

## Ready, Set, Go!!!

### Set Up your Home Office

Yes, you're avoiding the commute, the hustle and the bustle, well, to a degree....

You don't have to contend with the other noisy office workers, or the heavy breather in the next cubicle, but there are other distractions when in your home office.

Amidst the laundry, the Lego and general paraphernalia, there needs to be some privacy and order.

**Take just a few moments** and make a quick plan to set up your perfect home office.

I believe that if you are to be taken seriously you must take yourself and your business seriously. You don't need to spend a fortune, nor have the latest office furnishings, just practical and functional items that perform the duty you require. If you need to write something down, you need a pen and paper and you need it on hand, at your desk. If you worked for an employer, you would expect them to have certain supplies available at your disposal – expect the same of yourself.

#### **Location, Location, Location**

The area that you choose to create your office space in must be conducive to "working".

A spare bedroom is ideal; preferably out of the everyday traffic... perhaps you can reshuffle the existing rooms and move someone into another room to ensure the most peaceful location. You may need to consider converting the garage, or adding an extension if you can't find somewhere else in the existing layout.

Your room will need good lighting and ventilation. A section of the laundry divided off with a curtain hung from the ceiling may not give you the space or inspiration that you need. You need to allow enough room for furniture i.e. desk, bookshelf, filing cabinet, supply cupboard and your printer etc.etc. You may need a table and chairs so that you can meet with clients.

If possible, a window is a good thing for fresh air and natural light. Consider its reflection on your computer screen and whether you can cope with the distractions that may occur if you are constantly staring out at what is going on outside.

### **Power Up and Get Connected**

You need an appropriate number of power points (electrical outlets) and a steady, safe supply of electricity i.e. not 50 double adaptors piggy-backed on the end of a cord from another room. That is a recipe for disaster, especially if you are working from home with children. You will also need connections for your telephone, facsimile and modem. If you can't get point installed for the phone and modem, cordless phones and wireless internet connections are a great alternative.

Use a separate phone line, dedicated to your business. I am a huge fan of Skype, there are no costly line installations required and you can even use normal telephone handsets now if that is what you prefer. Above all, you don't want your children interrupting your business calls or keeping the line engaged on their personal calls while you are trying to conduct business.

### **Furnish your space**

Don't compromise too much in this area. If you are going to be sitting at your desk for long periods and want to do some serious work, you need to have sufficient space and a desk and chair that are ergonomic or suitable for you to sit at for an extended timespan. Ensure that you have tables and storage for your equipment and supplies. It is much easier to work and be creative or inspired in a space that has appropriate furnishings.

### **Equip yourself**

Again, if you want to be taken seriously, act seriously.

Don't even consider sharing your business computer with the family. Make sure you have your own. I won't go into the thousand reasons why, just rest assured you do not want to find your daughter's homework saved over the top of your million dollar proposal, let alone be fighting for computer time with the rest of the family. Enough said.

Make sure you have a supply of pens, paper, notebooks and whatever else you may need. I'm not suggesting you spend a fortune at a stationer, but you don't want to be scrounging for a pen and scribbling on the back of an envelope when an important business partner calls with the deal of the century. Make sure you have equipment that works and suits the purpose for

which you need it. Keep spare supplies of paper, toner and stationery so that you don't run out. Make sure things are placed so that you can access them easily as required.

### **Dedicate this space to "Work Only"**

Now that you have your own 'Home Office', make sure your family are aware that this place is "off limits". If you have to clean up children's toys from your desk before you can start work, you need to set some boundaries for your office. Children especially need to be taught that your office is for work, not for play.

By having a separate area, when you go there and the children know this is your "work" place, they know it is not time to disrupt you. Give them their special time and they will soon learn the routine.

Avoid taking any of your business equipment or files out of your home office area. Make sure that the children have their own pens and paper so they do not need to go and rifle through your office. Don't take paperwork out of the office area, once it hits the main home area, it can easily be lost in the rest of the family's belongings. You can't afford to be disorganised when combining your home and office.

Should you have clients meet with you in your home office, the more professional your work environment appears, the more professional you appear to your client.

### **Include your children in your plan**

You will no doubt have difficulty, getting children (especially the very young) to understand that you are not available for certain hours. Be sure to schedule in an hour of family time during the day where they will have your unlimited attention. Be easy on your children, this is new to them and they are little. They don't understand that if you don't work, they may not eat... Be patient and keep them as occupied as you can with quiet activities so you can get your work done and still be with them. I have a child gate at the door to my office. I can still supervise and see/hear everything that is going on and they can see me. It is also much safer, they can't get into anything that I don't want them to touch in the office i.e. paperwork or power cords.

If you found this helpful, or would like to learn about these topics in more depth, please visit my website [www.workathomeandparent.com](http://www.workathomeandparent.com) or feel free to contact me for more information. Take advantage of a free 20 minute consult.

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