

THE DIGITAL NOMAD

By Christine Gilbert

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Will international readers know where Seattle is? The rest of this issue is Audi-centric.

Moving to Mobile

It was one of those rare meteorological occasions, a snow storm in Seattle. Nearly three inches blanketed the city. In my native New England, this would have meant a slow commute, but in Seattle it meant a snow day. Unaware, I found myself alone at work and annoyed. To compound it, I received an email with the subject line "Working From Home." It featured a picture of a co-worker in his hot tub, grinning with a half-empty beer in his hand. From that moment on, working from home became the holy grail of employee benefits.

Credit line too close to gutter?

words overcrowded. Increase kerning.

to workers

<space>

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The progression of the wireless worker

As someone who worked with software, it became increasingly difficult to justify my presence in the office. We had the technology to access our work files from anywhere, to log into any computer company-wide, to access servers and network settings, or even to complete pedestrian tasks like checking email, support tickets or voice mail. Increasingly, our managers began seeing the benefits of remote work – we could be available for midnight launches, troubleshoot over the weekends, or schedule testing after hours.



"I was always connected and to justify my remote status I'd put in as many hours as possible"

It may have begun with the techies, but it didn't stop there. Managers and executives caught wind of the idea and wanted full access at home too. Trial programs began to allow phone operators to work remotely, creating 24-hour service on the cheap. Years later at GE, I was managing a completely virtual team. We installed scanning software for Yale Medical School completely off-site. There was simply no need for our dispersed team of engineers to travel when installation, testing and roll-out could be handled via the internet.

When I finally left the corporate world one thing was clear: becoming a digital nomad was no longer a fad, but a rising tide. It's too good to go back.

Work at home: All work, no play?

However, it wasn't until I left my corporate job to travel full time and pursue a new career as a writer, that I found the missing piece of the digital nomad puzzle.

After years of working semi-nomadically, a strange transition occurred in my personal life. The lines between work and home blurred. I was always connected and to justify my remote status I'd put in as many hours as possible. I'd spend a Saturday morning catching up on work emails and it wouldn't occur to me to

ask "why?" I felt lucky to work from home. I felt guilty too. I overcompensated. And my boss didn't mind for a moment.

When I hit the road, first around Europe, later in Central America, everything changed.

Now, as a writer, I didn't have set hours of attendance. When I was researching stories, my mornings could be spent catching up on emails or (more likely) chasing down the perfect Pastel de Belem somewhere in Lisbon, Portugal. The change from a sedentary life to walking six hours a day exhausted me. I'd take naps. I'd have a glass of wine with lunch. I'd work until 3am to finish a deadline or I'd

Missing a word, but to fit, how about "Location alone doesn't create balance"

take an entire day of My sense of being p I was getting more d fantastically happy. A have never allowed it

Life balance is more than location

It's easy to trade the cubicle for a coffee shop but still bring with you all of the baggage of a traditional nine-to-five career; accountability based on time spent rather than output or quality, tasks that waste time but don't add value, and the need for management to see you (even virtually) as you work. The digital nomad trend is in its infancy, and these compromises are a necessary step to move us closer to workplace independence, but it's not the spirit of the movement.

What I realised in those first months of travel was that the promise of remote work is goes beyond just setting up an identical cubicle in your home and working as you always have. It's about creating a balance that allows you to pursue your ideal life without compromising your workplace productivity. Whether that means taking a 10am kickboxing class or taking a client call from Paris, it's the personal responsibility to say, "Hey, I've got this."

Kudos to ITPM for a fab read, and thanks for making this page available on CC for me to use as fictional mark-up.

10 a.m.