

Manage a Home-based Business

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Introduction

Until recently, everybody worked at home. Farmers worked in the field and the seamstress worked out of their living space. But in the olden days, workers didn't have the frantic lifestyles or endless distractions that we have. Working from home has its advantages but it requires balance, organization and sacrifice. As a small business owner you wear many hats: accountant, marketer, sales person, packaging engineer, production line and boss. Succeed in each job by having a plan for working from home.

Steps

Set aside space for your work area. If you need a desk or computer, do not clutter the area up with the rest of the family's junk. Use a different room if possible. Create a specific space for your business. This will also come in handy when you file your taxes and need to itemize a portion of your home and utilities.

Keep things separate. Your work area should be focused on your business. Have a calendar specifically for your business rather than using the family calendar. Create a separate email, bank and postal account. Ideally you should also have a separate phone line and fax machine.

Schedule your day. Set meetings with yourself to accomplish everything you need to complete in a day. Include time for breaks, checking emails, going to the post office, placing phone calls, billing, invoicing and research.

Create a well-rounded "To Do" list. You need to have adequate time to create your product or service, market it, invoice it and improve your business. Schedule time for all the duties a small business owner must make time for by growing slowly and deliberately. Don't just put out fires.

Hire help if you can not perform all the functions of your business by yourself. Professionals can often design a business card or website faster than you could do it yourself. Often it is worth it to hire a babysitter to watch the kids, a college student to complete the order entry or a courier for delivering products.

Learn to say "No" by saying it often. Never agree to anything on the spot. Inform your friend that you need to check your calendar to see if you have time to do her favor. This makes it easier to come back and honestly say you are too busy. Don't feel guilty if you have to say no. You are working.

Tips

Wear a hat, sweater or special shoes as your "working" apparel. Family should recognize that you are working when they see your hat and will know to come back if it is not an emergency. Additionally you will jumpstart your day just by putting on your special item of clothing.

Warnings

It takes time to make a profit with an at-home business. Your business plan should have addressed the first several months as you build your business. Encourage your family and friends to be patient as your business grows.

Don't let yourself get off track throughout the day. You only meant to spend five minutes checking email but suddenly an hour has passed. Use a small kitchen timer to keep time limits on your activities.

Resources

<http://www.homebusinessmagazine.com/>

Subscribe to "Home Business Magazine" for more ideas on how to improve your business.

<http://www.sba.gov/>

The Small Business Association, the SBA.gov, has several helpful articles for working at home.