

I unashamedly traded in my monkey suit and a corporate life to work for myself and enjoy the benefits of a virtual office. What this really means is that on any given day, you'll find me working in client offices, cafes, gardens, on a beach – the list goes on.

Wherever I am, I'm connected by technology that not only makes this possible, but moreover, it makes it effective, as it results in a myriad of health benefits for me and supports a different level of efficiency that a typical corporate role and office environment simply can't match.

In fact, according to Eva M. Selhub, co-author of *Your Brain on Nature*, the time spent in nature turns off the stress response in your brain, which lowers cortisol levels, along with your heart rate and blood pressure.

When stress response sensors are off, it means that we can access more of our brain power, which translates to greater creativity, better outputs and more energy. Meaning that when we are working, we are super productive.

For many people, trading in the monkey suit, or working from home, is not always possible, but if you're finding your office walls or rows of cubicles stifling, why not try taking your meetings literally outside of the box, in nature or a local cafe, to promote more creative thinking.

Over the years, I have been fortunate enough to work with some great companies who not only support my virtual office philosophy but have introduced their own initiatives to promote more flexibility for desk jobs. So, I thought we'd list a few of our favourite ideas:

- Lunch and crunch sessions – research has found that environments with reasonable background noise, such as cafes and restaurants, offer enough noise distraction to encourage more imaginative thinking, but not enough to result in loss of focus. Time for lunch.
- Walk and Talk meetings – research has also found that the act of walking boosts creative inspiration, whether it's done inside or out. Time to get moving.
- Boardbench meetings – replace boardrooms meetings with park benches and encourage participants to look at things from a different perspective. What a breath of fresh air.
- BusCycle and BusYoga – grab a work buddy and get pedaling or stretching. De-brief and de-stress at the same time.

Working harder is a thing of the past. In today's fast-paced world, we need to work smarter... and letting go of conventional notions around 'monkey suits and desk jobs' is the first step.

What it comes down to is trusting your employees to do their best work and taking advantage of laptops, which were designed with mobility in mind! Go for it. You won't regret it.

