

From the authors of the *New York Times* bestseller *Rework*



REMOTE
OFFICE NOT REQUIRED

Jason Fried and David Heinemeier Hansson
FOUNDERS OF 37SIGNALS

فروشگاه کتاب الکترونیک باکتابام
<https://e-baktabam.ir>

More Praise for *Remote*

“What you’ll find in *Remote* is profound advice from guys who’ve succeeded in the virtual workforce arena. This is a manifesto for discarding stifling location- and time-based organizational habits in favor of best work practices for our brave new virtual and global world. If your organization entrusts you with the responsibility to get things done, this is a must-read.”

—David Allen, internationally bestselling author of *Getting Things Done: The Art of Stress-Free Productivity*

“Remote is the way I work and live. Now I know why. If you work in an office, you need to read this remarkable book, and change your life.”

—Richard Florida, author of the national bestseller *The Rise of the Creative Class: And How It’s Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life*

“In the near future, everyone will work remotely, including those sitting across from you. You’ll need this farsighted book to prepare for this inversion.”

—Kevin Kelly, senior maverick for *Wired* magazine and author of *What Technology Wants*

“Leave your office at the office. Lose the soul-sapping commutes. Jettison the workplace veal chambers and banish cookie-cutter corporate culture. Smart, convincing, and prescriptive, *Remote* offers a radically more productive and satisfying office-less future, better for all (well, except commercial landlords).”

—Adam L. Penenberg, author of *Viral Loop: From Facebook to Twitter, How Today’s Smartest Businesses Grow Themselves*

“Shows how remote working sets people free—free from drudgery and free to unleash unprecedented creativity and productivity. The first gift copy I buy will be for my boss!”

—James McQuivey, PhD, VP and principal analyst at Forrester Research, and author of *Digital Disruption: Unleashing the Next Wave of Innovation*

“Just like we couldn’t imagine a cell phone smaller than a toaster in the 1970s, some companies still believe that they can’t get great performance from their employees unless they show up at an office. Virtual work is the wave of the future, and Jason and David do a brilliant job of teaching best practices for both employees and employers.”

—Pamela Slim, author of *Escape from Cubicle Nation: From Corporate Prisoner to Thriving Entrepreneur*

“Jason and David convincingly argue the merits of remote work, both from the perspective of manager and of worker ... Remote work gives you the power to craft your own life, and this book is a road map to get that.”

—Penelope Trunk, author of *Brazen Careerist: The New Rules for Success*

“The decentralization of the workplace is no longer fodder for futurists, it’s an everyday reality. Remote is an insight-packed playbook for thriving in the coming decade and beyond.”

—Todd Henry, author of *The Accidental Creative: How to Be Brilliant at a Moment’s Notice*

“Remote shows you how to remove the final barrier to doing the work you were meant to do, with the people you were meant to do it with, in the most rewarding and profitable way possible—this book is your ticket to real freedom!”

—John Jantsch, author of *Duct Tape Marketing: The World’s Most Practical Small Business Marketing Guide*

“Remote is not just a powerful toolbox ... It’s full of fascinating insights into collaboration, innovation, and the human mind.”

—Leo Babauta, author of *Zen Habits: Handbook for Life*

Cover
Authors' Note
Introduction

THE TIME IS RIGHT FOR REMOTE WORK

Why work doesn't happen at work
Stop commuting your life away
It's the technology, stupid
Escaping 9am–5pm
End of city monopoly
The new luxury
Talent isn't bound by the hubs
It's not about the money
But saving is always nice
Not all or nothing
Still a trade-off
You're probably already doing it

DEALING WITH EXCUSES

Magic only happens when we're all in a room
If I can't see them, how do I know they're working?
People's homes are full of distractions
Only the office can be secure
Who will answer the phone?
Big business doesn't do it, so why should we?
Others would get jealous
What about culture?
I need an answer now!
But I'll lose control
We paid a lot of money for this office
That wouldn't work for our size or industry

HOW TO COLLABORATE REMOTELY

Thou shalt overlap
Seeing is believing
All out in the open
The virtual water cooler
Forward motion
The work is what matters
Not just for people who are out of town
Disaster ready
Easy on the M&Ms

BEWARE THE DRAGONS

Cabin fever
Check-in, check-out
Ergonomic basics
Mind the gut
The lone outpost
Working with clients
Taxes, accounting, laws, oh my!

HIRING AND KEEPING THE BEST

It's a big world
Life moves on
Keep the good times going
Seeking a human
No parlor tricks
The cost of thriving
Great remote workers are simply great workers
On writing well
Test project
Meeting them in person
Contractors know the drill

MANAGING REMOTE WORKERS

When's the right time to go remote?
Stop managing the chairs
Meetups and sprints
Lessons from open source
Level the playing field
One-on-ones
Remove the roadblocks
Be on the lookout for overwork, not underwork

Using scarcity to your advantage

LIFE AS A REMOTE WORKER

Building a routine
Morning remote, afternoon local
Compute different
Working alone in a crowd
Staying motivated
Nomadic freedom
A change of scenery
Family time
No extra space at home
Making sure you're not ignored

CONCLUSION

The quaint old office

The Remote Toolbox
Acknowledgments
Epigraph
Dedication
Copyright
Thank You for Reading Our Book
About 37 Signals

AUTHORS' NOTE

When we started writing this book in 2013, the practice of working remotely—or telecommuting, as it's often referred to—had been silently on the rise for years. (From 2005 to 2011 remote work soared 73 percent in the United States—to 3 million workers total.*)

The silence was loudly broken at the end of February 2013, though, when Yahoo! announced that they were dismantling their remote-work program, just as we were finishing this book. All of a sudden, remote work moved from academic obscurity to a heated global conversation. Hundreds, if not thousands, of news articles were written, and controversy was in the air.

Of course, we would have appreciated Yahoo!'s CEO Marissa Mayer waiting another six months for our publication date. That said, her move provided a unique backdrop against which to test all of *Remote's* arguments. As it turned out, every single excuse you'll find in the essay titled "Dealing with excuses" got airtime during the Yahoo! firestorm.

Needless to say, we don't think Yahoo! made the right choice, but we thank them for the spotlight they've shined on remote work. It's our aim in this book to look at the phenomenon in a much more considered way. Beyond the sound bites, beyond all the grandstanding, what we've provided here is an in-the-trenches analysis of the pros and cons—a guide to the brave new world of remote work. Enjoy!

* <http://www.globalworkplaceanalytics.com/telecommuting-statistics>

INTRODUCTION

The future is already here—it's just not evenly distributed.

—WILLIAM GIBSON

Millions of workers and thousands of companies have already discovered the joys and benefits of working remotely. In companies of all sizes, representing virtually every industry, remote work has seen steady growth year after year. Yet unlike, say, the rush to embrace the fax machine, adoption of remote work has not been nearly as universal or commonsensical as many would have thought.

The technology is here; it's never been easier to communicate and collaborate with people anywhere, any time. But that still leaves a fundamental people problem. The missing upgrade is for the human mind.

This book aims to provide that upgrade. We'll illuminate the many benefits of remote work, including access to the best talent, freedom from soul-crushing commutes, and increased productivity outside the traditional office. And we'll tackle all the excuses floating around—for example, that innovation only happens face-to-face, that people can't be trusted to be productive at home, that company culture would wither away.

Above all, this book will teach you how to become an expert in remote work. It will provide an overview of the tools and techniques that will help you get the most out of it, as well as the pitfalls and constraints that can bring you down. (Nothing is without trade-offs.)

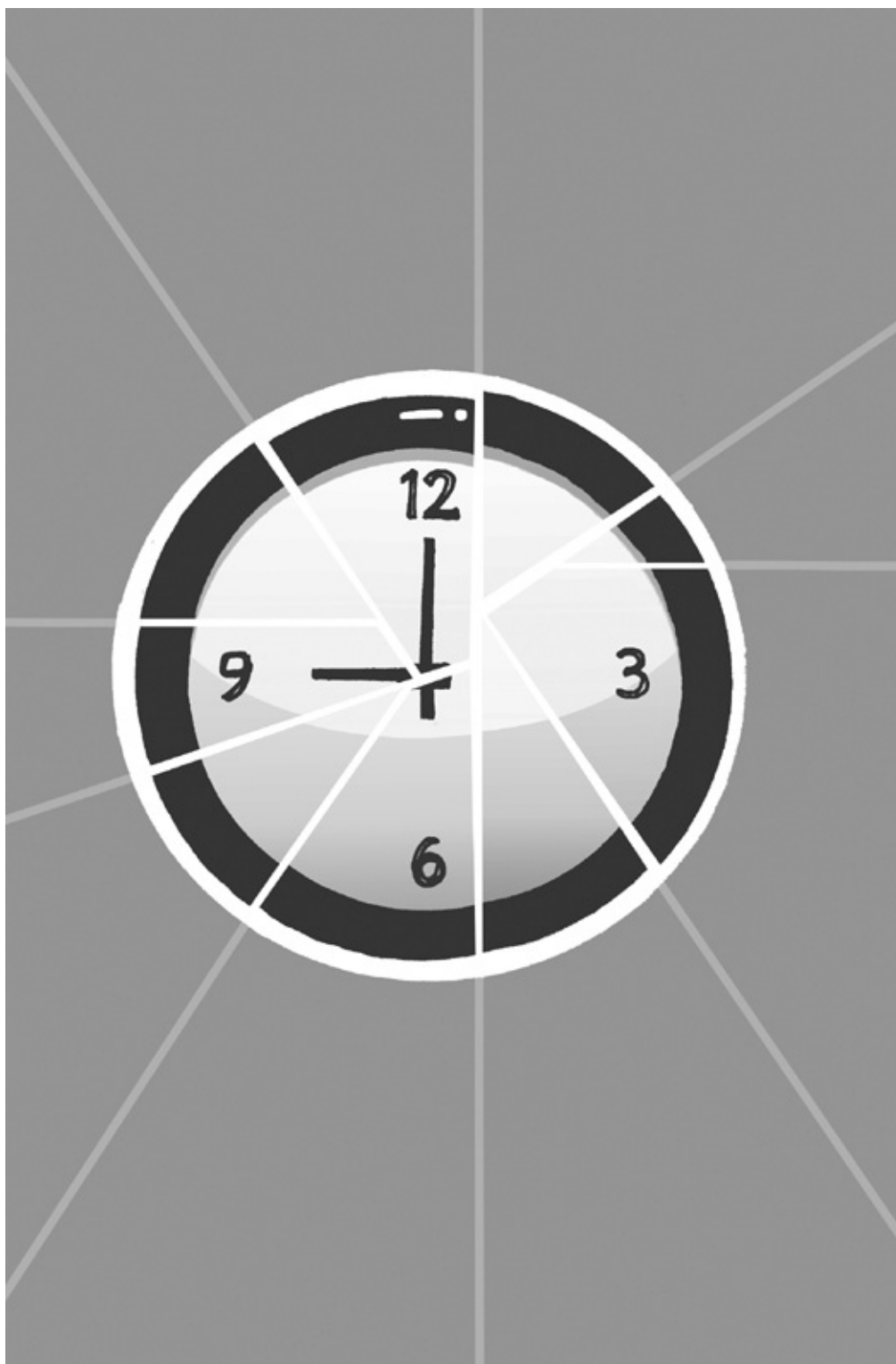
Our discussion will be practical, because our knowledge comes from actually practicing remote work—not just theorizing about it. Over the past decade, we've grown a successful software company, 37signals, from the seeds of remote work. We got started with one partner in

Copenhagen and the other in Chicago. Since then we've expanded to thirty-six people spread out all over the globe, serving millions of users in just about every country in the world.

We'll draw on this rich experience to show how remote work has opened the door to a new era of freedom and luxury. A brave new world beyond the industrial-age belief in The Office. A world where we leave behind the dusty old notion of outsourcing as a way to increase work output at the lowest cost and replace it with a new ideal—one in which remote work increases both quality of work and job satisfaction.

“Office not required” isn't just the future—it's the *present*. Now is your chance to catch up.

CHAPTER
**THE TIME IS
RIGHT FOR REMOTE WORK**



Why work doesn't happen at work

If you ask people where they go when they really need to get work done, very few will respond “the office.” If they do say the office, they’ll include a qualifier such as “super early in the morning before anyone gets in” or “I stay late at night after everyone’s left” or “I sneak in on the weekend.”

What they’re trying to tell you is that they can’t get work done at work. The office during the day has become the last place people want to be when they really want to get work done.

That’s because offices have become interruption factories. A busy office is like a food processor—it chops your day into tiny bits. Fifteen minutes here, ten minutes there, twenty here, five there. Each segment is filled with a conference call, a meeting, another meeting, or some other institutionalized unnecessary interruption.

It’s incredibly hard to get meaningful work done when your workday has been shredded into work moments.

Meaningful work, creative work, thoughtful work, important work—this type of effort takes stretches of uninterrupted time to get into the zone. But in the modern office such long stretches just can’t be found. Instead, it’s just one interruption after another.

The ability to be alone with your thoughts is, in fact, one of the key advantages of working remotely. When you work on your own, far away from the buzzing swarm at headquarters, you can settle into your own productive zone. You can actually get work done—the same work that you couldn’t get done at work!

Yes, working outside the office has its own set of challenges. And interruptions can come from different places, multiple angles. If you’re at home, maybe it’s the TV. If you’re at the local coffee shop, maybe it’s someone talking loudly a few tables away. But here’s the thing: those interruptions are things you can control. They’re passive. They don’t handcuff you. You can find a space that fits your work style. You can toss on some headphones and not be worried about a coworker loitering by your desk and tapping you on the shoulder. Neither do you have to be worried about being called into yet another unnecessary meeting. Your place, your zone, is yours alone.

Don’t believe us? Ask around. Or ask yourself: Where do you go when you *really* have to get work done? Your answer won’t be “the office in the afternoon.”



Stop commuting your life away

Let's face it: nobody likes commuting. The alarm rings earlier, you arrive home that much later. You lose time, patience, possibly even your will to eat anything other than convenience food with plastic utensils. Maybe you skip the gym, miss your child's bedtime, feel too tired for a meaningful conversation with your significant other. The list goes on.

Even your weekends get truncated by that wretched commute. All those chores you don't have the will to complete after slugging it out with the highway collect into one mean list due on Saturday. By the time

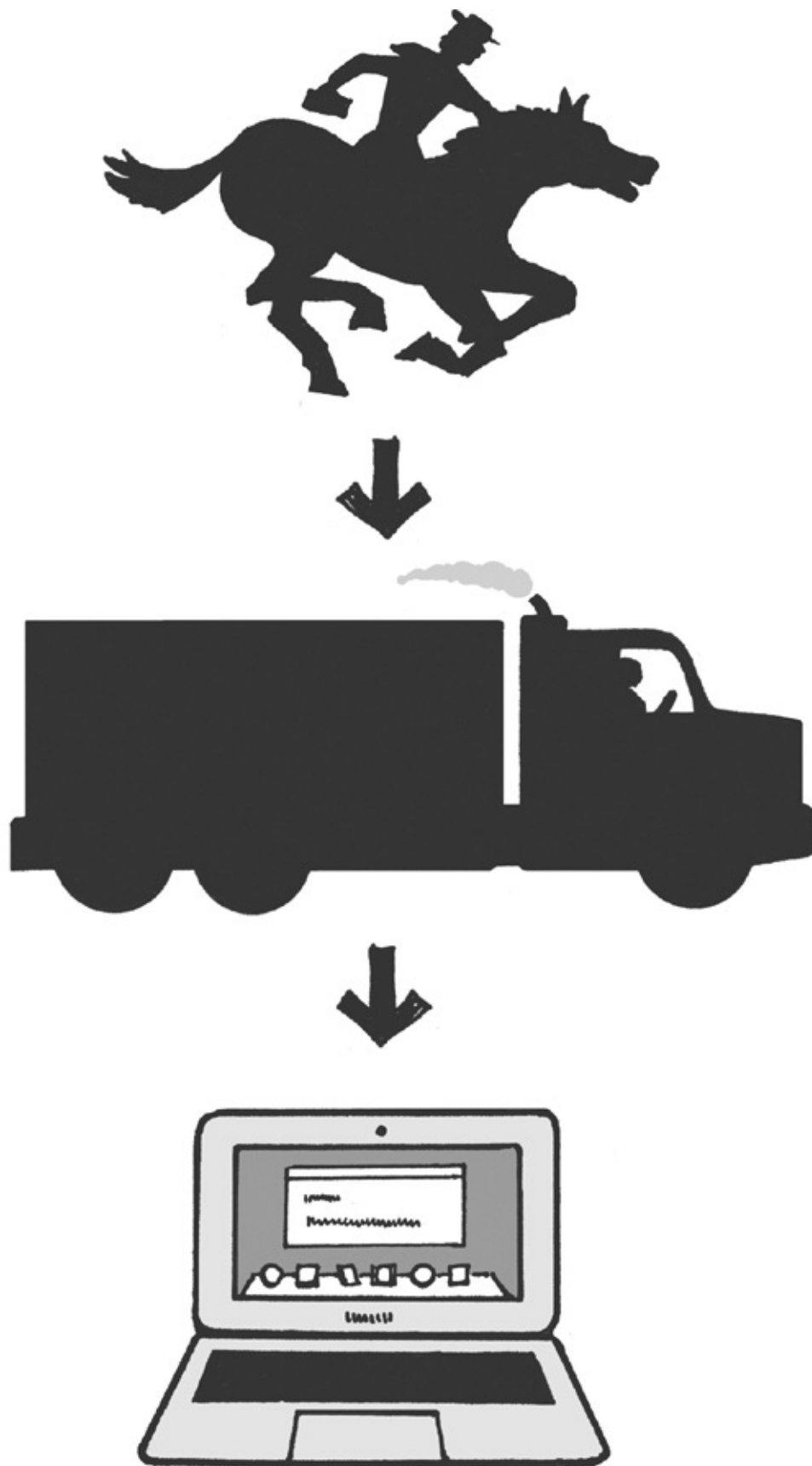
you've taken out the trash, picked up the dry cleaning, gone to the hardware store, and paid your bills, half the weekend is gone.

And the commute itself? Even the nicest car won't make driving in traffic enjoyable, and forget feeling fresh after a trip on most urban trains and buses. Breathe in the smell of exhaust and body odor, breathe out your health and sanity.

Smart people in white coats have extensively studied commuting—this supposedly necessary part of our days—and the verdict is in: long commutes make you fat, stressed, and miserable. Even short commutes stab at your happiness.

According to the research,^{*} commuting is associated with an increased risk of obesity, insomnia, stress, neck and back pain, high blood pressure, and other stress-related ills such as heart attacks and depression, and even divorce.

But let's say we ignore the overwhelming evidence that commuting doesn't do a body good. Pretend it isn't bad for the environment either. Let's just do the math. Say you spend thirty minutes driving in rush hour every morning and another fifteen getting to your car and into the office. That's 1.5 hours a day, 7.5 hours per week, or somewhere between 300 and 400 hours per year, give or take holidays and vacation. Four hundred hours is exactly the amount of programmer time we spent building Basecamp, our most popular product. Imagine what you could do with 400 extra hours a year. Commuting isn't just bad for you, your relationships, and the environment—it's bad for business. And it doesn't have to be that way.



It's the technology, stupid

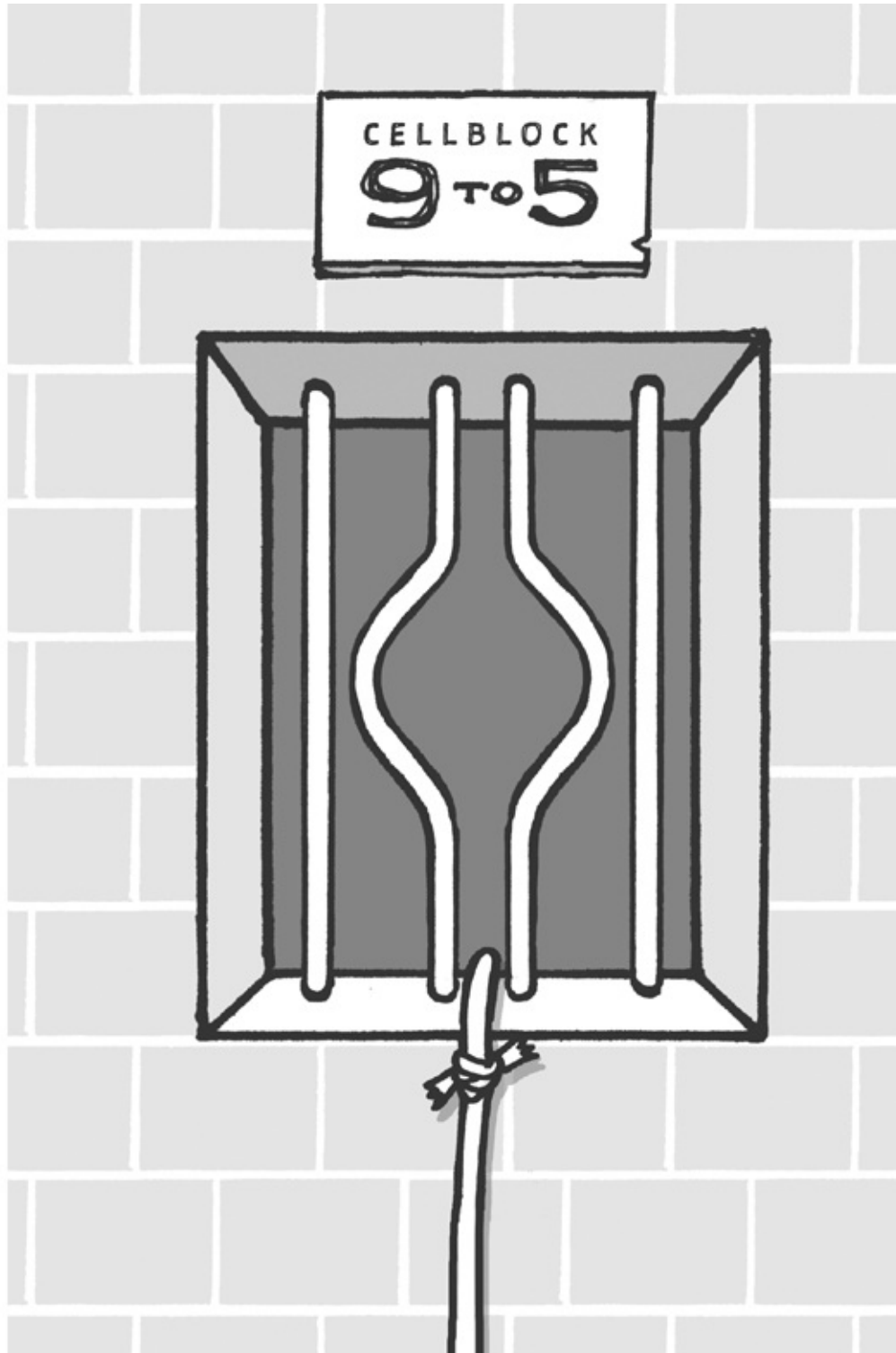
If working remotely is such a great idea, why haven't progressive companies been practicing it all along? It's simple: they couldn't. The technology just wasn't there. Good luck trying to collaborate with people in different cities, let alone halfway around the world, using a fax machine and FedEx.

Technology snuck up on us and made working remotely an obvious possibility. In particular, the Internet happened. Screen sharing using WebEx, coordinating to-do lists using Basecamp, real-time chatting using instant messages, downloading the latest files using Dropbox—these activities all flow from innovations pioneered in the last fifteen years. No wonder we're still learning what's possible.

But past generations have been bred on the idea that good work happens from 9am to 5pm, in offices and cubicles in tall buildings around the city. It's no wonder that most who are employed inside that model haven't considered other options, or resist the idea that it could be any different. But it can.

The future, quite literally, belongs to those who get it. Do you think today's teenagers, raised on Facebook and texting, will be sentimental about the old days of all-hands-on-deck, Monday morning meetings? Ha!

The great thing about technology, and even working remotely, is that it's all up to you. It's not rocket science, and learning the tools that make it possible won't take that long either. But it *will* take willpower to let go of nostalgia and get on board. Can you do that?



Escaping 9am–5pm

The big transition with a distributed workforce is going from synchronous to asynchronous collaboration. Not only do we not have to be in the same spot to work together, we also don't have to work at the same time to work together.

This is one of those things that's born out of necessity when collaborating with people in multiple time zones, but it benefits *everyone*, even those in the same city. Once you've structured your work technique and expectations to deal with someone seven hours ahead in Copenhagen, the rest of the home office in Chicago might as well work from 11am to 7pm or 7am to 3pm—it's all the same.

The beauty of relaxing workday hours is that the policy accommodates everyone—from the early birds to the night owls to the family folks with kids who need to be picked up in the middle of the day. At 37signals, we try to keep a roughly forty-hour workweek, but how our employees distribute those hours across the clock and days just isn't important.

A company that is efficiently built around remote work doesn't even have to have a set schedule. This is especially important when it comes to creative work. If you can't get into the zone, there's rarely much that can force you into it. When face time isn't a requirement, the best strategy is often to take some time away and get back to work when your brain is firing on all cylinders.

At the IT Collective, a film production and video marketing firm based in Colorado (but with people in New York and Sydney too), the team of editors will occasionally switch to nocturnal mode when working on a new film. It's simply how they get their best work done. The next day the editors will overlap with the rest of the team just long enough to review progress and get direction for the next night. Who cares if they slept way past noon to make that schedule work?

Naturally, not all work can be done entirely free of schedule restrictions. At 37signals, we offer customer support to people on American business hours, so it's important our customer support team is available during that time. But even within those constraints, relaxed schedules are still a possibility so long as the group as a whole is covering the full spectrum.

Release yourself from the 9am-to-5pm mentality. It might take a bit of time and practice to get the hang of working asynchronously with your team, but soon you'll see that it's the work—not the clock—that matters.



End of city monopoly

The city is the original talent hub. Traditionally, those who ran the engines of capitalism thought: “Let’s gather a large number of people in a small geographical area where they must live on top of each other in tight quarters, and we’ll be able to find plenty of able bodies to man our factories.” Most splendid, Sir Moneybags!

Thankfully, the population-density benefits that suited factories proved great for lots of other things too. We got libraries, stadiums, theaters, restaurants, and all the other wonders of modern culture and civilization. But we also got cubicles, tiny apartments, and sardine boxes to take us from here to there. We traded the freedom and splendor of country land and fresh air for convenience and excitement.

Lucky for us, the advances in technology that made remote working possible have also made remote culture and living much more desirable. Imagine describing to a city dweller of the 1960s a world in which everyone has access to every movie ever made, every book ever written, every album ever recorded, and nearly every sports game live (in higher quality and better colors than at any time in the past). Surely, they would have laughed. Hell, even in the 1980s they would have laughed.

But here we are living in that world.

There's a difference, though, between taking it for granted and taking it to the logical conclusion. If we now have unlimited access to culture and entertainment from any location, why are we still willing to live bound by the original deal? Is that overpriced apartment, the motorized sardine box, and your cubicle really worth it still? Increasingly, we believe that for many people the answer will be no.

So here's a prediction: The luxury privilege of the next twenty years will be to leave the city. Not as its leashed servant in a suburb, but to wherever one wants.



The new luxury

A swanky corner office on the top floor of a tall building, a plush company-provided Lexus, a secretary. It's easy to laugh at old-money corporate luxuries. But the new-money, hip ones aren't all that different: a fancy chef and free meals, laundry services, massages, a roomful of

arcade games. They're two sides of the same coin.

That's the coin given in exchange for the endless hours spent at the office. Away from your family, your friends, and your extracurricular passions. The hope is that these enticements will tide you over during those long years when you're dreaming of all the things you'll do when you retire.

But why wait? If what you really love doing is skiing, why wait until your hips are too old to take a hard fall and *then* move to Colorado? If you love surfing, why are you still trapped in a concrete jungle and not living near the beach? If all the family members you're close to live in a small town in Oregon, why are you still stuck on the other coast?

The new luxury is to shed the shackles of deferred living—to pursue your passions *now*, while you're still working. What's the point in wasting time daydreaming about how great it'll be when you finally quit?

Your life no longer needs to be divided into arbitrary phases of work and retirement. You can blend the two for fun and profit—design a better lifestyle that makes work enjoyable because it's not the *only* thing on the menu. Shed the resentment of golden handcuffs that keep you from living how you really want to live.

That's a much more realistic goal than buying lottery tickets, either the literal or figurative ones. As an example of the latter: pursuing a career-ladder or stock-option scheme and hoping your number hits before it's too late to matter.

You don't need to be extraordinarily lucky or hardworking to make your work life fit with your passions—if you're free to pick where to work from and when to work.

This doesn't mean you have to pick up and move to Colorado tomorrow, just because you like skiing. Some people do that, but there are many possible in-betweens as well. Could you go there for three weeks? Just like working from the office, it doesn't have to be all or nothing.

The new luxury is the luxury of freedom and time. Once you've had a taste of that life, no corner office or fancy chef will be able to drag you back.



Talent isn't bound by the hubs

If you talk to technologists from Silicon Valley, moviemakers from Hollywood, or advertising execs from New York, they'll all insist that the magic only happens on their sacred turf. But that's what you'd expect talent hub nationalists to say. You're the fool if you believe it.

"Look at the history," they'll say, pointing to proud traditions bearing glorious results. Yes, yes, but as the fine print reads on investment materials: "Past performance is no guarantee of future results."

So here's another set of unremarkable predictions: The world's share of great technology from Silicon Valley will decline, the best movies of the next twenty years will consist of fewer Hollywood blockbusters, and fewer people will be induced to buy products from admen in New York.

Great talent is everywhere, and not everyone wants to move to San Francisco (or New York or Hollywood, or wherever you're headquartered). 37signals is a successful software company started in—gasp!—the Midwest, and we're proud to have hired spectacular employees from such places as Caldwell, Idaho, and Fenwick, Ontario.

In fact, we don't have a single employee in San Francisco, the hub where every technology company seems to be tripping over itself to find "rock stars" and "software ninjas." This hasn't been a conscious choice on our part, but given the poaching games being played in major hubs, with people changing jobs as often as they might reorder their iPhone playlists, it's not exactly a net negative.

When you have dozens, even hundreds, of competitors within walking distance of your office, it should come as no surprise when your employees cross the street and join the next hot thing.

As we've observed, star employees who work away from the echo chambers of industry spend far less time brooding about how much greener the grass is on the other side and, generally, seem happier in their work.



It's not about the money