

AN INTERVIEW WITH

IMELDA DONNELLY

COO, HSBC SECURITIES SERVICES
HSBC SINGAPORE

*Working from home: We are all in the same storm
but we are not in the same boat.*

Pre-COVID-19, working from home for me was a quiet, calm thinking and doing space.

I found the experience productive and it allowed me the headspace to be more creative and innovative as well as the flexibility to get some wellness-related activity comfortably into my day.

Now, working from home is more akin to a circus!

With schools, daycare and workplaces closed due to COVID-19 my home is filled with noise and activity. My husband, children and I are on video calls overlapping throughout the day. As parents we are also substitute teachers, homework and play supervisors and have had to hone new skills as IT support technicians for the online platforms and devices our children are using.

Juggling these responsibilities along with my role at HSBC, has been the most challenging part of COVID-19.

The human brain makes the best adaptation it can in a situation and this is just another challenge to rise to. And we are adapting; from tools to help organize our space and time as a family, to changing the way I approach my working day and meetings, I'm taking lots of positive learning from this unprecedented situation.

So what are my tips to create success from working from home for both my colleagues, personally and for my family?

Communication is key. A perennial risk for large businesses is falling into silos and focusing on individual priorities; to prevent this we need to keep reaching out regularly.

We are navigating unprecedented times, and it's affecting us all in different ways. *We are all in the same storm but we are not in the same boat.* As managers and humans we can support our team in a way that is impactful to them if we understand what matters to them or what's not working for them. We survey often rather than making assumptions. The responses have often surprised us.

In my role, I need to always have my finger on the pulse. COO acts as a nerve center for a wide network of stakeholders. It's crucial to stay informed of what is going on in the industry and maintain relationships, internally and externally.

Simultaneously, communicating with my family and support network is key – sharing frustrations, sharing empathy, sharing fun and noticing that people value the simple things so much more now is the great equalizer.

I do miss popping out with friends in my industry and across my network for the connection as well as the informal updates and debate. I use my usual news apps, podcasts and LinkedIn to stay informed. So many business models have adapted and are offering online or virtual versions of their products and events which I have found useful.

Despite the disruption that COVID-19 has caused, it has rightly prompted us to take stock and readjust. There has been great collaboration and a collective drive to do better, together, during this time – and I've felt this both in my personal life and with my work.

We will retain the muscle memory of this experience and continue to improve and change at pace.

The hot topic is; will we see a permanent increase in numbers working from home? Globally, yes I think it's inevitable for many reasons – mostly because where you communicate and collaborate effectively, this change has been positive for us all.

Break out box:

My tips:

Don't underestimate the value of your office chair! Many people working from home will be doing so for some months to come. Take care of your back and the rest of your body. When working from home we are severely movement restricted. We don't even have to walk to meeting rooms, everything is based in one spot now.

Make time to move your body or suffer the consequences later!

And for the mind, meditation. If you feel you don't have time for meditation, you probably need it more!

Imelda Donnelly

Imelda began her career as a Scientist, before making the transition into Consulting for banks. She joined HSBC's Securities Services Singapore earlier this year having spent over ten years in Financial Markets at several international banks. Imelda is a certified yoga teacher trained in meditation, mindfulness and nutrition, and a certified Executive Coach.

