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WLRN Connects: The Ins And Outs Of Working From Home In South Florida During The Pandemic

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Working from home during the pandemic has been so common it has earned its own well-known shorthand — WFH.

But the novelty of not having to battle traffic jams and working from home has worn off for many first-time remote workers. Productivity may come with a dose of isolation when your kitchen table turns into your office. And shifting priorities may come with the anxiety of eventually going into a workplace sometime in the near future.

WLRN Connects spoke with South Floridians from a split household — one spouse can work from home, the other must leave to go to a job — a lawyer who has returned part-time to his office, a choreographer who has stopped working, and operators of co-working spaces about welcoming clients back to the office during COVID-19.

Chris Wishlade is a rising music producer who works from a home studio. He's also a restaurant worker in Palm Beach County. His wife, Pamela, is a client service specialist for an insurance broker who used to go to work in an office, but since the pandemic has been working from home. The couple rearranged their home to accommodate their workspaces, and school, play space for their two sons.

Here's what Pamela shared about the family's work from home adjustment: "I think at the beginning it was just kind of — we were rushed into it. It happened from one day to the next where we decided, OK, you know we're gonna work from home. So it was very difficult at first to try to get used to, you know, and everything was fine. We were moving along but then Chris needed to go back when the restaurant started opening up again. And so that was like a whole 'nother ball game that we needed to get used to and a whole different routine and schedule that we needed to to adjust to. So to say that it's been easy, it hasn't been."

Chris Wishlade, who released his debut album "Olives" in 2019, says producing for other artists hasn't been that difficult during the pandemic:



"It's mostly I have to Facetime or I work on a song and then send it through email. I have like someone play bass on it or sing on it and send it back to me. That's honestly how the music industry works right now — for a long time. People really hardly get into the studio now to work unless it's for a big, major project."

Leslie Jose Zigel is a partner in the law firm Greenspoon Marder where he leads the firm's entertainment, media and technology group. He's also a bass player who has been forced to jam at home since live concerts are out during the pandemic.

"I was out playing a couple of times a month or sometimes going out to hear music quite a bit. These days that's been nonexistent since the middle of March. And also, I traveled quite a bit for work.

I was in L.A. probably two or three times, just between January and February, March. And now the traveling has come to a grinding halt. So inside a lot more."

Christine Kerber worked as a choreographer and creative consultant for cruise ship companies before they were forced to dock because of COVID-19. She actually pivoted by doing choreography for independent films.

"...In my free time now I've been finding other ways to use my creative outlet. I've actually started writing a little bit more. So I'm doing that. I'm trying to spin my creativity into other ways that I can do here at my home, as opposed to having to be on-site teaching more classes. So, you know, a lot of my colleagues are teaching Zoom classes. So they're doing dance classes or they're doing vocal lessons."

Amber Tollefson is the founder of The Flamingo House in Boca Raton, a boutique co-working space that attracts young professionals and creative entrepreneurs. She says her community-centered business is in the middle of pivoting right now.

"I crave, you know, giving the hug and the high five when someone walks in. But that's not the case anymore. So we obviously put all of our events and workshops. Everything's on — that's all on hold. That's, you know, something we started doing when people were working from home.



We started flocking the yards of our members with flamingos, which was kind of fun and staying connected in that way. We had to come up with cute little ways to stay creative and know that staying connected and the people are still — we're still a community. Just in a different way right now.”

Philippe Houdard is the founder of Pipeline Workspaces. It has a half dozen workspaces in Florida and one in Philadelphia. Houdard says since he has an older brother that lives in Shanghai, China, he was able to catch wind of what was going on and began instituting a lot of changes in January and February, weeks before businesses began closing.

"Fortunately, we've fared OK. The business is doing well. We're concerned about how long this goes for. So we've made a lot of changes to adapt to that, to the current environment. We've got a lot more flexibility in the way that we can treat our members. What we're really trying to do is make sure that as many businesses as possible can get through this time and get to the other side. They will do it in a safe way. And that's our goal, really."

Chester Rodeheaver rents a workspace at a Pipeline location. He is the founder of Pont Capital, a financial consulting firm. He said he misses the “benefits of relationships and connectivity.”

"I've always been sort of a hybrid user where I kind of use it a couple of hours a day most days, and try to be thoughtful about what has to happen at the office and what can be done from home.

You know, before this, there was a lot of travel involved as well. When I'm here at home in Miami, it's typically about fifty-fifty under normal circumstances. And now there are some weeks where it's 100 percent at home and the average now is probably closer to 20 percent I'm out of the home and 80 percent at home."