# Raise Your Hand

Finding Success and Happiness through Remote Work



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Finding Success and Happiness through Remote Work (Aka: what hanging out with 70,000 remote workers has taught us)

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# We Are the Remote Workers

We are the early birds, who always get up on the right side of the bed. We are the stay-at-home moms and dads, with full-time jobs. We are the trusted advisors ... to clients ten thousand miles away. We are travelers, and storytellers, and prop-makers, and coffee tasters. We are the ones you hear about only in the movies. Okay, that last one's not true. But we are the rest of it. That's because we are part of a revolution in work. An idea that if something can be done from the comfort of your own home, why wear anything but slippers? A belief that work can be fun. And, boy, do we have a lot to share with you!

This book is about what remote work means to us, our journey into finding success, and the lessons we learned along the way. It looks at some of the hurdles you'll likely face and ways to help you overcome them. Think of it as a useful guide in your quest to becoming your own boss.

# So, what is remote work all about?

#### On the one hand ...

Our days are filled with the most important things in life, such as:

- Looking after growing families
- Spending time with loved ones
- Traveling to places that existed in dreams
- Or pursuing hobbies that feed our souls ...
   like gardening or volunteering

#### On the other hand ...

We work on things we love to do. On our own terms. Sometimes for an hour, sometimes for a month, occasionally for 10 years, but always from exactly where we want to be ...

- We teach, we edit, we counsel
- We work only as much as we need or want
- We form bonds that transcend oceans and seas
- We travel daily, but we're always home for lunch



# A Disclaimer of Sorts ...

When we say we've been hanging out with 70,000 remote workers, we're not really exaggerating. You see, we have something of a vested interest in changing the way we think about work.

We're like that one friend at the party who will, given the opportunity, talk about how great a new trend is until the DJ goes home. But the thing is, when you hear what we have to say, even the DJ will stick around to learn more.

That's because here at VIPKid, we truly believe that online work can change lives. That every child can be empowered and inspired by a teacher ten thousand miles away. And that every teacher can share their knowledge and develop their career, without the limitations of pesky things like bus rides, recess duty, and mountains of paperwork.

But while much of the content of this book comes from our experience in teaching, it's applicable in almost every type of remote work. The lessons contained within are universal, and mastering them will give you a head start in whatever form of remote work you embark upon.

This book is for anyone longing to make the jump into something new. Something where you set the rules and where you'll never be subjected to the delightful smell of a colleague's Tupperware full of reheated fish at lunchtime. Ever. Again.



# Chapter 1:

# Life

The Art of the Work-Life Balance

# The Art of the Work-Life Balance

## There are two ways to look at work-life balance.

The first is the usual way: Working hours have taken up a proportion of your day more closely resembling waking hours, and now balance is needed to prevent burnout, appease the kids, and justify that \$75 you spend on the gym every month. Work-life balance in this sense is the panicky state in which you attempt to claw back a few precious minutes of time that should be yours in the first place. We're not really fans of this version much.

The second way to look at work-life balance is in a more proactive manner. How do I architect a life in which my personal interests and commitments can be balanced with my work and other responsibilities? The answer lies in the ability to manage your time on your own terms. This is the realm of online work. Where the unemployed writer becomes the online writer. Where Grandma swaps out her Sunday crosswords for filling in surveys online (and continued disbelief that she gets paid for it). Where work is what you make of it.

Here is an important takeaway, however: Quitting your day job in a huff and opting to work online won't result in an automatic Zen-like balance in your life. In many ways, it initially creates a new set of challenges, since the boundaries between work and family life fall away. The difference, however, is that you are in control of how you manage it!

So, how have our existing VIPKid teachers put the idealistic murmurings of work-life balance into concrete practice? We asked a few (if you can call a couple thousand "a few") for their insights, and this is what they had to say:



### Break Time

Almost 2/3 of teachers mentioned something involving a pillow, a spa, or some Z's.



#### **Set Your Limits**

Over 70% of VIPKid teachers said that setting some form of boundary was the most important aspect of maintaining a healthy work-life balance.

"Know when to take a break.
Allow this job to enhance your life, not create stress."

- Leslie



#### **Back to Business**

While remote work provides oodles of flexibility, teachers highlighted the importance of a routine or schedule. The magic, though, is in creating a routine that works best for you.

Fancy a 4 p.m. nap ... daily?

# All Eyes on

# Lauren

Olympia, WA

VIPKid Teacher since 2016



For Lauren, teaching with VIPKid has always been about her own little girl, Ruby. Being able to teach while Ruby is asleep is the biggest benefit to Lauren, as it means she's able to work every day but still fulfill her grilled-cheese, pillow fort, or Santa Claus duties.

"I love that I can be done for the day at 7 a.m., and for the rest of the day I can just be Mom."



Lauren has prioritized her day around her mornings. In fact, she's such a morning person that she's already had a cup of tea, explained the use of a dangling participle, been showered with 20 apples' worth of student praise (VIPKid teachers know about this), and is preparing Ruby's breakfast before the early bird has even begun panicking about worms.

"By 6 a.m., I've already connected with students from across the world, used my degree and passion for teaching, and yet can still spend the entire day with Ruby."

The key to Lauren's success is her morning regimen. In the beginning, she was nervous, but after a year of teaching, Lauren has developed a rhythm that lets her fulfill her passion in teaching AND go spelunking in the foothills of Mount Olympus... whenever she wants.



Little Ruby

# Top Tips for Work-Life Mastery

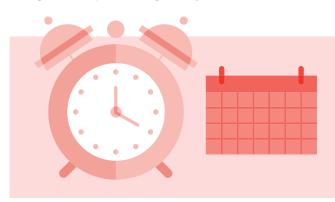


# Make time for friends, family, and loved ones

Working from home creates a unique family dynamic because you're with each other all day. But spotting your 5-year-old "cookie prowling" in your peripheral vision doesn't exactly count as family time. Work-life balance begins with prioritizing family!

# Establish a routine and stick to it!

Working remotely is a lot different from signing up for a gym membership on January 1. It requires commitment to succeed! Having a routine not only lets you arrange your day how you want, but it also allows your mind and body to fall into a pattern that becomes easier over time.





## Know your Limits!

Burnout is real, and while you may love doing what you do like a dog loves a tennis ball (which is awesome!), remember that you're in it for the long haul.

Take things one step at a time so that work time remains a highlight of your day. Designing logos online? Don't accept every offer in the first week. Find your pace. You'll thank yourself later.

#### Don't be afraid of down time

Whether you're waking up before even the rooster starts crowing or juggling six different projects at the same time, make sure your commitment to your work doesn't go unrewarded.

Maintaining a healthy work-life balance means occasionally recognizing that the beach needs to be graced with your presence. Or your doctor's waiting room for that annual check-up. Or just your bed until 11 a.m.!

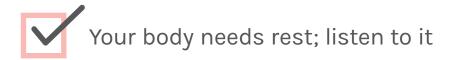


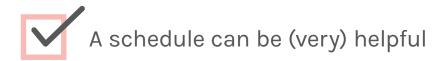
Check out our work-life balance worksheets at the end of this book!

# Summary: Art of the Work-Life Balance









# Chapter 2:

# Money

**Setting Financial Goals** 

# Setting Financial Goals

Even trying a new brand of peanut butter can be pretty daunting. The crunch factor. The aftertaste. Will the dog take to it? There's a lot that can go wrong. So, deciding to make the leap and totally changing up how you receive an income ... we get it, it can be terrifying.

Although the absence of a regular paycheck may get your palms a little clammy, making the shift into managing your own income is easier than you realize. It just relies on understanding one core concept: Financial reward is directly proportional to the amount of effort you put in.

With a regular day job, mentally tagging out for the day usually results in a stern talking to by your manager, and you feeling slightly stressed out for breaking the cardinal rule of hitting "reply all" without thinking. But at the end of the month, your paycheck should still arrive, no different from the month before. Remote work is a little different.

However, understanding this opens a whole new way to look at your earning potential. That's because remote work lets you actively manage how much you make. Instead of arranging your life around what's in your paycheck every month, you can manage your work around how much you want to be paid every month.

#### Here's an example:

With a regular paycheck, you may say: "If I can get everything paid off this month, I might be able to buy that second guitar I've always wanted."

While someone engaged in remote work might say: "If only I'd had that second guitar in last night's show, the crowd would have gone twice as wild. How many hours do I need to work to make that happen?"

Herein lies another important point. Is satisfying all the needs of your alter ego on stage the thing you should be doing? For some people it is. But for many others, remote work is a means to a more practical end such as paying bills and rent. If you are one of the latter, then the tendency to splurge on your band (or whatever your hobby may be) is exactly the behavior you need help avoiding. More on that in a few pages.

To sum up, remote work puts you in control of your income, but it also comes with the added expectation of discipline if you want to succeed. Setting goals and budgeting around your needs becomes a critical component of achieving success through remote or online work.

We asked our teachers about money, guitars, and keeping peanut butter in the pantry, and this is what they had to say:



#### 35% of Teachers

emphasized the importance of setting a financial goal in order to keep you on track and away from the summer specials.



#### 21% of Teachers

highlighted the importance of having a clear budget or savings plan.

# All Eyes on

# Edison

Anza, California

VIPKid Teacher since 2016



Edison knows a thing or two about navigating financial uncertainty. Before joining VIPKid, he worked solely in the family business. While you can imagine the tightrope act of mixing family politics with watercooler gossip, the nature of the business also meant that regular paychecks were unpredictable. The small family business was reliant on clients paying up on time, which meant Edison struggled to plan further than his monthly needs.

By supplementing his daily work with online teaching, Edison was able to totally reimagine how his new income source could work for him. Especially during slower periods in the family business, he could still set goals and financial targets that would have been impossible before.

"It gives me liberty; it gives me that extra income to splurge on my expensive hobby and to save toward buying a house."

Edison's horizons have only broadened since taking control of his earning potential. Asia is now squarely in his sights as he contemplates a move–one made possible by his development as a teacher in the online classroom.

"I'm planning on moving in a year or two. I never thought of moving as a teacher before, but remote work has opened up this door."

While Edison explores his new oyster-looking world, one thing is for certain: This sure beats having to tell your step-dad he's got to pull his socks up at work. Phew.





When cultures collide: Remote work has not only provided him a new window into a different world, but he's also been able to take his hobby with him by rewarding himself with a new guitar.

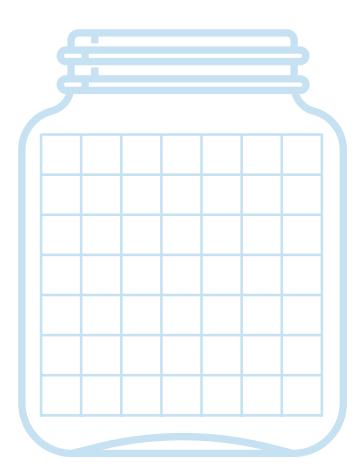
# Tracking Your Financial Goals

By now you're probably feeling a little inspired to start working toward your own financial goals, immediately. But what's the best way of going about it? Setting goals can be anything from a note scribbled in soap on the bathroom mirror to a six-page color-coded manifesto on how you're going to fulfill your promise to buy your son a car upon graduating (especially if he got straight A's).

We believe there are some fundamentals to setting goals, however. Those are simply the ability to create momentum and positive reinforcement to stay motivated and ultimately achieve your goal.

Why is this important? Let's say your monthly financial target is paying off \$800 you borrowed. But you're earning \$5 an hour filling in online surveys. That goal is probably going to feel a looooong way off. So how do you create momentum and develop positive reinforcement to keep you on track?

As Anne Lamott would say ... bird by bird. Or, in our case, block by block. Check it out:



# The Mason Jar Method

#### 1. Define Your Goal

For example, this month my priority goal is \$600 for rent. But as a secondary goal I'd also like to buy a new phone for \$250.

#### 2. Reach Your Goal

If every block in the Mason jar represents an hour of work, how many blocks do you need to reach your goal?

In 1 hour I make \$22 My rent + my phone = \$850 So, \$850 divided by 22 = 38.6 blocks

#### 3. Mark Your Goals

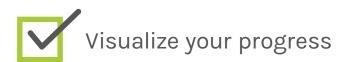
Mark off your goals and start crossing off as you go! It seems basic, but every block you fill will give you a sense of achievement and keep you aligned to your goals.

# Summary:

Setting Financial Goals







Chapter 3:

# Location

Being Prepared to Work, Anywhere

# When Your Office Is Anywhere but the Office

As the name suggests, remote work is 50% work and 50% being somewhere other than where work normally takes place. For some people, that means working from a tent dangling precariously over the edge of a glacier. For others, it means a coffee shop in Barcelona or a park in Bangkok. And for many, it simply means not needing to take off your slippers, like, ever. Broadly speaking, people who choose to work remotely exist in one of three types of locations:

#### At home:

Where the only person staring over your shoulder is the goldfish. Home is the place where you are in total control of your environment. And where taking a break isn't going out for a cup of coffee, but maybe helping Grandma get comfortable or taking the dogs for a quick jog around the block.

## On the edge of their seats:

Because who knows when the next impromptu trip to Tahoe is going to happen? This person never passes up a great flight special, and they see so many airports the TSA knows them by name. Their "office" is usually the most creative.

# In spots typically reserved for vacation:

There's always that one friend (whom you're probably stalking on Instagram) who quietly disappears off the face of the planet and then reappears again on a different continent, with significantly more facial hair. How do they sustain these nomadic exploits? Probably remote work.

No matter where you choose to work from, every location comes with a unique set of challenges. That is because remote work is coupled with the expectation that you're equipped for the task at hand. If you've worked in a traditional office before, you've probably become accustomed to yelling for admin every time you lose your stapler or can't remember your password. But as a remote worker, you are admin, and HR, and often the janitor too.

To be successful, you need to figure out what you need to perform your duties effectively and efficiently. A comfy chair? Probably. What about an 850W wind-powered all-terrain Wi-Fi satellite? If you're working out of Antarctica, very likely. The key lies in adequate preparation.

We asked our teachers what they thought was indispensable to their online work:



#### 50% of Teachers

emphasized the importance of the space itself: finding somewhere that is quiet, comfortable, and that will let you focus regardless of your surroundings. And, folks, don't be scared to get creative!



#### 40% of Teachers

said identifying the equipment and supplies you need, especially in unknown locations or circumstances. Lighting (as our teachers need to be seen clearly by their students) and Wi-Fi were the top culprits.

# All Eyes on Arielle

Cairo, Egypt

VIPKid Teacher since 2016



Arielle began teaching with VIPKid while in the throes of arranging her wedding in Egypt. The flexibility was perfectly suited to the last-minute demands of caterers, florists, and anxious aunts alike.

But once the church bells had sounded, Arielle found herself reluctant to return to her regular teaching job (even with its attractive two-hour commute in the sweltering Cairo sun). Teaching kids in China had become this Miami native's full-time vibe.

Now while it seems to us that Arielle is casually living out our childhood dreams—filled with pyramids, sphinxes, and all the hieroglyphics you could ever want—her travels don't stop there.

"Living in Cairo, I'm able to afford a lifestyle that I couldn't in the US. Now if a festival comes up in a different country, or a great travel deal, I'm able to book that."

For Arielle, being able to earn a living, travel when she wants, and still save money every month is a huge benefit. She's even started a travel blog, you know, to make us all a little jealous as she shares her experiences abroad.

"I used to have to plan trips in the high season; now I only need to plan my schedule two weeks ahead."







# The Remote Ready Checklist

Everything we've said about working remotely so far sounds easy. But what happens when things go sideways? You're on the road and the internet goes down? When the power outlets look like they need five different adapters, and you're on 3%? Any remote worker can tell you that the key to being successful on the road is:

## **Being Prepared**

It doesn't matter if you're working from the corner of your living room or while balancing atop a canoe in the Amazon, as a remote worker you are responsible for being able to deliver. And while you cannot control everything all of the time, you can make sure you're prepared. There are two situations that one day you will likely find yourself in:

- 1. You just won a trip to Hawaii, or some other critical vacation plan has come up.
- 2. Something has gone pear-shaped. Like your rabbit testing its teeth on your power cord.

Therefore, we would like to introduce you to the Remote Ready Checklist! Thwarter of rabbit antics. Savior of vacation invites. Think of it as a list of things you can grab at a moment's notice and with which you know you can perform your work (it may even be an actual bag that you pack and keep in a strategic place).

#### The Essentials

(Forget these and you're on a real vacation)

#### The Unknowns

(Going somewhere you can't pronounce? You'll probably need these)

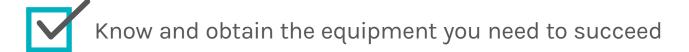
#### The If-It-Fits-Ers

(Got a couple of pounds left in your luggage? Cram some of these in)



# Summary: Being Remote Ready







Chapter 4:

# Career

**Building Your Career from Home** 

# Building Your Career From Home

## Can you develop a career through remote work?

The short answer is, absolutely. The long answer really depends on how you define a career, what you expect of it, and whether you're up for working hard. A little poking around a dictionary will usually see a career defined as:

- The pursuit of consecutive, progressive achievement in your professional life OR
- A profession for which you train and undertake as a permanent calling

Now these definitions seem pretty on point to us (also, if you learn anything from a good game of Scrabble, it's that the dictionary is law). But this suggests that a career doesn't rely specifically on nine days of commuting per year (the US national average), nor does it mean that being the prime suspect in the case of a co-worker's missing lunch every Friday is just part and parcel of early career expectations. A career is all about playing the long game. Depending on how you approach and manage remote work, you will find that building a career is not just possible, but its progression is entirely under your control.

Instead of stumbling into "a career" because you happen to have held onto the same job for the last 25 years and couldn't work up the nerve to leave, remote work allows you to define the path your career takes. But just because you're the captain of your own ship doesn't mean you won't encounter unforeseen challenges along the way. As with regular jobs, the challenges in forging a career are many. You just have more control over them.

As we watched our online teachers overcome their challenges and develop successful careers, we've come up with several elements key to developing a career remotely. And since our publisher sternly told us that no eBook is complete without an acronym, may we introduce to you **PRO**:

#### **Patience**

Patience. And a little more patience. In the beginning, work may come slowly. This is normal. Nobody who ever started building a career on their own was a success story overnight. In fact, 47% of VIPKid teachers believe that patience is the very first step to success.

## Relationships

Remote work relies entirely on your ability to build close and trusted relationships with your clients—even if they are 4-year-old kids. A quarter of VIPKid online teachers agree and prioritize investing in their professional relationships every chance they get.

"Be patient. Realize that a business takes time to build. Successful businesses don't happen when you sit back and wait for [work] to drop into your lap. You have to go out and get it."

#### - Adrienne

## **Obligation**

Our acronym needed an "o," but what we're really talking about here is the obligation to yourself and your clients to perform well, be consistent, and deliver on time. Thirty-eight percent of our respondents prioritized the importance of being consistent with your availability, especially in the beginning when you're trying to build steam.

Always remember, just because you're working in a pair of penguin-patterned pajama pants every day, doesn't mean you're not taking your work seriously. No matter how you choose to develop your career, the first step is considering yourself a **PRO**.

# All Eyes on the Career Builders

## Everywhere, Planet Earth

The best thing about building a career on your own terms is that there's no single right way to do it. When you're thriving in your career, being self-taught or having attended five Ivy League schools is a distinction that exists only on paper. We asked several of our online teachers how they developed their careers through remote work. This is what they had to say:



Yasche

"Commit to the same amount of time to build your business as you would if you worked for someone else. Give yourself time to build your business. Remember, you are your brand. Represent yourself well."



Wendy

"Collaborate with others. Learn what your special skills are and use them to be who you are. Let your teaching be natural. Be prepared and focused. Attend workshops on how to become a better teacher and learn to write personal feedback."



Vanessa

"Build a community of people around you who have done it before and don't be afraid to push outside the lines to make it your own."



Tracy

"You get out what you put in. Be professional by being on time, focused, and prepared!"



Traci

"I recommend always staying on top of updates and continuously striving to improve yourself by taking workshops and continuing education classes. Market yourself properly by putting your best self forward."



Terra

"Learn as much as you can by searching online, talking to others in your field, and taking workshops! I love being able to soak up new info to help me become better at what I do!"



Vanesa

"You have to hustle! Dedicate yourself to learning the ins and outs of the business. Build a relationship with students and parents by remembering small details. Make time for learning, like watching videos and attending workshops. Make time for reflection by reviewing classes and seeing what could be better or different."

## Tips for Taking Your Career to the Next Level

So you've been diligently attending to your Ps (patience), Rs (relationships), and Os (obligations or responsibilities), but you still want to supplement your career development even more? Luckily, it's not hard.

Think of further development of your career a little like building the perfect burger. Not burning the patty is all fine and good, but to get things really mouth-watering, everyone knows it's all about the layers. The more layers and variety there are, the more you're willing to drop big bucks for the very best.

So, in the context of your remote career, what is the equivalent of lettuce, tomato, Monterey Jack, and a slice of pineapple? From our experience, there are four key areas from which many remote careers can hugely benefit:



## Meetups and online groups

Working remotely from the island of Tristan da Cunha may have you feeling a little lonely at times. That's partly because you and its 29 other residents are a casual 1,600 miles from the nearest city, and it's partly because you haven't yet considered meetups. Meetups both online and in person are becoming increasingly popular among online remote workers and are a great way to make new friends, stay connected, and learn more about your trade. Meetup.com and Facebook are great places to start.

## Workshops and webinars

Wise people love to tout education as a lifelong journey. And since you've decided to take control of your career by becoming a virtual online assistant or freelance editor of magazines specializing in Venus flytraps, you're already kind of wise. Workshops and webinars are the easiest ways to continue upskilling yourself and stay ahead of the game. If your remote work doesn't include explicit workshop opportunities, try sites like Udemy or Coursera.





#### Conferences and events

The first good reason to attend conferences is an excuse to go on vacation. The second is to take advantage of all that great branded stationery lying about. And the third is because conferences are a fantastic place to broaden the horizons of your own career. You meet other smart and dedicated people, build your professional network, and strengthen your resolve to succeed in your field.

## Referral initiatives

Not all, but many remote work opportunities come with the added possibility of making money off referrals. This may be more focused on developing the capacity of your wallet than your career, but the people who succeed the most in referring others are usually those with the deepest and broadest knowledge of what their brand of remote work entails. If you feel like you've reached legendary hamburger status, now's a good time to consider referring. Not to mention the benefits to building and supporting community that referring can provide.



# All Eyes on

# Martha

Seaside, California

VIPKid Teacher since 2017

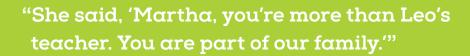


Martha is a career teacher. She's been grading papers, intercepting love notes, and taking kids under her wing for the past 28 years. And she's only just beginning. For Martha, working remotely through VIPKid is not about changing her career path, but rather about reinvigorating her love for teaching.

"The highlight of my day does not start until after I get home and I see my favorite VIPKid student."

For most people, after a long, hard day at work, just the thought of more work instead of the tender embrace of your couch is unfathomable. Yet for Martha, her job is much more than just a means to an end, it's a calling. It's a career she has put her heart and soul into.

Even ice cream becomes regular tasting if you eat it often enough, and for Martha, teaching online is a chance for her to experience teaching in a different way. It supplements and even enhances her normal daily classes. And we can see why. Just listen to what one online parent said to her:



Spending just five minutes in Martha's home will have you smiling her contagious smile along with her. Her never-ending enthusiasm about trying to always try new things and find ways to keep progressing and learning in a career already three decades in the making is truly inspirational.

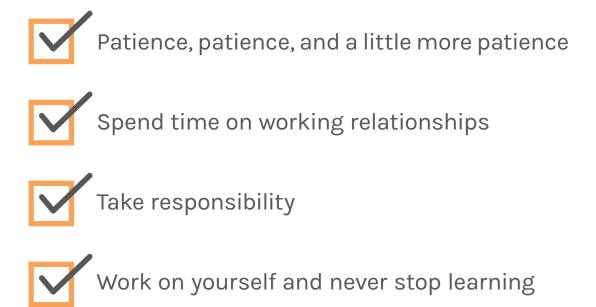






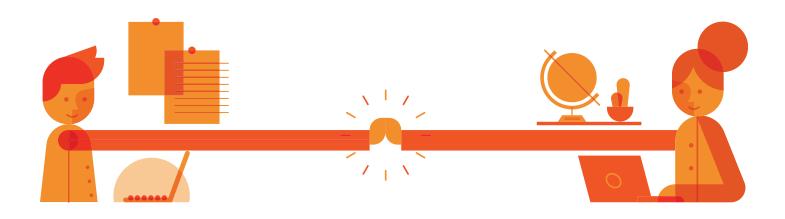
**Dedication:** just a glimpse of Martha's 500+ teaching props!

# Summary: Building a Career from Home



# That's It!

You've successfully stuck with our ramblings till the very end. We hope this book has given you a whole new outlook on remote work and how you can make it work for you. We've watched thousands of individuals go from first-time freelancer to seasoned professional—don't worry, you've got this!



Be part of the VIPKid Teacher Community!

Find us at: **VIPKid.com** 

# Over the past five years ...

VIPKid has been on a journey that has fundamentally changed the lives of students and teachers everywhere. We grew from just a single teacher in 2014, using a patchy Skype connection reminiscent of the late '90s, into the 70,000+ teachers we are today. We teach nearly a million kids and, would you believe it, we teach every student one-on-one.

Learn more at: VIPKid.com



# The Art of Work-Life Balance Sheet

_		
_		
_	Eg: Finish 3 essays	Eg: Take boys to beach
	Work	Personal
•		

2. Mark off the day(s) where each item listed above can happen.

#### Month/Year:

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT

3. Have you remembered to include each	An Achievable amount of work time
of the following?	Time for you (to relax!)
	Family time

# Monthly Financial Goal Tracker

- Here's your chance to be realistic with yourself before thoughts of retail therapy start floating into your mind.
- There are 400 blocks here. How many hours of your time do you need to reach your goal? Mark the block you want to reach
- S. Remember that every block represents actual money you are making! Give yourself a friendly reminder of what every block is worth.



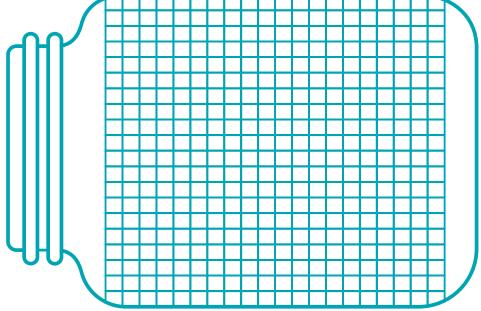
1 block = \_

1 block = \_

# Important Jar

Nice-to-have Jar

This month I need \$\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(rent, hamster, food.)



This month I need \$\_\_\_\_\_(sushi)

# The Remote Ready Checklist

The Essentials		
<u> </u>		
The Unknowns		The If-it-fits-ers
Other important thin	ags to remember:	

