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## GETTING YOUR HOME READY FOR YOUR HOME BUSINESS

Congratulations on becoming your own boss! You now have the perfect opportunity to create an effective work area suited to your tastes. Whether it's a nook, cranny or a separate room, your work area should be conducive to performing your daily work.

A well-organized work space also means efficient invoicing, expensing and follow-up, which translates into dollars in your pocket. For home-based businesses, organization is doubly important. A good system can help set boundaries between home life and work life, giving more time to actually enjoy the freedom of being your own boss.

### Make a List

With the product or service you have in mind, can you handle the business from your home the way it is right now? If not, what do you need to do to get it ready?

- Will you need space for inventory, supplies, records and/or equipment?
- Do you already have an area you can use for your office or will you need to bargain with another member of the family to give up some space?
- Is the nature of your inventory or equipment such that special climate needs must be accommodated?
- Do you need to add a room, enclose a patio, convert a garage or basement, or stake out the attic?
- What kind of power needs will you have and will you have to make any alterations to accommodate them?

As you determine what you'll need, keep track of your estimate costs because you'll need them later in this exercise.

### Establish a home-office space

Find an appropriate work area. Look around your home and find a spot that you will be comfortable working in. This can be an open closet space, a nook in the family room, or a spare bedroom. Before you start organizing, make sure your office is in the right place. You're going to spend most of the day here. Don't banish yourself to a room you don't like. Often, people plan to put their office in a spare bedroom they never use, except they hate that dark, isolated room and wind up doing all their work on the dining room table!

Just keep practicality in mind while designing your office. For example, if you need to keep an eye on small children while you're working, then make sure your home office will allow this. Another thought is to ensure that you have some privacy with a curtain, door, or structure. This will enable you to conduct business calls as needed as well as separate your 'work time' from your 'family time'. Slowly purchase any needed equipment that you'll need to get your office ready for business, including a computer, printer, fax machine, copier, paper supplies, and a good Internet connection. My suggestion is to invest in the core equipment you need, and add as you go. Remember, these are all business expenses!

### Setting Up Your Home Office

Skip that trip to Staples. Before loading up on nifty organizational devices, you have to figure out what goes where, what you're keeping and what you're throwing out.

A well-equipped workspace will contain all necessary supplies and equipment within arms reach. Larger tools like fax machines and printers should be set up in areas with easy access.

Use a desk caddy. Keep a sufficient supply of pens, pencils, paper clips scissors and other supplies in a desktop holder or a tray inside a desk drawer.

Make sure to keep 2/3 of your desktop cleared at all times. It is easier to function and maintain focus when your desk space is open and free of clutter.

Keep your papers in process vertical instead of horizontal in piles. There are several vertical stepped file holders on the market today. One of the most useful has eight steps to hold eight 'manilla' folders. Ideas for the folder headings would be: Calls To Make, Waiting For Response, Data Entry, Bills To Pay, Projects etc. Projects often become 2-3 working folders. Once a project contains 3-4 sheets of paper, it merits a separate folder. Store all project folders behind each other in the stepped unit. This type of system is called an "Action System". You will need to touch and work at least one of these folders every day or the system will break down and become overcrowded. When deciding where to put specific items, focus on finding them, not storing them.

Mimic the corporate environment by creating forms for everyday tasks. For example, type up a personalized Fax Transmittal Form that includes your company name, phone number and other pertinent information. Make copies and leave them by your fax machine for quick and efficient fax transmissions. Create standard email signatures for your email correspondence.

Don't quit and remove what isn't working for you!

Organizing is such a huge task, people often quit before finishing. Invariably, those remaining little piles of clutter take over the office, reducing it to chaos again.

Some things that will keep you living in chaos and unhappiness include: clutter, disorganization, broken items, and time wasting tasks. These items will only stress you out and wear you down so after you make a list of them, it is time to begin removing them from your daily life.

A final word!

Adhere to a daily routine and schedule. Maintain focus on your long-range goals (life and business) as you go about your daily tasks. Consider whether the business you are involved in is directly related to your long-term goals. Keep your schedule constantly aligned with the specific reason that you began working for yourself and you will go far!