

NANO TOOLS FOR LEADERS®

INTEGRATORS AND SEGMENTORS: MANAGING REMOTE WORKERS

Nano Tools for Leaders® are fast, effective leadership tools that you can learn and start using in less than 15 minutes — with the potential to significantly impact your success as a leader and the engagement and productivity of the people you lead.

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THE GOAL

Help your team (and yourself) set effective boundaries between work and home by acknowledging and supporting those who prefer to keep the two separate, and those who don't mind blurring the lines.



NANO TOOL:

At this point, the benefits and drawbacks of working remotely are well known. But aside from the generalities (no commuting! Too much Zooming!), there are different preferences for when and how people get their work done. One important variation is between “integrators,” people who don’t mind blurring the boundary between work and home, and “segmentors,” people who have a strong desire to separate business from personal life.

Those preferences can lead to important differences in work schedules and expectations about availability, for example. Leaders need to understand where their workers fall on this spectrum so they can better manage them. The action steps below provide some concrete advice.

ACTION STEPS:

1. Acknowledge that neither integrators nor segmentors are better or more committed than the other, simply by nature of their work-life preferences. Managers should discuss where each person falls on the integrator-segmentor spectrum, so as to most effectively capitalize on individual strengths and avoid unnecessary tension.
2. As a leader, think about your overall expectations, metrics, goals, and deadlines, and whether it matters when and where tasks are done. An integrator might be happy to work outside of the traditional “workday” but that might not be effective for a segmentor. Expect that integrators might want to check on a child or pet during a meeting and doing so would allow them to be able to focus during the rest of the meeting. A segmentor might be distracted if their child walked into the room. Respect people’s differences in preference and work style.
3. Negotiate with people in your household in addition to your manager and teammates to align your schedules. For example, if your kids are occupied with online school in the morning that might be a good time to schedule a standing meeting. However, you also need to be flexible and aware that what works for you may not work for the team. Find out what the best and worst times are for team members and rotate the times so that one team member is not always required to meet at their worst time. You should also think carefully about what can be done individually rather than reflexively delegating work to teams.

4. If you're a segmentor (or managing segmentors) working from home, acknowledge that work and home lives can't be completely separate. A few adjustments can help you be more comfortable in the new work-from-home reality. First, create a schedule and routines to structure your time. Then, structure your space. It's preferable to create a workspace that can be separated from others (integrators may not mind working in the kitchen, for example, whereas that would not be an ideal solution for segmentors). Develop a ritual for transitioning into and out of work mode. That could mean only entering the workspace when you're working (crossing the threshold as a ritual), closing all non-work-related tabs and email apps, and dressing for work. Finally, move home-related items to another room so that family members don't need to come in and find their stuff while you are working.

HOW LEADERS USE IT:

Whether you are an integrator or a segmentor, in a work-from-home world, the lines may be even more blurred than normal. Even people who don't mind integrating on some dimensions, like my colleague Wharton management professor Adam Grant, might find it helpful to set boundaries between work and non-work by establishing clear priorities with themselves and the people around them. Grant did this when his inbox started overflowing such that integrating by letting work spill over to home would have been overwhelming. He talks about how he determined who, when, and how he would help. "Who to help? Family first, students second, colleagues third, everyone else fourth. When to help? At designated times that didn't interfere with my goals. And how to help? In areas where I had a unique contribution to make," he explains. "Now, when people reach out with requests that stretch beyond my wheelhouse or my calendar, I refer them to relevant resources: an article or an expert." But it takes discipline, and a lot of practice, to not dive in himself. Says Grant, "I think that's what improving our work and our lives is all about: practicing, trying out new ways to work, and setting boundaries for everything we hold dear beyond work."

When a firefighter in one of my studies, a segmentor, left for home after his shift, he switched into flip-flops to avoid bringing his firefighting boots into his house. When he gets home, he doesn't touch or hug his kids or his wife until he has taken a shower and changed his clothes. He wants to detach physically from work as a symbolic recognition that he sheds the difficulty of his job before entering the sanctity of his home. This is an extreme example of setting boundaries, but we all need to find new routines in the work-from-home world we are living in that allow us to do something similar. That might entail working in a room with a door that you can close or taking a walk around the block before and after work to clear your head and get into the "work" or "home" mindset.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- "[Working from Home: Navigating the Pandemic's New Normal](#)," *Knowledge@Wharton*, May 4, 2020.
- Nancy Rothbard directs Wharton Executive Education's [The Adaptable Leader: Strategies for Emerging Leadership](#) and [Women's Executive Leadership: Business Strategies for Success](#). She also teaches in the [Advanced Management Program](#), [Leadership in a New Era of Health Care](#), and [High-Potential Leaders: Accelerating Your Impact](#), among many other programs.

ABOUT NANO TOOLS:

Nano Tools for Leaders® was conceived and developed by Deb Giffen, MCC, director of Custom Programs at Wharton Executive Education. *Nano Tools for Leaders®* is a collaboration between joint sponsors Wharton Executive Education and Wharton's Center for Leadership and Change Management. This collaboration is led by Professors Michael Useem and John Paul MacDuffie.