

Staying Productive While Working from Home

By Brian Shannon

In today's business world, working from home is a reality. For some of you, it is only occasionally at night or on the weekend, but for others it can be part of your daily routine. More and more employers are giving their team members the flexibility of working from home simply to keep their overhead costs down. While others do it to allow their employees some flexibility in their day. In our current competitive job market we must all become effective and remain productive regardless of where our place of work happens to be. Here are 8.5 tips on how to make working from home a successful venture for you, your family and your employer.

- 1) Start your business day as if you were going into the office.

Even if you will be physically at home all day, that does not mean that you cannot mentally be at work. I encourage you to set your alarm to wake up bright and early, jump in the shower and get dressed in comfortable, yet business casual attire. These steps set the expectation in your mind that you are going to work. Not only that, but it demonstrates to your family that you are treating the day as a work day.

- 2) Place your office in an area that is not easily found.

If your office is right by the front door, kitchen or kids play room, you will undoubtedly be interrupted by others throughout the day. Even if you are not interrupted, your curiosity will be peaked and you will be inclined to leave your office when you hear others. Instead, I recommend your office be set up in an area that is away from all distractions. Remove the television, couch and home phone from this area as well, as they will only compel you to take your focus away from the tasks at hand.

- 3) Use a separate phone line.

Whether you use your cell phone or have a separate house line put in do not share your lines of communication with your family. Nothing will be more burdensome than having family members interrupt your business calls with their personal agenda.

- 4) Make sure you have all the equipment you need to be productive.

My office in my residence has the same equipment as my corporate office. I have a separate phone line (with speaker), a spacious work desk, high speed internet access, a color printer, fax, scanner and copier. This allows me to be as productive as possible.

5) Communicate your location to co-workers.

If you work in both a corporate office, and also at home sometimes make sure to let people know where you are each day. This will reduce the amount of follow-up you will have from people constantly leaving you messages at the office that you do not get until a later time. Also, you might consider forwarding your office calls to your home or cell line if more appropriate.

6) Set boundaries with your family.

My family knows that if my door is closed at home, then I am busy at work and I am not to be disturbed. Also, if they want/need to speak with me they call me on my phone. This prevents them from interrupting my flow of work. If you would like to integrate some time with your family during the work day, I recommend a short break and set your time limit up front.

7) Take several short breaks to change the scenery.

Don't let working in your home office cause cabin-fever. Take a couple breaks throughout the day. Keep these breaks short, no longer than 15 minutes, and relegate them to 1-2 per day.

8) Know when to call it a day.

One challenge with working from home is that your work is always available to you. Learn when to end your work day and week. Just because you **can** work all the time, does not mean you should. Listen to your family members on this one. If they complain about you always working while at home, they may be right. Give your work and yourself a break after business hours.

8.5) You may need a permanent change!

Working from a home office only works for some people. I know quite a few people who thought they could do it, but failed. That is ok. But, try to be rational when you evaluate your production at home. You should be able to get the same amount of work done at home as in your corporate environment. If not, make a change – before your boss does it for you!

If you would like to learn more about me, please visit my website at www.brianshannon.net.