

“Luke 14: 31

“Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand?” KJV

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A word from the author

I live in a beautiful city called [Mangalore in India](#). The main attraction of this place is beaches and temples. In fact there is nothing much to see here other than the beaches and temples. But still I love this place.



I love nature and pets and I am a firm believer in God and it's creations.

My first love is my bike. (My wife will kick me out of the house if she reads this because I always tell her she is my first love!) My favorite pass-time is going on long rides on my bike. I can go on riding for hours and still not get bored.

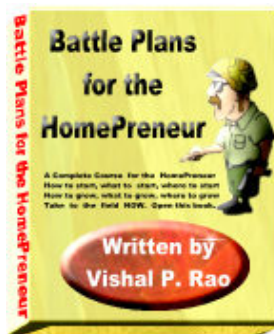
I also love reading books on a variety of subjects. I'm ever hungry for more knowledge. My favorite books are - [The Power Of Your Subconscious Mind](#) by Dr. Joseph Murphy and [Seven Spiritual Laws Of Success](#) by Deepak Chopra. Both have helped tremendously in moulding my life.

Starting up a home based business was never easy for me. I always longed for a internet-based business where everything is automated and the entire world is your customer base. The first 3 years were very tough for me. In fact so tough that many times I contemplated quitting. But God had something different in store for me.

After repeated failures, I used all my experience in creating a business web site. It was a huge success. I guess that's the reason I went through so many failures. I always believe that whatever happens, happens for good.

To your success,

Vishal P. Rao



Equipping Your Home Office - Part 1

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Choosing Home Office Furniture

Having an adequately equipped home office is essential to being productive. It is not necessary that everything be brand new, nor is it necessary that you spend a lot of money. What is important is that you select your items carefully and that they are functional and safe for use in a home office environment.

Check your telephone directory for used office furniture stores. Many times you can find very nice furniture available at a fraction of the cost. Don't forget to also check the resale store and thrift shops in your area, as well as the local classified ads.

1. The Desk

Bigger is better when it comes to desks. Try to choose one that has lots of room for your computer monitor, keyboard, telephone, and space to spread out paperwork and anything else that you may be working on at the moment. Pick a desk that has adequate drawer space and a file drawer for short-term filing of active projects.

If you choose a desk that has a built-in keyboard support shelf, make sure that the shelf is wide enough to hold your keyboard and still have plenty of room to let you perform natural mouse movement. Some of the new keyboard designs, such as the Microsoft "Natural", are wider than standard keyboards.

2. The Chair

Proper back and neck support is essential when you spend all day sitting down. Buy the best chair that you can afford. Your chair must have solid upper and lower (or lumbar) back support. A flimsy backrest puts stress on your spine while you're seated and causes back pain. Look for a chair where the lower portion of a backrest is slightly curved to follow the natural contour of your spine.

Your chair's seat should feel comfortable when you initially sit down, and should remain that way after you've been seated for a significant period of time. If the seat becomes uncomfortable then the foam padding may not be a high enough density, or the contouring may not be right for your body.

Make sure you have plenty of room around your hips and thighs. You should have at least one inch of space on either side of your body. It is also important that your chair's seat properly supports your thighs without the edge of the seat coming in contact with the back of your legs while you are sitting.

3. File Cabinets

To keep your home office organized, and avoid clutter, you are going to need filing cabinets. There are essentially two different file cabinets that are perfect for a home office. Here is a quick summary:

a) Vertical file cabinets

This is the most common file cabinet. Vertical cabinets are taller than they are wide so that they use a minimum amount of wall space. They have anywhere from two to five drawers and are the right size to hold hold letter and legal-size documents. They come in a variety of colors and gauges of steel. If you can afford to buy one that is fireproof, so much the better.

b) Lateral file cabinets

Lateral cabinets are wider than vertical cabinets, but not as deep, and are designed for high-volume storage capacity. They have anywhere from two to five drawers and can hold letter or legal-size documents. Files are either placed in the cabinet from left to right, facing the side of the drawer, or are arranged from front to back in multiple rows.

Many two-drawer lateral models are designed to fit underneath work surfaces and tables for additional storage and are often paired with a desk to increase horizontal space. Again, if you find one that is fireproof, and you can afford it, snap it up.

4. Bookshelves

Bookshelves should be made of wood or metal. Avoid the fiberboard ones since they are flimsy and do not

stand up to repeated usage. Like file cabinets, bookshelves come in vertical and lateral. Avoid vertical ones that stand too tall. There is a chance of them becoming top-heavy and falling over. Pay particular attention to this warning if you live in an earthquake area or if you have small children which may delight in climbing to the top of your bookcase.

5. Work Tables

Worktables are great for spreading out large projects that your desk is not big enough to accommodate. If you have enough home office space for a permanent work table, that's great. Otherwise consider buying a folding table that you can take out when you need it and store away when you do not.

6. Storage

Closets, garages, attics and crawl spaces make great places to store completed projects and home office paperwork if the space is not damp or subject to high humidity. If storage is a real problem then you might need to consider renting an off-premise storage locker.

Think of your office furniture as the foundation of your productivity center. It is likely that you will have to live with your decisions for some time. Choose wisely. Your personal comfort, and ability to remain organized, depend upon it. If you outgrow your furniture later, or simply make enough money that you want to "kick it up a notch", your investment will pay off because you will likely be able to get a great deal of your money back when you sell your old office furniture to make room for the new.

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Equipping Your Home Office - Part 2

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In Part 1 of this article we discussed how to select office furnishings and why making the right choices were crucial to your comfort and ability to remain organized. In Part 2 we will take a look at your basic home office equipment needs.

1. Computers

The type of computer that's best for you depends upon the type of work that you do, and whether you spend all of your time in your home office, or go out on the road to meet clients. While there are a seemingly endless choice of makes and models, there are essentially only three basic choices.

For most home office situations, the desktop computer reigns supreme. However, if you are on the road a lot then you can find notebook computers with nearly the same horsepower as the best desktop. If you do choose a notebook, the consider one that has an available docking station. That way, when you are in your home office, you can easily use a standard keyboard, mouse, and monitor.

Even if you have a desktop or notebook, you might have room in your life for a Personal Digital Assistant (PDA). PDAs, such as those from Palm Computing, can be a very valuable personal productivity tool especially if you need real-time access to your appointments, to-do lists, and phone numbers. With the growing popularity of wireless Internet access you can even use your PDA to connect to your home office computer no matter where you are.

2. Printers

Your first decision is what type of technology to go with --laser or ink jet. Laser printers use a toner cartridge/drum assembly while ink jets accept ink tank cartridges. Lasers are generally better for high-volume printing and have higher duty cycles--the manufacturer's rating for the unit's recommended monthly workload. Lasers also produce better-quality black text than most ink jets, though some ink-jet models rival low-end lasers.

Lasers are also faster than ink jets, but ink jets offer a lower cost model if you need to print in color. Color laser printers are still very expensive. Since the prices for laser and ink jets are so low, you could consider buying one of each. Another important item to consider is resolution. A printer's resolution determines the overall print quality of your documents. Resolution means the number of dots per inch that appear on the page as a horizontal and vertical measurement such as 600 x 600 dots-per-inch or dpi. A 600 x 600 dpi resolution produces adequate quality for most projects.

Your final deciding factor is speed. While printers rarely perform up to the manufacturer's claims, you should still use the printer's posted performance specifications as a guideline. An acceptable speed for personal laser printers is around 6 to 10 pages per minute. An acceptable range for ink jet printers is 4 ppm or above.

There are printers that do double, triple, or even quadruple duty as a fax, copier, and scanner as well. You should consider buying one of these models if you have a need for all of this equipment.

3. Internet access

Today you have a wide choice of Internet access protocols. If you access the Internet only to check your email, and browse the web a bit, then you might be able to get by with an inexpensive dial-up account. This type of access generally runs around \$9.95 per month and up.

If constant, high-speed Internet access is a requirement for your home office business, then you need to step up to either Digital subscriber lines (DSL), or a cable modem. Both provide sufficient speed for any type of business that you are likely to run out of a home office.

DSL utilizes unused bandwidth on your existing telephone lines to provide a constant connection, while cable modems use your existing cable television network. DSL may not be available in your area. It depends upon your telephone company's technology and how far you are from a DSL access point.

Cable, on the other hand, is available in all but the most remote markets. Still, if you can't get either, then there is always the possibility of a satellite uplink. While this was considered extravagant only a few years ago, it's affordable and no more trouble than installing a small dish antenna on your home and signing up for

the service.

4. Telephones

No matter how high-tech your home office is, the telephone is still the most basic and essential of your business tools. Available features are at an all-time high and prices are at an all time low. Almost any home office phone on the market comes equipped with programmable speed-dial numbers, multiple-line capability, speakerphone operation, conference call capability, and headset jacks. In addition, your local phone company offers a wide array of add-on services such as called id, voice mail, flat-rate long distance and more.



If your work keeps you up and around your home office, or if you like to take business calls while out on your patio or while walking around your home, then a cordless phone is a joy to have. There are so many makes and models to choose from that it almost seems like you need a consultant to help you make the right choice. It's not really that hard. Just keep the following in mind:

a) Choose the right technology

Avoid analog phones at all costs. Analog phones are susceptible to interference from other devices and range is very limited. Also, analog phones permit eavesdropping through baby monitors and other cordless phones.

Digital phones have greater range than analog phones plus they offer better call privacy through the use of random codes that scramble communications between handset and base unit.

Digital Spread Spectrum (DSS) is the best of breed for right now. The Spread Spectrum technology uses multiple channels and frequency hopping to thoroughly scramble communicate between the handset and base unit. You also get increased range due to decreased electrical interference, plus DSS phones are permitted to use more powerful transmitters.

b) Frequency

The range of your cordless phone also depends upon its assigned radio frequency. Most home office phones fall into three frequencies.

900 MHz: This is by far the worst choice. This frequency is crowded with devices such as baby monitors, pagers, and cell phones, and is subject to maximum interference. A 900-MHz phone has a range of around 1,500 feet and prices start at \$20.

2.4 GHz: While once the best choice available, the 2.4-GHz spectrum is overrun with wireless networking, microwaves, and other devices. A 2.4-GHz phone has a range of 2,200 feet and pricing starts around \$50.

5.8 GHz: This is the latest unlicensed spectrum available for wireless devices. Very few devices operate in this spectrum so there is a marked reduction in interference. A 5.8-GHz phone also boasts a range of around 2,200 feet and start at about \$150.

c) Other considerations

Make sure that any phone you select has a headset jack, and then invest in a headset. There is nothing worse than cradling your phone on your shoulder while you consult your files or try to type something on your keyboard. A headset frees both hands while you talk.

Don't forget to take a look at your potential phone's battery life as well. Most cordless phones offer at least four hours of talk time and seven days of standby. Make sure that your phone uses replaceable battery packs, and that the battery packs are widely available.

One last thought. Cordless phones are useless without power, so always keep a regular corded phone handy for blackout emergencies.

In Summary

There is a lot more to equipping an efficient home office than first meets the eye. Hopefully this two-part series gets you going in the right direction. Chances are everything that you buy for your home office is tax deductible. Check with your accountant to be sure.

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How to Protect Yourself & Your Business

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As a business owner, you already know how important it is for your customers to feel safe about doing business with you. After all, if a customer even suspects he may not receive everything he was promised, then chances are he's taking his business elsewhere. So to prevent that you offer guarantees, secure payment methods, prompt customer service, and more. You do whatever it takes to show each customer that you are sincere and trustworthy.

But what steps do you take to protect yourself and your livelihood?

Too many business owners spend all their time worrying about their customers' security without thinking of their own, even though small companies must often deal with customer fraud, non-paying clients, and more.

Just as you've taken steps to ensure that your customers are satisfied with their buying experience, so should you feel comfortable and secure by taking a few precautions of your own.



1. Get Everything in Writing

Written contracts are not just for helping customers understand what they can expect to receive for their money, they are about laying down the ground rules for your business relationship. When these guidelines are in writing, nothing is left up for a debate or becomes a misunderstanding.

Both parties can be assured that their interests are being protected and both should have a clear understanding of their rights and responsibilities in the event that something goes awry.

A good example would be if you sold a toy which a parent returned six months later because it was broken. Without a contract in writing specifying the time limits and conditions of your return policy, you might end up with an ongoing battle with the customer which could result in lost business and even lawsuits.

Written contracts also don't need to be crafted by lawyers. You can write everything out yourself in ordinary, easy to understand language. When you and the customer sign it, it becomes a legal and binding agreement. It's really that simple.

2. Don't Be Naive

So many people in business get burned by their customers simply because they are too trusting. For example, some of you may have shipped products before the customers' payments cleared. Or you may have completed agreed upon work without asking for a deposit. Both are risky propositions as many new entrepreneurs discover the hard way, especially if they do business online.

You can protect yourself by always asking for a partial payment in advance and by always waiting until a customer's payment has cleared before you ship their products. Another method of protecting yourself and your customer is by using a service such as Paypal.com to handle your transactions. The service protects you from non-paying customers and offers your customers protection for lost, damaged, or unshipped products.

3. Know Your Local Laws

One of the best ways to protect yourself is by becoming informed. When you know your legal rights, you'll have a better understanding of how to effectively deal with troublesome customers.

For example, some states don't allow you to limit a customer's right to return a product beyond a certain time limit, so you may not legally be able to enforce a guarantee of only one week. On the other hand, if you know your rights, then you'll also understand what steps to take in case legal action on your part is necessary.

For instance, you may want to send a certified letter demanding payment before you file a lawsuit. Additionally, if you appear knowledgeable about your rights, many customers might think twice before failing to pay or committing fraud.

The bottom line is that you deserve to be protected just as much as your customers. A few advance precautions now can ensure that you'll have a long and satisfying business relationship with your customers.

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Advertising 101

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Advertising has truly become a part of all of our lives as consumers, as business owners, as parents, as concerned citizens. We simply cannot escape from its presence no matter how hard we try. Considering how pervasive advertising is in our daily lives, it's no surprise that people have such extreme views about it.

Many home-based business owners want to steer clear of it altogether. They might dabble in marketing or use some sales strategies, but most don't want much to do with actual advertising. Unfortunately, this is a mistake on their part and it usually comes as a result of not understanding the purpose of advertising.

So what is the true reason for advertising? According to Michael Corbett, author of *The 33 Ruthless Rules of Local Advertising*, you should advertise "to create an equity position in a target market and to ...motivate a sufficient number of consumers..." In simple language, you advertise so that people will know you exist and will keep you in business. What's so evil about that?

Absolutely nothing! Here are a few very good reasons why you need to start advertising today:

1. Potential customers are constantly shopping

The truth is that most people are always looking for ways to spend their money. They don't always realize it, but they are. That's why banner ads, commercials, and billboards work even though they are being viewed miles away from the business. If you don't advertise, you're missing out on a chance to tap into that human desire.



2. Potential customers may forget you

While the desire for shopping may be permanent, a consumer's memory is not. Even if they have had a tremendous experience with your business, even if they've recommended you to their friends and family, even if you were the only company they ever thought of doing business with, after awhile they would forget you or forget how to get in touch with you.

3. Potential customers don't always make buying decisions immediately



Another tried and true rule about consumers is that they don't always decide to buy as soon as they see an ad. For example, if you see a commercial for a fast food restaurant right after Thanksgiving dinner, you're not going to run right out to the drive thru after seeing the commercial. However, the next time you're hungry, you might remember that commercial and choose to stop in then. So the idea of advertising is to plant an image in consumers minds so that when they need your product, your business comes to their minds.

4. Customers rely on name recognition to guide their consumer choices most of the time

Why do people still buy name brand products over generics even when the price difference is significant and the quality of the products is equitable? Because of name recognition! Consumers respond to names that are familiar whether they are buying a new car, a computer, a lawyer, or ketchup. If you want to succeed, you need to be sure that your targeted audience will know your name when they hear it and will think of your name when they need your product. Advertising can make that happen.

On the other hand, many business owners see advertising as a quick fix. If business gets a little slow, a newspaper ad or a direct mail piece will fix everything in a jiffy. That's not the case either. Let me give you a few reasons why.

1. Advertising works on a six month cycle

Many times when people think their advertising hasn't worked, it's because they haven't waited long enough to see results. Generally, the advertising you do today won't fully pay off for another three to six months. For that reason, if you want to ensure a consistent stream of customers, you need to continue to advertise all the time. Advertising only when business is slow simply won't save your business because by the time you start seeing results, it may be too late.

2. Your problems are related to another step in the process

Another reason advertising can't cure everything is that simply attracting customers is only one step of the process. Once you lure them in, you need to have the content or the customer service to convince potential buyers to take that next step. If any step in the process is lacking, then no amount of advertising is going to help.

3. You are neglecting your current customers and their potential

Don't make the mistake of focusing all of your efforts on finding new customers when your best source of additional revenue is being neglected. Past customers are more likely to become repeat customers, plus they don't require the additional expenses of marketing and advertising.

As you can see, the truth about advertising is that it can be a powerful force for your success if handled correctly. Too many people see it as an evil force or as a business miracle when the reality is somewhere in between.

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First Steps to Picking the Perfect Marketing Method For Your Home-Based Business

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Part of running a successful business is making it grow. Home-based businesses are no exception. In fact, it can be even more important if you are just starting out or lack a potential client base. The key to growing a business is marketing.

Marketing is how you connect with individuals who may become customers or clients and includes methods such as affiliate programs, newsletters, trade shows, web sites, brochures, advertising, and more. The potential marketing methods available are almost limitless in scope and deciding on an approach may seem daunting, but a little preliminary effort can help you narrow down the field of options and help you make the best choices for your business.

Determine Targeted Audience

No matter what marketing method you choose, you first need to decide to whom you plan to market. Mass marketing to a general audience simply is not cost-effective for most businesses so you must decide early on which segments of society are most likely to purchase your products or services. Begin by asking yourself some simple questions:

What needs does my product/service fulfill?

Will businesses or consumers be more likely to need what I offer?

Who are the clients I already have?

Who does my competition market to?

With the answers to these questions, you can begin to decide on your targeted audience. However, you can refine it further by contacting sample populations of that audience and getting feedback from them on whether or not they would be interested in your product/service. You can use surveys, chat rooms, email questionnaires, or telephone polls to generate that feedback.

Set a Budget

Many inexperienced business owners make a major mistake when they begin their marketing efforts: they do not set a budget. Without a budget, these business owners can easily find all of their profits being funneled into marketing efforts.

Before you make a decision about what types of marketing methods to choose, you need to first establish how much you can spend in order to receive the desired results. Most businesses use the 10% rule. According to this rule, if you decided to implement a marketing program that would generate \$5000 in monthly sales, then you should spend only \$500 a month on marketing.

Applying the 10% rule prevents businesses from spending more on the marketing efforts than is generated by those efforts. You must also remember to be realistic. If you currently generate \$200 a week in sales, do not anticipate marketing results of \$10,000 a month and use that number as the basis for your marketing budget. Instead, start small at first and build on successful marketing attempts.

Evaluate Marketing Methods

There are a wide array of marketing methods available, but not all of them are appropriate for every business, audience, or product/service. Before deciding on a method, you need to carefully evaluate what will work

best for your situation.

For example, if you run an online business, you may want to focus most of your marketing efforts on the Internet medium instead of mailing brochures to people who may not even own computers.

Also take into account your audience. If you are marketing to businesses, your methods will be different than if you are marketing to consumers. If you sell to parents, your methods are different than if you sell to college students. You may even need to develop more than one method in order to meet the needs of all of your potential audiences.

Finally, remember your budget. A television commercial may be more effective than an ad in the yellow pages but it may also use your entire marketing budget. To make the most of your budget, you want to start small and test your efforts before plunging into a major investment. After all, if the

commercial flops, you won't have anything left in your budget for alternative marketing.

Once you complete these preliminary efforts, you can begin to explore marketing methods more effectively which will allow you to pick the methods which should provide the best results for your particular business.

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Establishing Your Web Presence

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Part of the success of most home-based businesses is their web presence. After all, you want to benefit from the global exposure, reduced marketing expenses, and low entry costs. But to receive those benefits, you must first get your web site off the ground which means you need to select an effective domain name and find reliable web hosting.

The tips below can help you accomplish both goals successfully.

Picking a Domain Name

When it comes to choosing your web site's domain name, you need to keep a few things in mind:

1. Your domain name should relate directly to the product or service you provide. Avoid picking a name that is vague or misrepresents your company.
2. Your domain name should be easy to remember. Keep the name as short as possible, but do not use unconventional spellings or add hyphens just to secure a version of the name you want.
3. Your domain name should be simplistic. Do not pick words which may be difficult to spell or which have multiple spellings. Also, select words and phrases that are common and easy to pronounce, especially if you are aiming your business toward the general public.
4. Your domain name should be a .com address whenever possible. Avoid selecting the less



common extensions which cost more to register and which will be largely unfamiliar to your clients.

Once you do select a domain name, you should consider registering other variations of the name. That way if someone uses the wrong extension or adds a hyphen, he or she still end up right where you want them.

Here are some good places to register your domain:

<http://www.godaddy.com> (Recommended)

<http://www.networksolutions.com>

Choosing Web Hosting

You could literally go crazy trying to compare all of the hundreds of hosting plans and providers on the market. To narrow down your options, talk to friends and business associates who have professional web sites.

Ask them which providers they use or recommend. A number of Internet sites, such as CNET and Epinions, allow users to share their thoughts about web hosting companies, so their input could be valuable in your search also.

Once you've found a manageable number of potential providers, you can begin to compare plans. Here are a few things you should focus on:

- **Money Back Guarantee** - Many providers offer a 30-Day money back guarantee so that you can try their service risk free. Always look for this option so you don't get stuck with a service you're unhappy with.
- **Storage Space** - This is the amount of room you will have for your site. Of course, you don't want to pay for room you don't need, but you also want room to grow. If you've a small site in mind 10-15 MB should be sufficient to begin with.
- **Bandwidth/Data Transfer** - Data transfer (bandwidth usage) refers to how much data/information is sent to or received from your hosting account on the server over a specified period of time. Usually it is measured monthly.

The more visitors you have visit your site, the more bandwidth you'll require.
Small sites usually suffice with 1 GB/month.

- **Site Speed** - This is very important factor while considering a hosting service. This will decide how fast your site loads when some one visits your site. Online surfers are extremely busy, so you need a fast server. Or else they will leave your site even before it gets loaded!

You may ask your hosting provider to provide you with a list of their client's sites (if they can) for checking their speed. Here's a good tool to check a site's speed:

<http://www.hostpulse.com/app/networktools/ping.asp>

- **Customer Service** - You strive to provide exceptional service and you should expect nothing less from your web hosting company. Look for multiple methods of receiving service, such as a toll-free phone number or live chat. You may also want to consider testing their response time in advance.
- **Uptime Guarantee** - Your web site is like your store. If your store is closed, you aren't making any money. The same is true if your web site is down. You should only choose a plan that provides at least a 99% uptime guarantee.
- **Cost** - Price should also be a deciding factor. Cheaper is not always better, but there are reasonable rates for quality hosting available if you do your research.

Never pay for a full year of service upfront, though you are likely to pay less in the long run. You have to

take into consideration their after sales service too.

Also, as far as possible, try to choose a hosting company that allows easy upgrade/downgrade between plans. This way you can trim down your costs to the maximum.

Using these tips and suggestions, you should easily be on your way to establishing a successful web presence and to reaping all the benefits the Internet has to offer.

Also read:

http://www.epinions.com/inet-Web_Hosting_Topics-Selection_Criteria

<http://www.webhostmagazine.com/hf/choose.asp>

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Five Foolproof Ways to Improve Your Web Site Sales

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When you run an online home-based business, your web site is more than simply a company location. It's also your primary source of advertising and marketing. If you've noticed that sales are lagging or if you're simply looking for ideas for a site you're building, the following five tips can help you boost revenue and develop an even more successful web presence.

1) Stress Your UPS

In this case, UPS isn't referring to the delivery company. Instead, it stands for Unique Positioning Statement and it's one of the most important ingredients of your business. Your UPS is basically a statement of what sets you apart from your competition.

Think of it as an answer to the question: Why should I do business with you? You may choose to focus on service, price, or any other special feature of your business that would appeal to customers. Whichever feature you choose should be stressed in all your web site's content. Don't shy away from telling others what sets you apart.

2) Add Interactivity

Consumers are shying away from passive activities where they just sit and watch. Instead, they want to be a part of the action, so you need to give your potential customers several ways to participate at your site.

Possibilities include message boards, polls, chat rooms, and surveys. By adding these types of elements, you are giving visitors more of a reason to stick around, to return, and to recommend your site to their friends.

3) Stress Credibility

No one wants to buy a product from someone they don't trust, so building a sense of credibility with your site is crucial to your success. You can accomplish this in a number of ways:

* Adding an "About Us" section

* Providing complete contact information

* Offering a money back guarantee

These methods work for several reasons. An "About Us" section allows visitors to get a picture of who they will be doing business with while the contact information gives them the security of knowing they can reach someone in case there is a problem.

Furthermore, the guarantee expresses your confidence in your product and that confidence is contagious. Testimonials, client lists, and awards are also effective for building credibility.

4) Test Everything

The problem with most unsuccessful business owners is that they jump right in to things without ever taking the time to test their site, their product, their layout, even their links. The result is that too much money is spent on things that do not work.

Any changes you make to your site need to be tested before being adopted permanently. For example, if you change your headline on your home page, compare your sales for the week of the change and the previous week.

If the numbers drop or stay about the same, go back to the drawing board. If the numbers go up, check one more week's sales numbers and if the numbers are still high, you may have a winner.

5) Provide Reasons for visitors to Return

While it may only take a visitor to your site once trip to make a purchase, you want to give them reasons to come back. Otherwise, how will they know when you add new products? The key is to continue to update your site, perhaps with articles or news, that may be of interest to your target audience.

If your site becomes one of your visitor's primary resources for the latest information on a subject they are interested in, you can be sure they will bookmark your site and come back frequently.

Also consider having a mailing list. A mailing list will allow visitors to provide you with their email addresses so that you can send them notifications of updates, specials, and changes to the site including ads and marketing materials for new products. These email messages will also provide them with a reason to come back.

When you do business online, your web site takes the place of your sales force. If it's not pulling in the numbers you had hoped for or if you've seen your numbers going down recently, you need to evaluate your site and decide where changes can and should be made.

Content, layout, graphics, even navigation all play a role in the success, or failure, of your site and your company. Don't let a small problem with your web site become the reason you go out of business.



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Benefits of Ebooks for Your Business

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No matter what type of home-based business you operate, chances are ebooks are already part of your business -- or should be part of it. Most of us are familiar with the term and probably have seen at least one ebook, but you may not have realized how beneficial they could be for your business.

Ebooks do have a number of benefits:

1) Affordable to Create

Unlike many products, ebooks can be produced inexpensively. They don't require expensive materials or equipment.

2) Inexpensive to Distribute

With most products, you have to cover some of the shipping costs and those costs can be considerable. Ebooks are accessed by the customer directly from the Internet, so no shipping charges are involved.

3) Appeal to a Wide Audience

Ebooks can be designed to attract almost any type of customers. Because you control the topics of your ebook, you decide who to target. If you sell educational children's toys, you could develop an ebook for parents. If you sell copywriting services, you could create ebooks on how to write successful content.

4) Increased Credibility

When you put your ideas and advice in book form for people to buy and read, you are selling yourself as an expert they can trust. When people trust you, they are more likely to buy from you.

5) High Profit Potential

Ebooks cost little to create and to distribute, but customers perceive them as being highly valuable so you can charge more for them than you might expect. Prices between \$20 to \$50 for an ebook are not uncommon and almost every penny of that revenue is your profit.

6) Versatile

Ebooks are one product that can serve a multitude of purposes. For one, they do make excellent additions to your product catalog. They can also be offered as free gifts to entice customers to purchase from you.

You can use them as marketing tools through affiliate programs, contests, and more. Ebooks can also be transformed into audio cassettes or other multimedia information products to further increase your profits. Try doing all of that with any other type of product.



As you can see, ebooks are truly packed with benefits. They are an asset to any type of home-based business whether they are used to increase revenue or bring in more business.

So how do you create an ebook that will allow you to take advantage of all of these benefits? You'll find the answers below:

- 1) Writing the ebook - Some ebook creators choose to write their own ebooks. While this is the most cost-effective option, it does require a great deal of time and confidence in your writing skills. Another option is to hire a freelance writer who can do the work for you. The work will be completed faster and you can be assured of having high-quality copy in your ebook.
- 2) Designing the ebook - Ebooks can be fairly straightforward in their design, but for maximum effectiveness, they do need a few graphical touches. If you're not an artist and don't already own some sort of desktop publishing software, you can use ready-made templates that work with Microsoft Word, such as Word Ebook Templates available at (<http://www.ebookgraphics.com/mytemplates2.html>) or a program such as Ebook Composer (available at <http://ebook-composer.com>) which also allows you to add multimedia effects to your ebooks.
- 3) Compiling the ebook - If you already have Adobe Acrobat on your computer, then it can effectively compile all of your pages into an ebook. However, other compilers are also available for purchase.
- Prices on these programs vary but most of the costs will be recouped after you sell only one or two ebooks. Some examples of compiler programs are Activ E-book Composer (<http://www.ebookcompiler.com>) and Editor (<http://www.nukanweb.com/ebooks/editorial2/editor2.html>).
- 4) [Creating an ebook cover](#) - The last stage of your ebook's development is putting together a graphic for your virtual front cover. This cover makes your book look more professional and more eye-catching, so it will appeal to more people and sell more copies.

You don't need to be an artist or design whiz to create one either. There are a variety of programs available which will do it for you, such as eCover Studio (<http://www.ecoverstudio.com>) and eCover Generator (<http://www.ecovergenerator.com>).

Not all of these programs are necessary to create a successful ebook, but they can definitely be of assistance. Purchasing them can set you back a few dollars, however, but you'll regain that investment and more quite quickly, especially if you plan on creating multiple ebooks.

No matter how you create your ebook or what uses you find for it, chances are ebooks will quickly become a welcome marketing addition to your home-based business.

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Five Ideas for Unique (and Cheap) Marketing

Home-based businesses generally lack the large marketing budgets of bigger companies, but a smaller budget doesn't have to stop you from engaging in clever and effective campaigns.

When marketing on a budget, you need to "think outside the box" and go beyond the obvious marketing approaches. Direct mail and banner ads, for example, are one way to go, but if your competition is using similar methods, you need to differentiate yourself.

Below you will find a few unique ways to boost the exposure of your home-based business and generate more sales without depleting your budget.

Idea #1 Offer Something for Nothing

One of the biggest ways to draw a crowd off- and on-line is by offering something for free. In particular, something that will be of interest to your target audience.

For example, if you sell arts and crafts, you might offer a free guide to craft shows in North America. If you sell collectibles, you might offer a free newsletter of tips and news relevant to collectors. If you sell marketing books, you might offer free articles about marketing.

When you provide these types of freebies, people will flock to your site. Some may only be interested in your free stuff, but others will take the next step and become full-fledged customers.

Remember that whatever you give away has a high perceived value, but costs little to produce.

Idea #2 Join On-line Discussion Groups

No matter what you are selling, chances are there's a discussion group on the Internet patronized by your target audience. The key is to find the right ones and become a member.

Once you find that group, start visiting the forums and message boards and responding to questions regarding your area of expertise. You should create a subtle signature file to post along with your responses. This file should direct people to your web site for further information.

Does this method work? One person who used it earned \$6000 just from efforts involving discussion groups.

Idea #3 Consider the Charitable Angle

People enjoy making a contribution to worthy causes and doing business with companies that try to make a difference in the world. Consider setting aside a portion of all sales as donations to a specific charity. Make sure to select a charity with a wide appeal and a good reputation. Don't forget that these donations also make appropriate topics for press releases which could bring you even more attention and sales.

Idea #4 Repackage Products

After a product has been available for awhile, sales naturally decline. You could lower the price or even discontinue the product altogether as solutions, but a better way to boost slow sales is to repackage those old products and sell them in a whole new way.

Consider bundling multiple products together for one price or offer the older product as a free gift to new customers. You may also want to try it out on a totally new target audience. Simply taking the time to revamp an old product, perhaps with the addition of a new chapter or special feature, can allow it to be sold as an all-new version.

Repackaging can help you boost sales and extend the profitable life of your products.



Idea #5 Sell Yourself as an Expert

No matter what you sell, you are proclaiming yourself to be knowledgeable and experienced in that industry. People want to believe that you are an expert who they can trust with their hard-earned cash. You want to convince people that you are an expert who has products that deliver what you promise.

One of the best ways to do both of these things is to become a speaker on topics related to your industry and to home-based business in general. Speakers are needed at a variety of functions, including trade shows, chamber of commerce functions, high school/college career festivals, and more.

Another way to position yourself as an expert is to become a part-time teacher in a college or community center where you share your knowledge of business and your industry with others. Or consider becoming an author. You could write an e-book related to your business which could gain you considerable recognition as well as revenue.

Any of these methods will help you market yourself as an experienced professional worthy of potential customers' attention.

With these five ideas and a little creativity, you can take steps to set your business, your product, and your marketing apart from your competition.

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How Becoming an Expert Can Boost Your Success

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As a home-based business owner, part of your focus is always on securing new customers. While it is true that your repeat clients are the backbone of your success, you need to add to those returning numbers if you want your business to grow.

One of the best ways to make that happen is to sell yourself as an expert. When potential buyers see you as a knowledgeable professional whose opinions and guidance truly matter, they are more likely to hand over their hard-earned money. Below you will find a few ways that you can use to promote yourself as an expert.

Display Your Credentials

Credentials are anything which you've accomplished which reflects positively on your line of work. For example, a teacher's credentials might include his or her completed education and years of employment as an educator while a writer's might also list his or her publishing credits.

Whether you have a Master's degree or a GED, you have credentials worth promoting to potential clients, such as your years in the industry, number of satisfied customers, awards you've received, and more. If you're a member of an organization, a former military person, or an experienced entrepreneur, you can use these facts to sell yourself as an expert.

Once you have established your credentials, display them everywhere. On your web sites, business cards, brochures, and advertisements your credentials will help boost their marketing effectiveness and will ensure you an influx of new business.

[Write a Book](#)

Have you ever noticed that on television anyone who writes a book becomes an instant expert? It's true. Once someone is published, he or she becomes a knowledgeable source of information on that topic and what works for them will also work for you.

Now you might be thinking: I don't have the writing skills to publish a book on the time to find a publisher for any manuscript. Thankfully the Internet allows you to get around those concerns. For one, you don't have to write your book to receive the benefits of authorship. You can hire a ghostwriter using any of the online freelance marketplaces, such as Elance.com, to turn your ideas into powerful prose.

You can also forgo traditional publishing methods and instead create an Ebook or submit your book to an online publishing house, such as iUniverse.com. Either of these methods will help you effectively establish yourself as an expert.

Broadcast Your Success

People are naturally drawn to winners. They will almost always choose to do business with successful companies instead of those seeing only mediocre results. How else could one explain the popularity of Wal-Mart and McDonald's? But how do potential customers find out about your success unless you tell them?

One of the best ways to broadcast your success is by creating and distributing press releases. Many small business owners mistakenly believe they need an entire public relations department in order to send out press releases, but the truth is they are easy for anyone to write and deliver to potential customers.

To create a press release, you need to follow only this simple formula:

Paragraph 1 – Establish the relevance of your news by explaining why people should care. For example, you may want to mention the need your product fulfills.

Paragraph 2 – Discuss your news or success. You need to go into details about what you've accomplished so that readers can see concrete evidence of your success.

Paragraph 3 – Give background information on your company or yourself. This paragraph will tell readers more about the company and what you do. It also gives you a chance to stress your credentials.

Paragraph 4 – Wrap up with contact details. The last thing you want to leave your potential customers with is a phone number, email address, or web site address which they can use to reach you and learn more.

After you've written your press release, you can distribute them directly to the individuals on your client list – all those people who have expressed some interest in becoming a customer of yours – via email and post them on your web site so they are easily accessible. You can also try mailing them to local newspapers or magazines to try to motivate their interest as well.

As you can see there are numerous ways for you to sell yourself as a knowledgeable expert in your field. Once you begin using them, you will quickly discover that your potential customers view you as more trustworthy, reputable, and reliable which translates into more sales and higher profits for you. It may take some work to convince the public of your expertise, but in the long run the payoff is worth it.

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Ideal Marketing Methods for Home-Based Businesses

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What is the difference between a small business that makes it and one that does not? Most likely, the one that was successful engaged in some effective marketing. Wise marketing is critical for owners of home-based businesses for a number of reasons:

1. Marketing keeps you ahead of the competition
2. Marketing brings you a steady stream of revenue
3. Marketing provides leads for future sales
4. Marketing helps increase awareness about your business

Marketing is not something you just jump into, however. It requires careful examination and evaluation. Not every method, after all, will lead to the benefits mentioned above.

When it comes to selecting the methods you use with your business, remember to keep in mind your target audience and your budget, then start narrowing the list of possibilities. You may also want to try a few of these marketing methods which have been proven effective for other home-based businesses:

Affiliate Programs

Almost all home-based businesses can work with an affiliate program. With this type of program, you recruit other people to sell your products/services and reward them with a percentage of the revenue (usually 3 to 10%).

The mechanics of these programs works like a restaurant franchise. Because your recruits are now associated with your company's name, you want to be sure that they are maintaining your standards of quality and professionalism, so many affiliate programs include ready-made web sites, sales materials, and more.

These recruits then attempt to make sales on your behalf. The benefit is that all of their marketing efforts (beyond what you provide) are not part of your business's expenses, and they have the potential to reach new segments of potential clients and customers.

Giveaways

This type of marketing is one of the most popular with all businesses and can be handled in at least two ways: free gifts with a purchase and/or contests.

You have probably come across ads or web sites that sell e-books or other products and offer a number of free gifts with the purchase of the product. The lure of freebies helps people make the decision to purchase. You can do the same thing with your product or service. Keep in mind that whatever you offer as a free gift should be inexpensive to produce so that you don't lose money on the deal.

Contests can also be quite effective if done creatively. For example, if your business was selling e-books, you could hold a contest with the grand prize being a free copy of one of your top-selling e-books.

But what about second place? Many people don't realize that there's no rule or law against giving a prize to every person who enters your contest so why not reward all of the other people who entered with a significant discount on the price of that same e-book? Many of those second place winners will take the

discount and make a purchase.

Search Engine Optimization

If you do any business online, an important part of your marketing efforts should be search engine optimization or SEO. SEO essentially means that you tweak your site so that it appears near the top of search engine results for certain keywords.

Generally this involves repeating those keywords frequently and placing keywords in headlines, meta tags, and introductory paragraphs. While it may sound easy, most businesses turn their SEO efforts over to professionals. If bringing an expert in fits your marketing budget, you may want to enlist their assistance.

Referral Reward Programs

Another type of program aimed at bringing people to your site is a type of referral reward program. During the Internet boom, many sites had these type of programs which paid a few cents for each person who visited a site from a link listed at your site or through some other means.

Now, however, they simply are not as popular, but they can still be beneficial. Instead of offering a cash reward, allow your customers to earn your products/services by referring new business to you.

For example, you may want to offer a free e-book to customers who refer five new customers to your site. These new customers may have to make a purchase, join the referral reward program, become a member, or sign up for the newsletter. People will do a great deal if the reward is right.

Whether you elect to use one of these marketing methods or choose one of your own, the key is to test its effectiveness. Try it out for awhile and see if the results are satisfactory. If not, return to the drawing board. If so, then implement it on a larger scale. With careful planning and testing, your business will experience the benefits of marketing firsthand.

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Do-It-Yourself Web Design

for Home-Based Businesses

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Home-based businesses need a strong web presence to combat the inflated advertising and marketing budgets of their larger competitors, but establishing that presence through a professionally designed and developed web site may not be an affordable option. In many cases, the only cost-effective way to get the web site you want for your business is to do it yourself.

Even if you are not experienced in HTML (Hypertext Markup Language), you can find helpful programs which will assist you in your design efforts. Trust me, it is not as difficult as it may seem to be.

Here are a few tips for finding software to meet your small or home-based business's needs.

1) Know Your Options

When it comes to web site creation software, there are three types to choose from: text editors, HTML editors, and WYSIWYG editors.

Text editors, which are basically any word processing program such as Word or Notepad, require extensive HTML knowledge.

NoteTab Light (Freeware)

<http://www.notetab.com/download.htm>

HTML editors are much like text editors except they include additional features to aid inexperienced users, such as color-coded tags and pre-prepared CGI and Java scripts. If you have little or no experience with HTML, WYSIWYG editor is a better choice.

HTML Kit (Freeware)

<http://www.chami.com/html-kit/download/>

Web-O-Rama (Donationware)

<http://www.kevingunn.com/weborama.htm>

WYSIWYG, which stands for What You See is What You Get, programs like FrontPage or DreamWeaver allow you to design the pages' appearance without writing code. You pick what you want and the program automatically generates the code.

Macromedia Dreamweaver (\$399) (Recommended)

<http://www.macromedia.com/software/dreamweaver/download/>

NetObjects Fusion (\$149.95)

<http://www.netobjects.com/products/html/download.html>

2) Look for the Features You Need

When you start browsing for web site software, you'll want to look for a few key features, such as ready-made templates, wizards (they make many tasks easier and quicker), auto-backup, and pre-built code.

Remember to also keep in mind your own level of HTML experience. If you are inexperienced, then you will want plenty of templates and wizards to help you along. Likewise, if you feel comfortable working with code, then you may want to choose programs without all of the bells, whistles, and help since they will cost you less.

3) Do Some Research

Never buy a program, especially not one for business, without trying it out first. Most of these programs have

demos or free trials available on their manufacturers' web sites. You can also check with sites such as CNET.com or Epinions to get an idea of which programs are being recommended by users. Check with popular computer magazines for their experts' input as well.

All of this research will give you a good idea of which programs to explore and which to avoid when you are making your final buying decision.

4) Keep Your Budget in Mind

Depending on which type of web design program you choose, your costs will vary dramatically. Text editors, for example, are often already on your computer. Notepad, a feature of Windows, makes a very usable text editor and will cost you nothing extra.

HTML editors, on the other hand, can cost anywhere from \$30 to \$100 while WYSIWYGs are priced between \$70 to \$500 and up.

Well-known brands, such as Adobe and MacroMedia, will cost more but the quality of their programs and the stability of their company make them a better choice than the inexpensive software from unknown vendors.

Also, be sure to look for programs that offer free or reduced price upgrades so you continue to get the most from your software without paying full price again every two or three years.

With these tips, you should have no trouble finding an HTML program that fits your needs and your experience level so you can create your own professional-looking web site without draining your business's budget.

-----SUMMARY-----

No matter which software you use, a good knowledge of HTML will always be helpful. Here are some links that have helped me tremendously in building my HTML and web designing skills:

<http://hotwired.lycos.com/webmonkey/teachingtool/html.html>

<http://www.davesite.com/webstation/html/>

<http://www.w3schools.com/html/default.asp>

-----SUMMARY-----

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Developing Multiple Streams of Income for Your Home-Based Business

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Many home-based business owners have a single service or product they provide. They may sell e-books or crafts or speech-writing services. Specializing in one area is good for many reasons. For one, it makes marketing easier and helps that business build a solid reputation in one area.

Although specialization has its benefits, businesses who derive all of their profit from a single area are overall more susceptible to economic fluctuations and less profitable long term.

A good example of multiple streams of income at work in traditional business is the modern newspaper. A newspaper company brings in revenue in three ways: by selling the

papers, by selling advertising space, and by selling classified ads. Each of these is another stream of revenue for the newspaper. Furthermore, some newspapers have added an additional stream by charging for access to their online content.



For the home-based business owners like yourself, the key is to follow the advice of the old saying: "Don't put all of your eggs in one basket." Instead, you should work on developing multiple streams of income.

Think in terms of a river. One river may have hundreds of small tributaries and streams emptying into it along its path. Without these waterways, the river level would fall considerably and may one day disappear completely. The same is true in business. Your revenue is like that river; it needs to be nourished by many sources, not just one. If you only have one source and that one source slows down or dries up, the negative impact on the flow of your revenue is dramatic.

Once you understand why you need multiple streams of income, the question is how do you create them. One home-based business owner who specialized in writing secured her multiple streams of income by owning her own business, doing freelance work for two other companies, and teaching a class at a local business college.

Another home-based business owner joined affiliate programs offered by big name retailers and earned money by imaginatively incorporating them into her heavily trafficked web site.

Still another took his existing product which was designed to help marketers produce effective e-zine articles, made some minor changes, and re-packaged it as a tool for students struggling to write school essays.

As these examples show, multiple streams of income can be derived in a number of ways if you think creatively. The key is to look for ways that complement your existing business.

If you sell gourmet cookies, for example, you could produce cookbooks. If you work with Internet marketing, set up an online bookstore full of marketing books via an affiliate program. If you design web sites, teach a course on it at your local college or offer it online through your existing business site.

The possibilities for establishing multiple streams of income are endless. But you must always remember that the key to successfully managing multiple streams of income is not to lose focus on your primary revenue generating activity.

Have you ever been to a web site so covered in ads that you could not tell what service or product was even being sold? Most people have. The people who run those sites do not realize that visitors are not coming to see banner ads for other companies' products, but to learn more about theirs.

When visitors are bombarded by these other ads, they leave in frustration. In the long run, the site loses money because it simply isn't generating enough sales to justify charging a decent rate for advertising. The idea is balancing these other ways of earning you money without taking away from the income stream you

already have.

Once you have your streams in place and learn how to maintain this equilibrium, your revenue will flow like a steady river and will keep your home-based business on solid ground.

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Three Steps to a Professional Image

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One of the biggest reasons home-based business entrepreneurs often fail to attract customers is that they also fail to create a professional image. A professional image is an element of your credibility and without credibility winning customers is an uphill battle.

Think of it this way: would you give your hard earned money to a guy selling products out of an alley? Probably not. For one, you would wonder where the good had come from. It would also be inconvenient because your method of payment options would be limited. You would also not have the peace of mind of knowing you could get a refund if it turns out that your purchase is defective or does not live up to your expectations. Just as you would have these concerns, so will your customers if you do not create a credible image.

Many home-based business owners feel they can't afford to create a professional image on a small start-up budget, but not only is creating that image possible even with limited funds, it's something you can't afford not to do.

Here are a few ways to create that image:

1) Provide Multiple Payment Methods

Most modern shops and businesses accept a variety of payment options, including cash, checks, and credit cards in order to make it more convenient for customers. Money orders and debit cards are also payment options widely accepted. You should try to accept as many of these payment methods as possible.

Additionally, online stores must be prepared to accept international funds or risk losing a percentage of their audience.

Accepting checks is the easiest method you can incorporate into your business. However, keep in mind that most people will be wary about making the check out to an individual when they feel they are doing business with a company. So you will need to create a business checking account. These accounts can be opened at

any financial institution.

Unless you have officially registered your company through the government and received an identification number, your account will be listed as you doing business as (dba) your company's name. With the account, you will be able to cash checks made out to you or your business.

Credit card, debit card, and international funds, on the other hand, can be more difficult matters. At least initially, you may want to use a service such as Paypal to handle these transactions. A PayPal business account will cost you nothing to open, but a small percentage of the funds will be automatically subtracted for each transaction. You can also use Paypal to accept electronic check payments.

2) Provide Detailed Contact Information

Customers like to know who they are doing business with and how they can reach them if there is a problem with their purchase. However, many home-based business owners don't want to put their personal contact information online where it is accessible by millions, and you do want to protect your family's privacy. So instead, you need to create business-specific contact information.

First, you need to rent a post office box. Various sizes are available, and payments can be made every six months or every year. You can use your post office box for all of your business correspondence and can safely display it on your web site.

Second, you should either get a second phone line or a cellular phone which is dedicated to your business. Not only does this allow you to keep your family's privacy secure, but it also prevents your children or loved ones from answering important business calls in an unprofessional manner.

Also consider investing in a fax machine or using an online service such as efax. Including your fax number with your other contact information, not only provides customers with an additional method of communication, but also creates an image of professionalism.

3) Deliver on Your Promises

It can be easy to start taking customers for granted once they have paid for their product. After all, once you have their money, the hard part is over, right? Wrong! Customers can become repeat customers if they are treated well; they can also bring additional customers your way via word-of-mouth referrals.

Treating them well means delivering on your promises, including shipping products on schedule, standing behind your guarantee, providing effective customer service, and promotion products honestly. Doing these things sends a message to your customers that says not only that your company is professional but also that you care about your customers.

These three ideas are just the beginning but they will help you begin developing the image you want and need your company to have if it is to succeed.

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Writing Effective Sales Copy

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Whether you run a home-based business or Microsoft, one thing is always true: products do not sell themselves. So what makes customers buy? Words.

Marketing gurus learned long ago that it's the words salespeople speak and ads present which are critical to the decision to buy or not to buy. So how can you be sure that they copy on your site, in your sales material, and in your promotions is effective?

You have two choices:

- 1) Hire a professional copywriter
- 2) Do It Yourself

In order to keep expenses low, most home-based businesses prefer the second option. If you do as well, you should follow these simple guidelines:

- 1) AIDA

AIDA is an acronym which stands for Attention, Interest, Desire, and Action. This is essentially an outline for how to effectively write your sales copy. First, you must grab your audience's attention by using exciting headlines, shocking statistics, or surprising facts, such as in the examples below:

"Learn the Secrets of Becoming a Millionaire"

"In less than 5 seconds, your audience has developed its first impression of you."

"Seventy-five percent of people would quit their jobs and work from home if the right opportunity arose."

Next, you need to make them interested in your product. Personal stories of success and lists of benefits can all help you do this. Near the end, you should begin working on building their desire for your product by stressing what specifically your product can do for them.

Finally, you should end all of your copy with a call to action. What this means is that you tell the reader what they need to do next in order to get your product: [click here](#) to order, visit our web site today, call now, etc.

When you apply AIDA, you are carefully luring your audience in and guiding them towards the action you want.

2) Audience Appeals

All sales and marketing writing is meant to be persuasive and to change the minds of potential buyers. Most advertisers today understand this; therefore, they employ Aristotle's three audience appeals.

Aristotle, one of ancient Greece's greatest minds, identified these appeals which were being used by speakers of his time. These three appeals are ethos, logos, and pathos.

Ethos appeals are based on ethics and reputation. For example, using celebrity endorsements, building your credibility, or citing expert testimony.

Logos appeals are based on logic. These types of appeals use facts, statistics, and evidence to persuade audiences.

Pathos appeals are based on emotion. These type of appeals include the faces of starving children, the promise of success, or the lure of acceptance. Any part of your copy designed to make readers feel anger, pity, love, hope, etc. is an example of pathos.

Using one or all of these appeals in your content can boost its persuasive abilities considerably.

3) KISS

This acronym stands for Keep it Short and Simple. Basically, it means that your writing should be concise and to the point not a rambling bunch of metaphors and big words. You want your copy to appeal to as many people as possible so following this guideline is always a good idea.

Whether you decide to write your own copy or hire a professional, these tips will help you develop successful and effective copy every time you need it.

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Dealing With Business Slow Downs

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When times are slow for your home-based business, chances are you won't have the luxury of waiting and seeing if things improve. You'll need to take steps quickly to get back on track.

These suggestions will help you get business back to normal:

1) Add Products And Services

During slow times, your very instinct might be to cut corners, but in the case of your catalog of products and services this could spell disaster. Instead, you want to select additions carefully based on the needs and desires of your clients.

Think of it this way: let's say you provide web design services. Your client hires you for the design work, then goes elsewhere to get a logo, hosting, and content. Having to hire four different companies just to complete one project is not cost-effective or time-efficient for your client.

So what if you could offer web design and hosting or web design and everything else necessary as well? Chances are you'd have a definite advantage over your competition.

Even if you don't have the skills or ability to handle those aspects of the project, you could team up with other companies like yourself who also want to boost business and give themselves a competitive edge.

No matter what product or service you primarily provide, you could find ways to provide additional necessities to your clients.

2) Step Up Customer Service

Hopefully, you already provide good service and support to your customers, and you are probably already aware of how critical this is to your business's success. But when times get rough, customer service is even more crucial and you need to go beyond the call of duty to convince clients that their business is important to



you.

For example, you may want to guarantee responses within a few hours, instead of a few days. You may want to follow up with thank you cards or phone calls. If a problem does arise, act immediately to take care of it and rectify the situation to the client's satisfaction.

Remember not only is that customer's business at stake, but also the potential business of every single person he or she is acquainted with.

3) Market More

Business is slow; budgets are tight. So what usually gets trimmed first? Marketing. Do you know what the results are? Disaster!

When you conduct marketing, you are not selling yourself to generate business today or even tomorrow. Marketing is an investment in your business's future. In fact, research has shown that most marketing efforts don't pay off for at least six months.

So think about that. Let's say you cut back on marketing in June and you weather the economic down cycle, what's going to happen in December? Absolutely nothing! Because all of your potential clients have been won over by the marketing efforts of your competition which were conducted during the summer.



Instead of cutting back, a slow down is the time to boost marketing. Get back in touch with past clients, attend seminars, pass out fliers. After all, if work is slow, what else are you going to be spending your time doing?

4) Keep A Positive Attitude

Times are hard. Your nerves are on edge. You're feeling the pressure. When a past client calls to ask how things are going, do you tell them the truth and hope they take pity on you? Do you wallow in a self-defeating attitude? NO!

If you want to get through the hard times, you have to keep in mind two things:

- A) No one wants to do business with a failing company and**
- B) Hard times are only temporary.**

Let's think about this. If you called up a company about business and the representative says, "It will be great to be finally getting some new clients" or "Things have been horribly slow around here lately" are you going to trust them with your project? No.

The first thing you are going to be wondering is why they haven't been doing well. And that's what your potential clients will wonder about you as well.

So how do you keep from breaking down on the phone with your clients? By remembering that business is a cycle and just as things are bad now, they will turn around and you will be doing well again. The only thing permanent is giving up.

5) Branch Out

When things are slow with your business, you can take the opportunity to do all those things you always wanted to do but never had the time for.

Why not write some articles or an e-book related to your business, then sell them or publish them to earn more money and to further establish your credibility.

Or take a shot at teaching a class on e-commerce, computers, or a topic related to your business at a local college, vocational school, or adult learning center. Even if you don't get paid, the exposure could do great things for your business.

You could also start giving speeches, take some business or technology classes, or take on some part-time work that will give you more experiences that will help you compete in the market when things go back to normal.

Although ups and downs are simply an inevitable part of business, dealing with them effectively can make the difference between staying afloat or going under.

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Five Hints for Surviving a Business Slump

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Starting and running a home-based business has plenty of benefits and can generate a decent living quite easily, but the ride isn't always simple. When sales are slow or new customers are sparse, you don't need to throw in the towel and call it quits.

Business is a cycle. Sometimes it's booming and other times it's not, but neither state is permanent. The difference is that while business is booming, your biggest concern is meeting the needs of your multitude of customers. When things are not, you may be scrambling to keep everything on track.

Below you will find a few suggestions about what to do and what not to do when your home-based business hits a slump:

1) Keep in Touch with Past Customers

When business is going great, you may have a tendency to forget those past clients who helped get you where you are today. Yet, when things slow down, they can be your safety rope. Now is the time to drop them a friendly email or note with a pleasant message.

Don't come across as needy and don't tell them you are experiencing slowdown, but do ask them to keep you in mind if they have need of your services or if they know of any colleagues who may be in need as well.

Be sure to include your business card or contact information just in case they've misplaced it since you last worked together.

2) Avoid Cutting Prices

If sales stagnate, you may be tempted to boost business by dropping prices. While a temporary sale or special offer may attract new customers, if you expect to cut prices across the board in order to raise revenue then you may be making a mistake in judgment.

When a new customer can pay \$25 for your product during a slowdown, how are they going to react when you try to raise that price back up to \$35 or \$45 after things pick up? Once you lower prices, it's difficult to get them

back up again, **so cut prices only as a last resort.**



3) Make Budget Changes Carefully

When revenue is dripping in instead of pouring, you may need to trim some budgets, but be careful to make those reductions wisely. Your first instinct may be to cut back on staffing, distribution, or customer service. While these changes may help in the short term, they may cause you to lose clients in the long run.

Never make any budget alterations that might end up hurting your customers and costing you business.

4) Never Skimp on Quality or Quantity

Two things determine customer satisfaction: quality and quantity. If you are trying to cut corners in order to save money, you may consider making alternations in these two vital areas.

However, doing so may throw your business into more peril than any temporary downturn in the cycle. When you provide services or products which fail to meet the customers' expectations, you put yourself in a position to lose repeat business, and repeat business is where the money is.

Also, remember that happy customers are likely to tell others how satisfied they were with your company. Likewise, unhappy customers typically don't hide their dissatisfaction. Maintaining your current level of quality and quantity, or even increasing it, should be among your top priorities.

5) Never Appear Desperate

People like to do business with those who are successful. Therefore, if you approach potential clients with the air of desperation in your voice, you are more likely to scare them away than enlist their aid during this difficult period.

Examples of desperation may not just be obvious in what you say to your customers but also in what you do. For instance, if you significantly reduce your quote in order to secure their business, you may be sending them the wrong message. Stay positive and optimistic. After all, nothing attracts business like a good attitude.

By following these suggestions, you'll be able to tackle those bumps in the road and still come out on top of the game.

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Knowing Your Customers;

Closing the Sale

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Just because your business is based in your home that doesn't mean you can afford to ignore the most important element of your success: sales. The bottom line is that your sales ability will make or break your business's future. Chances are, however, that unless you have a background in sales, you lack the helpful training which will give you a competitive advantage.

The key to closing the sale quicker and easier than you ever imagined is to understand your customers. Below you will find some advice that will help you get to know them a little better.

Who They Are

Not all that long ago, customers were all pretty much the same. Most were males over thirty with steady jobs and families to support. Generally, most salespeople fell into a similar demographic. For that reason, buyers felt comfortable with sellers and typically trusted their guidance wholeheartedly.

Things have definitely changed dramatically in the last several decades. Even if you ignore the role of technology in sales, there are still enough changes from that old sales model described above to require a significant shift in attitude.

For one, men are no longer the only ones doing the buying. As you probably already know, women are out there spending their hard earned money and making important decisions about their family's budgets. Unfortunately, many of these women still feel treated as inferior or "stupid" by salespeople.

Another issue that has changed is the age of buyers. Today, many young people have enough disposable income to purchase nearly anything their hearts' desire, especially if they don't have the added responsibilities of excessive debt and dependents.

However, younger buyers also feel that they are not taken seriously by sellers. You can gain an advantage with these buyers by catering to their specific needs and by treating them with respect. It's not hard to do, but it will definitely make a difference.

If you do most of your business over the Internet, you might even want to stress that it provides a more equal playing ground for buyers of all genders and ages.

**One last critical point is that buyers,
regardless of their age or gender,
are more informed and more knowledgeable
about the products they buy and most simply
won't take your word for the benefits of your product.**

To make the sale, you'll need to show instead of just telling why your product is a worthy investment. Use statistics and testimonials to support your claims. Allow users to have free trials or demonstrations before they make up their minds. When they are convinced that you are being honest with them, that's when they will trust you with their money.

What They Want

Each customer is an individual who will react to the sales situation in different ways, but essentially all of them will fall into one of four categories: decisive, inquisitive, rational, and expressive. Knowing each customer's behavior style will let you know how to effectively meet their needs and finalize their transaction.

Decisive customers are typically more forceful and assertive. They know exactly what they want and don't want to waste time getting it. If you appear knowledgeable and professional and stay focused on meeting their needs, you will win their business.

Inquisitive customers are full of questions and want just the facts. They are incredibly formal and come off as distant which may discourage some salespeople. You can win their good favor by being honest about the pros and cons of your product. Also, never pressure them into making a decision. If you wait patiently, your efforts will be rewarded.

Rational customers are the easiest to work with. They ask questions, avoid conflict, and seem relaxed. They are friendly but not overly so, but don't try to put one over on them or they'll spot it right away. To succeed, stress guarantees, encourage them to get a second opinion, and present everything logically.

Finally, expressive customers are the ones you'll always remember. They are full of enthusiasm, very animated, and always upbeat. Unfortunately, they are not concerned with time and will delay making a decision for as long as possible. To win them, focus on telling your own stories about the product instead of just the facts. You'll also need to keep encouraging them to make a decision or they may never reach one.

If you don't have much interpersonal interaction with your customers, you still need to understand these four behavior types. For one, your sales writing will need to captivate all of them in order to turn them into customers. If you leave out a mention of a money back guarantee, for example, you may have a hard time convincing those rational buyers to spend their cash.

The bottom line is that all customers --

regardless of their demographics or behavior style,

want two things: quality and quantity.

If you can convince them that you offer both,

then you have closed the sale.



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Dealing with Disgruntled Customers

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No matter how hard you try, in business you simply can't please everyone. You could have a highly trained customer service squadron and an award-winning product, but still you'd have some buyers who just weren't happy. The bad news is that unhappy customers are more eager to share their experiences than happy ones which could spell disaster for your business.

There is good news, however. Unhappy customers who receive satisfaction can become your biggest allies. The trick, of course, is discovering how to satisfy their needs so efficiently that they'll forget whatever caused their disappointment in the first place. Here are some ways to make that happen:

1) Be a Good Listener

When someone complains about us, our first instinct is to get defensive and to distribute blame. Most of the time we start doing this even before the other person has finished their argument. When that happens, we may misjudge the situation, offer inappropriate resolutions, or appear insensitive to our customers' feelings. Instead, we must work hard to become patient listeners. We should stay focused on the customer and not get distracted by anything else going on around us.

We should also pay attention to what is being said, not how it is being said. Even a beligerant customer is trying to express a concrete complaint, he just might not be able to do it as clearly or as calmly as someone else. By listening patiently to our customers, we can take the first step toward helping them more effectively.

2) Don't Let an Unhappy Customer Slip Away Without a Fight

Just because someone is unsatisfied with your service or your product, you don't have to throw your hands up in the air and say "That's another one gone." Take steps right away to resolve the situation. Most customers who have a complaint just want you to take the problem seriously, to handle it as quickly as possible, and to have it resolved in a respectful and professional manner. If you can do that for them, you will successfully mend the relationship.

3) Resolve the Problem to Their Satisfaction, Not Yours

When many businesses right wrongs, they do so by only considering what is in their best interest and not what would satisfy the customer. That simply doesn't work most of the time. Let me give you an example.

One young woman took her small children to a well-known fast food restaurant for dinner. Because her youngest child was diabetic, she ordered diet drinks for their child-sized meals. Instead, she received regular drinks, and the extra sugar in the drink caused her child to have to be rushed to the emergency room that night. When she called to complain, the manager offered her a free meal to compensate her for the near-death experience of her two year old daughter.

Why did the manager make such a ludicrous offer? Because that was what the restaurant had decided to do in order to deal with customer complaints in a cost-effective manner.

It was good for them and that's all that they considered.

The reality is that customers will all have different ideas on how to resolve these issues: some may want an employee to be fired or punished for their bad service, others will want financial restitution, some will want assurance that it will never happen again,

and most will want a combination of those things.

To determine how to satisfy your unhappy customers, just ask them how you can make things right and then do whatever they ask for (within reason, of course). By doing this, you will be showing how much their satisfaction and patronage means to you.

4) Keep Your Head



When customers are angry with us, it can be very upsetting, especially if we truly do care about their business. Yet, we may get so upset that we aren't able to cope effectively with their problem and end up losing the relationship which can be even more upsetting. Instead, take these four steps to coping with your feelings:

A) Remember it's not about you – While it may seem that they are yelling or complaining about you personally, they aren't. They simply want what they paid for. Your customers don't know if you're a good family man or a single mother struggling to get by; all they know is that they paid for something and that's what they expect to receive. So don't take their complaints personally.

B) Stop thinking “If only” or “What if” -- After an incident, you may spend days going back over the situation and wondering what you could have done differently, but this is futile. No matter how much you may want to, you can't go back and change it now. Instead, you should be looking forward and finding ways to prevent it from happening again.

C) Know you've done all you can –

If you feel guilt because you weren't able to satisfy an unhappy customer, you can shut your conscience up easily if you know that you did everything within your power to right the situation. After all, there are just some people who will never be happy with anything that you do and they aren't worth stressing over.

D. Keep improving –

In life, we learn more from our mistakes than we do from getting something right. So each unhappy customer provides you with a learning experience that will not only help you handle future situations better but will also show you how to prevent future mistakes from happening. Obviously, you don't want too many of these learning experiences, but when they do happen, be sure to use them wisely.

While you won't be able to save every relationship,

you may be surprised at how many you can rescue

with these suggestions.

It may seem like a lot of extra effort, but if you care about your customers and about your business, it's the least you can do for them and for yourself.

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Keeping Your Business's Finances on Track

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One of the biggest benefits of operating a home-based business is that it doesn't require any formal training or experience. After all, some of the most successful individuals never attended a single business-related class or workshop.

The only drawback to having a lack of experience and/or business education is that it can make tracking your company's finances difficult. Even accountants who spend their lives working with numbers often find bookkeeping a tedious chore.

But no matter how mundane keeping track of your company's revenue and expenses may be, it is also necessary for several reasons:

- 1) You need to know at a glance if your business is spending more than it is earning.
- 2) You need to have all of this information documented for tax time.
- 3) You can use this data to help you establish your budgets and to adjust your spending.

Of course, just knowing it's important doesn't make it easier to accomplish. In fact, you really have two options if you want to reduce your accounting stress:

- A) Hire a professional to help you or
- B) Invest in a helpful accounting software program.

While hiring a professional would be the easiest route, it's also more costly. For most home-based businesses, the most effective choice is to use an accounting software program.

Before you spend a dime, however, there are a few things you need to know.

1) Know What You Need The Program To Do

The accounting programs currently available can handle a wide array of business related tasks, such as tracking expenses, creating invoices, handling payroll, and printing checks. The more of these tasks a program can do, the more expensive it will be.

For that reason, you should know exactly what you are going to use it for. That way you can get a program that meets your needs without paying for features you'll never use.

2) Know The Details Of Your Computer

Before you buy any software, you need to know your computer's current statistics, such as what operating system you use, how much hard drive is available, and how much RAM your system contains.

If you buy a program that won't work on your system, you won't be able to return it and get your money back once it's been opened. Checking in advance will protect you from getting stuck with software you can't use.

3) Do Your Homework

Any type of business-related purchase requires careful consideration, so be sure to investigate before you buy. Explore all of the software programs available and find out what other people are saying about them. Sites like Epinions.com and CNET.com can provide you with product feedback from both consumers and reviewers.

Pay attention to mentions of difficulty levels since you want a program that is easy for you to learn and to

use. Also, take advantage of software demos. Nothing beats a hands-on preview. You should do some research into the companies' technical support and customer service as well. If you ever need help, you want to know it's readily available.

4) Be Aware Of Costs

Another thing you need to know is how much you can afford to spend on the program. The costs for accounting software run from \$30 to \$600 or more depending on the features included.

Knowing what you need and can afford in advance will prevent you from paying too much. Shopping around for a particular program won't do much good, however. Whether you buy a program online, from an electronics store, or from a retail outlet, you'll pay about the same price. Watch for rebates or special offers, however, because they can cut your costs considerably.

Here are a few suggestions if you find it difficult to identify the right accounting software program for you:

*** Peachtree Accounting 2003**

Peachtree is one of the most recognized names in business accounting. This program allows you to manage your accounts receivable, accounts payable, inventory, payroll, job costing, fixed assets, even general ledger. Other valuable features perfect for small or home-based businesses, such as Internet postage, credit card service, direct deposit, and contact management are also included.

This version costs \$199.95, but others are also available. You can learn more about Peachtree's line of accounting software at <http://www.peachtree.com>

*** Quicken Home & Business**

At \$89.95, Quicken Home & Business is one of the most budget-friendly accounting programs on the market. Even though its price is low, it's packed with features, such as creating custom estimates and invoices, generating business reports, setting up a Merchant Account, managing taxes and expenses, and keeping track of your cash flow.

You can also use the program to download your transactions and pay your bills online. Other versions of Quicken are also available through the company's web site <http://www.quicken.com/quickensw/>

*** Microsoft Monday 2003 Deluxe & Business**

With this software, you can take care of most of your accounting needs without breaking your business's budget. At only \$64.95, the software still comes with a wide range of features including the ability to create customized invoices, estimate tax payments, compare financial data, balance your checkbook, track cash flow, and pay your bills. Additional versions of the the program are available for sale at <http://www.microsoft.com/money>

Knowing this useful information will help you find an accounting program that will make your job easier, less stressful, and more efficient.

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Tax Tips for Home-Based Business Owners

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As tax time approaches, many home-based business owners begin completing their forms or paying their accountants with trepidation. This nervousness comes from two sources: a fear of being audited and a fear of having to pay a lot. For the most part, both of these fears are unfounded.

For one, audits are rare. In fact, only 0.5% of taxpayers are subjected to audits every year. And if you do beat the odds, keeping good records and maintaining receipts will help you weather the IRS storm.

Obviously you have no control over whether or not your return is chosen for an audit, but you can control how much you are going to owe the government this year. Most people who own small or home-based businesses end up paying more than they should in taxes simply because they are not taking advantage of all their deduction possibilities, even those that are right around them every day.

Your Automobile

You may not realize it, but one of your biggest potential tax savers is sitting in your garage right now. Most people realize that their car can be a tax write-off if it is used for advertising purposes, but the majority of home-based business owners don't realize that it they may also be eligible for deductions as well.

For example, if you drive your car to the post office to buy stamps for your business or if you drive to the office supply store to stock up on paper clips, you can claim that mileage on your taxes. You can even claim the mileage if your business-related stop was made on the way to picking your daughter up from ballet class or dropping your dog off at the vet.

In addition, you can write-off other automobile related expenses such as gas, insurance, and parking costs if they pertain to any business related activity.

Be sure to keep records, however. You will want to have a small notebook in your car at all times so you can jot down your start and stop mileage as well as a note about the business activity in which you are engaged. Keep all gas, parking, and insurance receipts as well if you plan to claim those as business expenses.

Your Family

If you pay your children an allowance, you can also count these as deductions if you hire them as part of your staff. Any business owner knows that the money he or she pays to employees does not count as part of their profit. The same is true for home-based businesses.

Most business owners also know they can find employees among their own family without raising any eyebrows. The same is true for home-based businesses. You can hire your fourteen year old to help you answer phones, file, or type up correspondence. You can offer your eight year old a job emptying wastebaskets, straightening your office, etc. Then you pay them a certain amount of money every week for their labor.

Again keeping records is essential. Keep track of the hours your children work for you as well as the activities they do. Pay them, if possible, by check from your business account. You can set up a checking or savings account for the children in which the money can be deposited.

Your Home

Obviously if you worked in a small office building you could deduct the amount of rent you paid for that property from your taxes, as well as the costs of all the equipment and expenses. Well, just because you work out of your home that does not mean you lose out on those deductions.

Chances are you have a small area of your home that is set aside for your business purposes. Now while you cannot write-off the cost of your entire house, you can write-off the cost of that area.

What you do is determine what percentage of your home's total square feet is dedicated to your business. For example, if your office takes up 10% of your home's total area and you pay \$600 per month for the property, you can claim \$60 per month as a business expense which would be \$720 per year.

The same formula works for your utilities, such as electricity, water, and telephone (unless you have a separate line just for business). All of your equipment - your computer, printer, scanner, cell phone, printer ink, etc - is also tax deductible.

Remember to keep track of those expenses and hold on to your receipts in order to claim them on your taxes.

When it comes to tax time, no home-based business owner needs to feel afraid. By taking advantage of all your potential deductions and keeping thorough records, you can not only significantly reduce your yearly tax bill, but you can also prepare yourself in the rare event you may be chosen for an audit.

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A final word from the author.

You now have the basic weapons you need for establishing your business at home. You will find ever more advanced tools available from my web site where I have done everything possible to assemble what the HomePreneur needs most.

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the end

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