



Keeping Busy at Home



As some of you are now learning, working from home has temptations. Your office should probably not have a television. And the internet is a limitless distraction. It's going to take some discipline to work at home like you would in an office. I'm no longer tempted to watch TV for more than a few minutes of news twice a day, but setting your own limits will take time.

When you do have time, or nothing but time, there are a lot of good time wasters available. Use these, in moderation, to keep yourself busy, or to keep the kids interested in something that isn't online gaming. Everything below is either completely free, or has major amounts of free content.

edX

<https://www.edx.org/about-us>

edX is, in their own description, “the trusted platform for education and learning.” It’s college courses, with a fee if you want a certificate of completion, or many are free if you don’t. The universities working with them include MIT, Berkeley in California, Harvard, and the University of Maryland. The courses are varied: Business, technology, philosophy, languages, pretty much what would be available on-campus.

Ted Talks

<https://ted.com>

Currently at over 3300 videos, mostly under an hour, Ted Talks are experts talking about what they know. And they’re amazing—it’s like a university course in an hour. Go there and learn.

Start with the March 2015 speech by Bill Gates, just over 8 minutes about virus pandemics:

https://www.ted.com/talks/bill_gates_the_next_outbreak_we_re_not_ready

The List

ABC television stations are showing a long list of online educational links:

<https://abc13.com/coronavirus-covid-19-symptoms-covid-19/6009556/>

Not Just Educational:

Some online content that was behind a payment wall last year is now free, in hopes of boosting next year’s subscribers, most likely. These freebies do not require creating accounts:

HBO.com has free streaming on a selection of TV shows, including the Sopranos, and a selection of movies.

<https://www.hbo.com/hbo-news/watch-hbo-free-no-subscription>

Marvel.com is streaming comic books; you’ll need their app on a tablet:

<https://www.marvel.com/comics/discover/1626/read-these-free-comics>

Here’s how to sign up:

<https://www.deseret.com/entertainment/2020/4/2/21204539/coronavirus-covid-19-marvel-unlimited-avengers-xmen-civil-war-black-panther-free-comics-download>

And because it’s not over until the fat lady sings:

The Metropolitan Opera is streaming a free opera from their collection every day. Look for the “Nightly Opera Stream” here:

<https://www.metopera.org/>

Strange New World



Business changed last month. Fighting the change won't work; we will all be moving forward in a new world. It's not going back. Some lessons learned:

The Paperless conversion is worth it.

The offices that are having the hardest time with working from home are those who use paper as if they didn't have computers. Paper lists of everything, printouts everywhere, with creative vertical filing systems. (Visitors call it precarious piles of paper poised for pandemonium...) Moving all of that to electronic storage means you can work with it remotely, and your staff can work on it for you.

Everything that I would normally have printed way back then, or received in the snail-mail, pre-internet, I now save as a PDF, and have been doing just that since around 2015. There's a reason for that date; that was when I moved my invoices and estimates out of WordPerfect and into a web service. Since then, I haven't added any file cabinets, and will soon be at the point where I can free up a drawer or two for storing paper supplies, not that I need much of those now, either.

Not everything can be paperless. Portions of your paper collections probably consists of receipts and printouts that if you don't need them within three months, you'll never need them; place them in a 90-day pile. See my newsletter on the 90-day rule in the newsletter archive, in the [September 2019](#) issue. That was about email, but it applies to paper as well: Stack them up in order, and shred the bottom half of the pile a few times a year.

Acronym of the Month: WFH

Now, working from home is expected. I know vendors who refused to do business with companies that worked from homes, as recently as 2019. How things have changed; it's standard now, and you can expect to hear kids, dogs, and parrots in phone calls all the time. I have been remoting into computers since around 1998, and gradually added more capabilities for that as the services became better. Remember Norton's PC Anywhere? It was a great product for remote work, back in the modem & phone days. We've moved on, and the current preferred service is Splashtop. (See last month's newsletter for more on Splashtop, and a discount link.) I'm waiting to see what this will do to next year's real estate market for office buildings.

J-I-T is a Trap

Just-in-time delivery, whether it's groceries, product parts, or merchandise for resale, has now fallen apart. Scheduling every delivery for the last minute worked well, until it didn't. The idea was for manufacturers to receive parts for assembly when they needed them, exactly. It was always a juggling act to keep all those trucks and suppliers moving in strict synchronization, but now it's a mess. Any one part can be delayed, and that stops the entire chain.

Choosing a computer in late December from only in-stock models was always, well, limited. But now, the computer distributors have run out of notebook computers. Major companies bought notebooks to lend employees, hundreds and thousands for some corporations, and what remains are refurbished models and the extreme high-end \$4000 engineering models. Next, every remaining refurbished computer and all the cheap Chromebooks will go out to schools for distribution to students. It will take a few months for the steamships from Asia to re-stock our local warehouses. For now, I have used systems available, and they run well because of the solid-state drive upgrades.

Send me your comments and additions for next month. What have you learned about the new order of business?

