Pro tips for your video meetings

Working From Home: the Challenge of Ergonomics

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THE DOCUMENT CONTROL PROFESSIONALS

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

EDITORIAL

This Document Control Tribune comes out in an unprecedented period, during which the Coronavirus pandemic has changed the world as we know it.

Our lives and work have been changed profoundly and many professionals have had to work from home, because of the lockdowns imposed by many countries around the world.

For some, working from home has been an amazing experience, giving a better work life balance and reducing the time spent commuting to and from the office every day.

For others, often suffering from lack of tools and equipment to work properly from home, it has come with many challenges.

This issue of the Tribune tackles some of these challenges, including ergonomics challenges: how to adapt your home environment to make it a good working environment? Our article on improving the ergonomics of working from home offers tips and solutions.

We don't know yet the full extent of the changes to our work life brought by the pandemic. But one thing is certain: in the emerging new world, Document Control professionals will have to adapt to the "new normal".

Consepsys will continue to be here to accompany you during this period, and to keep the Document Control community together as we have done for the past 10 years.

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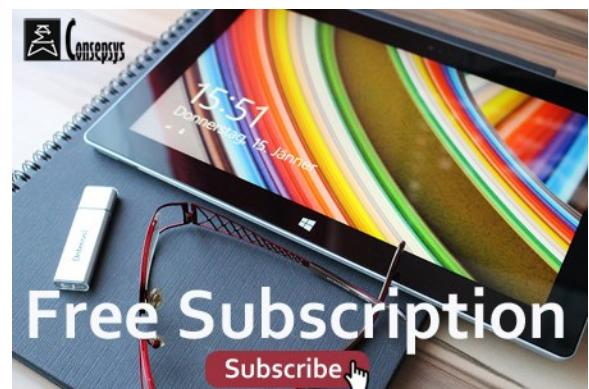
Working From Home:
the Challenge of Ergonomics

Many professionals are currently working from home, due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

Our "Working from Home Survey" results show that many are suffering from back pain, shoulder and neck pain or swollen legs, all signs of potential ergonomics issues.

Collins dictionary defines Ergonomics as "*the study of how equipment and furniture can be arranged in order that people can do work or other activities more efficiently and comfortably*".

The current Coronavirus situation is exceptional, and lockdowns were often abruptly implemented: from one day to another, suddenly, many have had to work from home, with no possible anticipation or preparation.

Most employees and companies have had to improvise

Most employees and companies have had to improvise in order to create an acceptable "working from home" environment.

44% think their equipment should be improved to work better at home

This is especially a challenge as with the current Coronavirus pandemic, homeworking is often full time, as opposed to only for a couple of days in the month, as it may have been the case in the past.

Many participants on the "Working from Home Survey" identified that their working conditions (equipment) were unsatisfactory or somewhat unsatisfactory.

Early results show about 44% think their equipment should be improved to work better at home.

Top 3 unsatisfactory equipment at home

The top 3 complaints on equipment at home come from:

- The **absence of a proper desk:**

  Many have to work from kitchen or living room tables, or from very small tables on which they cannot really have a proper set-up

- The **absence of a good chair**:

Office desk chairs are ergonomically designed for someone to sit on them for a full day of work, whereas most of us only have home chairs at home, and therefore chairs not designed to sit on them for more than a couple of hours or so without causing back pain.

- The **absence of a separate monitor** for the laptop.

  Working on a laptop without a separate monitor rapidly creates neck and back pain.

  Many also explain that they normally work with multiple computer screens at work, and that they now have to do with only one which, in addition to ergonomic issues, comes at a cost regarding efficiency.

Other issues have been mentioned frequently such as:

- Not having a separate room to work from (separate from family activities and distractions for example)

- Internet and network issues

- Issues due to room temperature, level of lighting in the room

- Or lack of equipment that would enhance work - such as a webcam for meetings, a comfortable headset, scanning or printing facilities.

The next article will look into solutions to these frequent challenges.

TOP 5 UNSATISFACTORY WORK EQUIPMENT AT HOME

DESK CHAIR
31%

DESK
24 %

MONITOR
11 %

NO SEPARATE ROOM
10 %

SCANNER / PRINTER
5 %

IMPROVING THE ERGONOMICS OF WORKING FROM HOME

In this article we have gathered solutions and tips to help with the ergonomics of working at home, and to reduce pain and fatigue.

As we know that nowadays it is not easy to buy equipment (either for budgetary issues or simply because shops are closed and deliveries are slow), we have also included tips that do not cost anything, but which can improve the workday drastically.

The objective: getting as close as possible to the ideal posture

Ideally, in order not to have pain due to our position, when sat at your desk, the body should create an "L".

Source: ErgonomicTrends
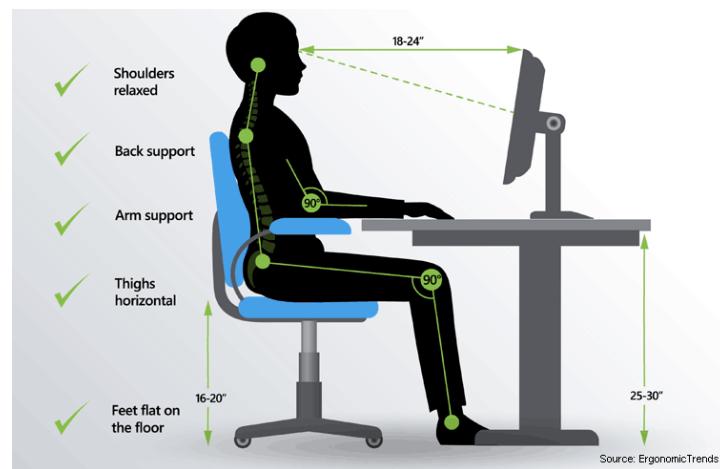
To do this:
- Keep your head directly above your shoulders
- Align hips slightly above knees (ideally at a 110-degree angle). It takes pressure off the bones
- Create a 90-degree bend in your knees to support your upper body
- Place feet flat on the floor.

Workaround for the lack of proper desk and chairs

95% of participants on the "Working from Home Survey" survey are working from home today because of the Coronavirus situation. This means that for 95% of professionals, the conditions may be sub-optimal as they did not have time and / or resources to prepare an adequate home office before having to work from home full time.

When working conditions are sub-optimal, **53% of people mentioned that either the desk or the chair or both were a problem,** most of these professionals have to work from the kitchen or dinner table, and to sit on a dining table chair.

- First, if possible, it is recommended to dedicate a part of that table to work, so that you do not have to remove your office set-up every evening and to rearrange it every morning.
- A kitchen table can make a good desk if the height of the chair and table allow a good posture.
- It is often not possible to play with the height of the table: if it is a kitchen table, it is unlikely that you will be able to adjust it (unless you are ready to saw the table's legs off.)

However, the choice of the chair will be key here, as you want to be able to have your arms at a 90° angle with the table.
- Ideally you would source an adjustable desk chair with lumbar support
- If you cannot get an actual desk chair, select a chair in your home that allows as much as possible for your arms to be able to rest on the table, at a 90° angle).

⇒If the chair is too high, you will be creating tensions on your shoulders, elbows and wrists.

⇒If the chair is too low, you may be able to raise its height with cushions

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If you use a dining room chair, you can add lumbar support either with cushions or by rolling up a towel and taping it onto the chair.

It may require a few tests to find the right level of support, but it is a DIY solution if no other options are available.

Avoiding (or reducing) back, shoulder, arms or leg pain

Working on a laptop full time is not good for your neck and back, as it forces you to have your head at an angle that will surely create tensions because of the posture it incurs, as we can see on the image on the right.

Do not despair, there are **solutions** you can use to avoid it:

- The key is to be able to raise the screen so that you do not have to tilt your neck and head to see it:

  ⇒ If you can source a computer monitor (a small flat-screen TV can also be used), you can connect it to your laptop (typically either through an HDMI cable or a VGA cable) and use that monitor rather than the screen on your laptop.

  ⇒ Doing this will immediately solve a lot of the back pain as you should now be able to have your eyes looking at the monitor at a 40 to 45° angle as we can see on the picture on the right.

  ⇒ If getting an external monitor is not possible, then another option is to raise the laptop to a higher height.
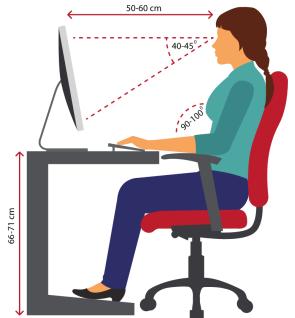
Image source: environmentsdenver.com

For example, you can use a laptop stand (left hand side picture below), like our director Luis Heng who is always travelling with his, or a folding desk (right hand side picture below).

The roost stand changes dramatically the posture, relieving the back & neck pain.

⇒ To raise the laptop height without a laptop stand, it is always possible to use household items such as books, shoe boxes, etc. Keeping in mind that we should raise it in order to obtain that 40 to 45° angle from the eyes. A good technique to know if your screen is at the right level: Your eyebrows should be roughly level with the top of the screen, so you can work without slouching.

Without roost stand   With roost stand
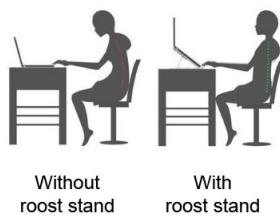
- The key items for better ergonomics are inexpensive and can be found in a variety of shops and online too: you will need an external keyboard and mouse, to connect to your laptop.
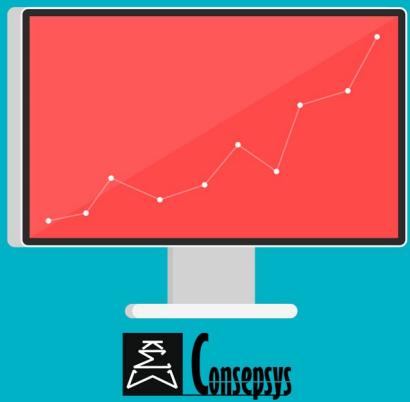
This is key as it will allow you to have your arms at a 90° angle, resting either on the table or on the chair's arms. If possible, choose wireless items so that it offers more flexibility for your different 'working from home' set-ups. A USB hub might be useful too, in case your laptop does not have enough USB ports.

(…) Continues from previous page

If you cannot buy them, ask around: it is not unusual for people to have a spare that they might be able to lend you for the duration of the situation.

If you really cannot source a keyboard and a mouse, and if you cannot find a laptop stand, you can try the following workarounds to try angling the laptop: for example with a lever-arch file or a chopping board on top of a book to use as a ramp for your laptop.

If, once you have placed all the above
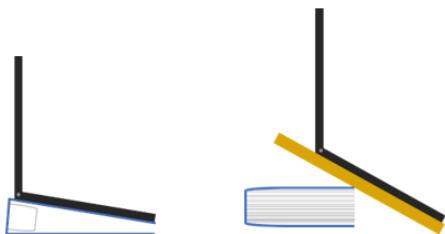
items properly, your feet are not sitting flat on the ground, you need to think about arranging a **footrest**.

⇒ Preferably an adjustable one.

⇒ If buying one is not an option, you can make a footrest out of household items such as shoe box, reams of paper, or a crate.

⇒ You can also make your own with one of the numerous DIY video tutorials available on YouTube, such as that of Clayton Bridges or the very simple one of J.D. Roth.

Finally, if possible, avoid working on a sofa for long period of times, as it leads to non-ideal conditions for posture and ergonomics. If working on a sofa is the only option, try and raise the height of the laptop either with cushions, a laptop desk or a laptop stand. Also set a timer to remind yourself to get up and walk around regularly.

Fighting strain and stillness

- Do not sit at your desk for too long without moving. At least every hour (ideally every 30 minutes), get up and move around (a few steps, a few stretches, a few deep breaths…

also rest your eyes by focusing on distant objects e.g. look out the window for a few minutes). You can set a timer or use a smart watch to set up reminders every 30 minutes for example.

- If you notice that your head starts tilting forward, backward or to the side, it may be the sign that your body needs you to take a short break from sitting.

- You may want to try exercises to relieve shoulder tension from computer work such as these ones.

- If it is an option and you are well equipped at home, you can also switch from time to time from a normal chair to a ball chair or from a 'standard' desk to a standing desk (if buying is not an option, you can
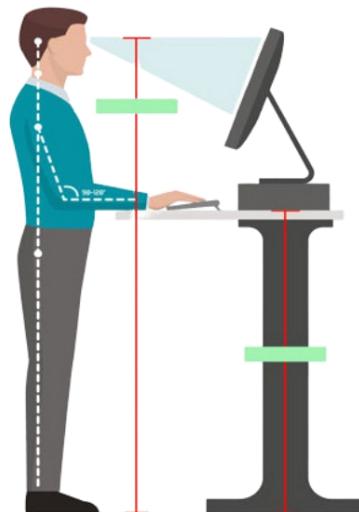
create a standing desk by placing for example your laptop on a bookcase, an ironing board or on top of a box on your desk).

Getting the right light

To reduce visual eye strain from glare, specialists recommend:

- Not to work with your back to a window (too much glare on the screen)

- Not to work facing a window (you would be staring into the light, which creates fatigue)

- If the two above positions cannot be avoided, it is recommended to use

either shades or curtains to circumvent these issues. If you do not have shades or curtains and if you cannot buy them at the moment, it is possible to cover the window temporarily with household items to reduce the direct light coming to your screen or eyes.

- If possible, place your screen perpendicular to the window.

Avoid repetitive motions

A lot of strains, pain and injuries happen over time, and are significantly caused by continuing and repetitive movements.

- A good idea is, when possible, to prevent muscle strain by frequently switching tasks, for example every one or two hours.

- If your activities involve a lot of communication over the phone or via teleconference, a headset will be invaluable to improve the quality of communication but also to reduce the repetitive motions due to phone handling.

- One of the most frequent strains that Document Control professionals can encounter due to the nature of their work is called "Mouse Shoulder".

  This condition refers to shoulder pain from using a mouse with your computer without appropriate arm support. It is a repetitive strain injury (RSI), typically developing over weeks or months from constant repetitive movements in a limited area (typically using the mouse in a constrained area).

  Read our tips to avoid / manage Mouse Shoulder here

We hope the above tips will help you make your working conditions better while working from home. And you? What are your pro tips to make working from home comfortable? Let us know in the comments section of this article on the Conspesys blog.

"Hanging in there" with D. Ceecee - the Document Controller   by Tuffmee
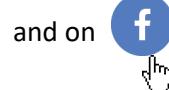
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Panel 1 — Email

From: James (Engineer)
To: D. Ceecee (Document Controller)
Dear D. Ceecee,
Thank you so much for your help yesterday, retrieving my comments in the EDMS.
You're an absolute star!
Best regards, James (Engineer)

Panel 2

....

Panel 3

Working from home clearly has a very positive impact on some people!

Follow D. Ceecee on Consepsys and on [f]

Credits

Graphical concept: Myranda Saffarine

Scenario & Design: Tuffmee & Nwash

DOCUMENT CONTROL TEMPLATES & CHECKLISTS
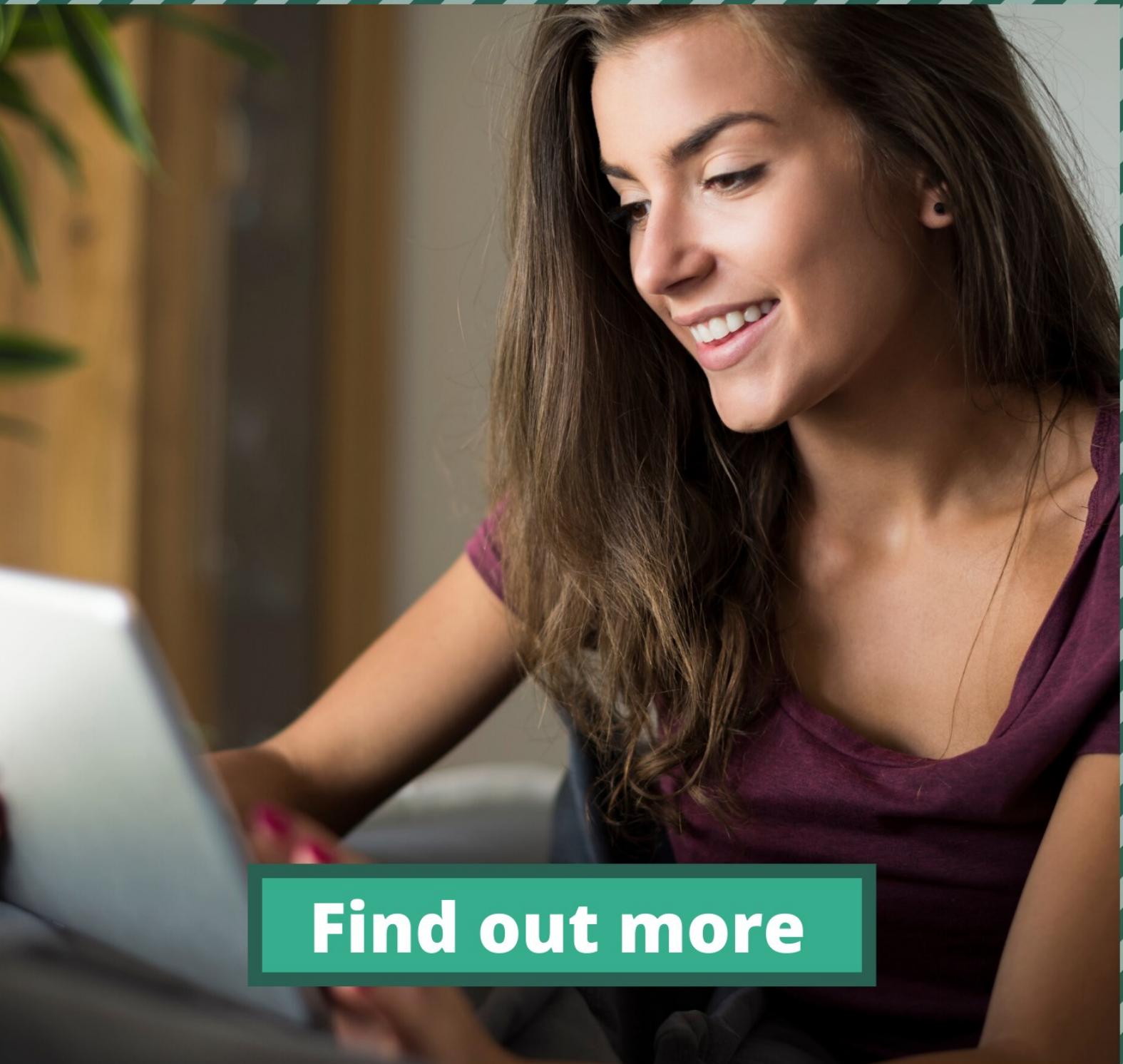
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PORTRAIT OF A DOCUMENT CONTROLLER

IRENA BAUMAN

Document Controller at New Gold (New Afton Mine) in Canada

Irena attended the Certified Document Controller course in in Vancouver (BC), Canada, in 2019

Can you tell us a bit about you?

My name is Irena Bauman. I am 36 years old, happily married to a wonderful husband and have two daughters aged 9 and 15.

I live in the interior of British Columbia, Canada in the city of Kamloops, but am originally from the Okanagan Valley, British Columbia. My family moved to Kamloops following a career change my husband made.

I have a very busy household with my daughters and our small dog, Lady. In my spare time I enjoy working out and being active. I love spin classes, hiking, biking, and camping.

What is your current role?

I am the Document Controller at New Gold's New Afton Mine.

I also act as the system administrator and soft SharePoint architect assisting with appropriate records management protocols and training.

Can you describe your professional experience?

My professional background is largely based in 13 years of law enforcement experience.

I started my career as an officer with Canada Border Services Agency, moving on to work as a Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) Detachment Services Assistant, and then a dispatcher for the RCMP eventually mov-

ing on to Records Management for the same agency. It was there that I was able to hone my professional skills in the organization and development of legal documentation and policy. Through this experience and training I formed a keen understanding of the importance of proper document control.

Upon moving to Kamloops with my family, I applied and started working for the Kamloops RCMP when I decided that I wanted to focus my skills on document control and records management.

"The course was extremely informative and thorough. Throughout the training I was able to develop a deeper understanding of my role and document control"

I started working for New Gold – New Afton Mine in May 2019 and have been using my previous experience and training to assist in my role as Document Controller.

It has been both a challenging and incredibly rewarding experience and has helped me expand and develop while meeting the needs of my team.

Which Consepsys course did you attend and when?

I attended the Certified Document Control course with examination in

August 2019, held in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

What did you think about the course? How did it help you in your current role and career development?

The course was extremely informative and thorough.

Throughout the training I was able to develop a deeper understanding of my role and document control during construction from a mining perspective.

The knowledge that I gained has helped to improve the quality of my work and has reinforced my understanding of the Document Control Fundamentals, which has been beneficial to my work restructuring and organizing documents.

If you attended one of our courses and would like to apply to be featured in one of our upcoming issues, drop us an email at:

dctribune@consepsys.com

PRO TIPS FOR YOUR VIDEO MEETINGS

The Covid-19 pandemic and the lockdowns imposed on many countries has forced organisations to fast-track their implementation of videoconferencing;

Zoom, Cisco Webex, Skype, or GoTo Meetings have become daily tools for many professionals.

Having great tools at our disposal does not necessarily mean that we know how to use them well. Here are a couple of tips to improve your web meetings.

#1 Make sure you look your best

Of course a clean and neutral look is important. But it is not enough! You can also:

- Make sure that you have good lighting. The best lighting is often natural lighting: if you can, position your computer close to a window during the meeting. Either facing the window (ideal to light your face evenly), or with a window on the side.

- If you can, position your webcam so that it is at eye level, or hairline level.

This will definitely give a better look than webcams positioned at the bottom of the screen, and shooting from below

#2 Audio matters

- Find a quiet place and, as much as possible, make sure that you reduce background noise to a minimum (sometimes even a fan or a refrigerator can become distracting for your microphone, and therefore for your audience)

- Wired headphones and microphones have usually better performances than wireless ones. In all cases, a good quality headphone and microphone set is always a good investment to improve the quality of your meetings

- Stay muted if it's not your turn to speak. This will avoid background noise disrupting other participants.

#3 Realise that… you are on camera!

All meeting participants are seeing you. Your facial responses to what is being said are visible. People can also see if

you are distracted (typing an email, looking at something in other window, checking your phone, etc). Be aware of that, and make sure that you show you are attentive.

To go around these issues, many people are tempted not to show their camera during meetings. However, it is counter productive because actually seeing your interlocutor plays a big part in effective communication.

#4 If you are the host, set ground rules

Setting ground rules for the meeting is important for effective meetings:

- If you need everyone on video, say it. If you'd rather have an audio-only meeting, say it too.

- Mute all speakers at the official start of the meeting: you won't have distracting background noise from participants

- Let other speakers know when it's their time to talk. Send them a private message for example.
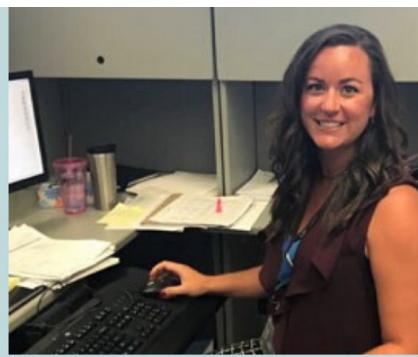
Working from home

Tip #5

ACCEPT THAT SOME TASKS WILL TAKE LONGER THAN USUAL

Tips from Document Controllers working from home

More tips

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FROM AROUND THE WORLD

**READ THEIR
STORIES**

THE DOCUMENT CONTROL TRIBUNE

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