

Tips for Running a Business From Home

- Present a professional image to customers - therefore always answer your phone in a professional manner. If your home and business share the same line answer every call as if it is a business call. Something like: "Hello, Graphic Solutions, John Smith speaking" should do the trick. Use something similar on your answering machine message.
- When you are working at home wear what you like. But dress appropriately when dealing with customers. If there's a chance you may receive unexpected visits from clients you should dress this way all of the time. You may find dressing up gets you into the mindset of going to work.
- If customers visit your workspace make sure it looks professional. The further away from your living space the better. If possible create a separate room, separate entrance, or a separate part of the house.
- Think about personal security, particularly if people you don't know visit you at home and your neighbourhood is reasonably vacant during the day. The police have safety tips that may help.
- Check with your local council to see if there are any zoning or other requirements that may affect your home business, such as a requirement to provide parking or requirements regarding signs.
- It is very important that the people around you (family, friends, and neighbours) know that when you are at home and working you shouldn't be disturbed. To reinforce this message try to create a separate workspace with a door that can be shut and work consistent hours. Deal with interruptions sensitively but firmly. Tell people you are working and will get back to them after hours.
- The informal setting of your business may also lead to family, friends or neighbours asking for discounted or free services. You may be prepared to do this, or barter for something they can offer in return. But remember, this is your living and if you keep giving things away you will quickly go out of business.
- Take steps to avoid feeling lonely and isolated. Try to get out of the house at least once a day: run an errand, visit a colleague, join an industry organisation or take classes to improve your business skills.
- When running a business from home it can be tempting to watch television, do household chores or chat to family, friends or neighbours. To help you stay focused, locate your work area away from potential distractions like the television and the front door. Get yourself into a routine, with a standard start and finishing time.
- Do the most important tasks when your mind is at its clearest. Monitor your performance and take breaks when you need them - very few people can work at optimal level for more than a couple of hours at a time.
- At the beginning of the day, set yourself a list of things to achieve. Make it realistic and don't beat yourself up if you don't get them all done.

