

Have you ever head the phrase, "I don't want to be just another statistic." I'm sad to say, it's too late for me. I recently learned that I am just another statistic. According to a report issued by [WorldatWork](#), I am one of an estimated 12.4 million people working remotely at least one day per month. I am a [teleworker](#). Thankfully, just because I work at home doesn't make me all that different. I'm like most people each morning. I wake up, get ready, grab a cup (or three) of coffee and head down to the office to start the day. The big difference in my daily grind is that my commute takes about 60 seconds as I make my way down to my home office. Some days, I can make it in 30 seconds if I've cleared the steps of all obstacles.

Okay, if you really do have a commute to work, you may not be chuckling. When I speak with others about my situation, they quickly remind me that I am very fortunate to be in this situation. They are right, I completely agree. I am fortunate to have this privilege! I am also fortunate that my employer values its greatest asset – its people. Vivayic has the philosophy that to deliver top-notch learning solutions means we must find and involve talented resources, wherever they may be located.

It seems simple enough, right? Find talented people; trust them to do their work; deliver cool solutions and everyone lives happily ever after. (Join me in a round of Cum-By-Yah.) Reality check, it's not *that* simple. We, like most working in [creative class](#) occupations, rely on a highly collaborative environment to produce innovative solutions. To be effective, we continue to seek out creative and resourceful tools to facilitate collaboration and connectivity between individuals who are working in different locations. I will share a few of the tools, tips and strategies we employ as part of our teleworking toolbox.

(By the way, in case our legal department is reading, I will take a moment to make them smile. We don't have stock in any of the following companies or products mentioned. We also do not warrant their products. We have found them to be useful in our own experience and thought we would share.)

- **Get connected with an affordable Webcam and a microphone.** I have a Logitech that cost under \$25 at Staples.com. In our learning solutions, we subscribe to the philosophy that learning is enhanced when you tap more than one modality (visual, auditory and kinesthetic/doing). Hearing and seeing the individuals who are collaborating with each other does enhance the quality of the discussion.
- **Sign up for an instant messaging service.** We are using [AOL Instant Messenger](#) (AIM) and have recently started testing out [Skype](#). We use AIM for quick questions and to check-in. (Not to mention a little socialization to keep our ability to provide witty remarks at the drop of a hat sharp.) Recently, we've found Skype offers instant messaging plus free videoconferencing or voice calls to other Skype users. We're always looking for methods to "cut the fat" in how we conduct our work to produce solutions. Through tools like Skype and AIM, you can hold a quick conference or "talk session" free of charge with anyone else who is a subscriber.

- **Download and start using [Jing](#).** It's amazing how much our understanding relies on hearing and seeing. For those who love learning, [Richard Mayer](#) has some fascinating work around how we process both visual and verbal information. Jing is a tool that allows me to capture what I see on my screen and verbally explain it at the same time. I can produce and share a visual conversation to explain an idea, a part of a document or a process in a matter of minutes with this tool.
- **Consider using a web conferencing service.** We use [Microsoft Live Meeting](#). There are a number of excellent conferencing tools available in the market. With Live Meeting, we can hold virtual meetings to generate ideas, outline a deliverables, create timelines and more. We find it helpful to open up a document and collaborate instantly.
- **Start a private wiki for a project team.** We used [Wet Paint](#) to create our internal instructional design team workspace. The wiki is a space we use to collaborate on projects over time. Through the wiki, we are able to share our progress on projects in a secure way and collaborate by building a library of links to online resources we all use regularly. We are even creating a "how to" page with links to a number of Jing videos that help our teammates effectively use the technology tools we have available.
- **Capture your meeting discussions on Flickr.** At Vivayic, we are a visual crew. In fact, most of our ideas end up on a flipchart at some point during our team discussions. We often capture a "storyboard" of our meetings by taking pictures of the flipcharts generated with a digital camera. After our meeting, we upload the images to our Flickr account and send a link to the photo stream to the appropriate people. If you try this one out at home, don't forget to set the images as private. ☺
- **Set up regular check-in meetings.** We hold a weekly webinar and a monthly in-person meeting to stay connected as a team. During our weekly calls, we use our web conferencing service to complete a quick run-down of our current project load. During our monthly meetings, we conduct bigger picture organizational planning. I often find it helpful to add on a "work day" to allow for in-person meetings on key projects.

As a company, we're committed to the teleworking philosophy as a guide for talent acquisition and a method to facilitate excellence in our work products. (At least I hope so! I just moved into a new home in Missouri!) As we continue to navigate this territory, I'll share more of the everyday solutions we find and use to collaborate and connect.

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