adapt them according to your work or study needs. I want to conclude with another 4 C's:

- **Cyril**, our president leading us: President Cyril Ramaphosa requested us to be focused and disciplined in our safe behaviour and actions. As he said: "We shall overcome" and "We will work together in winning the war against the virus." Thank you Mr President for your excellent leadership by providing us with hope and direction.
- **Cele**, our Minister of Police: If we are not disciplined, Minister of Police, Bheki Cele has warned that we will be arrested in the event of non-compliance to the lockdown regulations. The Minister has kept his promise by ensuring that thousands of arrests have been made by the police, even at weddings. In fact, we now have more arrests than infections. Let us remain disciplined, resolute and compliant to all the lockdown rules during this period.
- **Citizenship:** All of us have an opportunity to be a good citizen by practicing good citizenship during the lockdown. Being a good citizen of a family, an organisation, a country, local community and indeed the global community is an opportunity of making a major contribution to serving society and humanity at large.
- **Conclusion:** We can be focused in our work from home by using some or all of the 21 guidelines provided above. Try it out and make it work for you in your unique home and work environment. We are half way through the lockdown, let us complete the rest of the lockdown and remind ourselves of why we are in this situation. We all have one overarching goal and that is to prevent the spread of the virus, while still trying to sustain our organisations where possible. Be safe and productive and make the most of your focused work time at home.

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