

22 Insider Tips to Working from Home Successfully

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I got up at 9.30am, enjoyed my slow bath and long breakfast, read the morning paper (not just the headlines) and finally entered my "office" at 11.00am. No stares, no sarcastic remarks, and no reprimands. I felt so focused and energized, as if the morning breeze itself had lifted my spirits and breathed young, new life into my soul.

Everything I ate felt like heaven. Everything picture in the newspaper brimmed with bright colors. Everything I read was absorbed into my mind like water being absorbed by a sponge. I felt everything, heard everything, tasted everything, and for once in a long time my mind was as clear as the morning sky. Nothing seemed impossible.

For the first time, I finally felt how it was like to be the master of your own destiny; to be the captain of your own ship. I felt what it was like to be a home based entrepreneur working for what my heart wanted to pursue, not for unrealistic figures in a budget I didn't care for. It was an immensely overwhelming emotion, so powerful I felt both like smiling and crying at the same time.

Then my eyes caught something. I read in the papers about the newly completed train project that stretches over 700miles from Qinghai (China) to Lhasa (Tibet), dubbed one of the most amazing engineering feats of the new millennium. I searched the Internet for some pictures

and was amazed by what I saw. I then marked three weeks off the 2006 calendar. I knew I had to go there. This time, unlike the past, I didn't need to ask anyone's permission. No leave forms to fill up, no lame excuses to keep you at work, and no cancellations.

Although "working at home in your underwear" is a much abused cliché, as a home based business entrepreneur, you'll begin to realize how fulfilling and motivating it can be to be your own boss, set your own goals, and work in line with your passion or what you really want to do in life. However, if you're not careful, you'll end up doing nothing and will soon be reluctantly seeking another J.O.B when your home based business dream turns into a nightmare.

Here are some tips to avoid "home business disaster," work at home productively, and achieve your goals in record time:

→ Your Home Office

As the nucleus of your home based business, setting up and organizing your home office can be the key to your success:

1. Learn to separate work from play

Although working at home is fun, you must learn to mentally separate your work from your personal life. Otherwise you'll get it mixed up and both will suffer. Do not put too many personal things in your working space and vice versa.

2. Separate the "home" from the "office"

Yes, you have a home office or a SOHO (Small Office Home Office) as it's popularly called. But you need to physically separate the two. For this reason, it is never a good idea to put your office in your bedroom or

share it with any other room. If you have a small living space and can't afford a separate room, do what I do. Just determine which part of your hall or living area to convert to your home office, and mentally draw a "line" separating it from the rest of the room. You can also put full or partial partitions if you want.

3. Separate entrance is best

If you can afford it, create a separate door or entrance into your home office. This is especially useful if you expect a lot of clients at home.

4. Create wireless networking

Cables are messy and troublesome. If you have more than one PC just use wireless routers and create a wireless environment in your home.

5. Be fully equipped for business

Technology has made things cheap, so make full use of it. I personally use the [TelExtreme VoIP](#) service that gives me unlimited calls to local, domestic and international fixed and mobile phones for a flat rate. I use [Skype](#) when I travel with my notebook and use it to automate all incoming phone calls, record messages and send them to my email (you can learn more on how to do this with my [e-book on Internet Telephony](#)). You could also get a 3-in-1 fax, copier and scanner for under RM800! You can't afford to have an ill-equipped home office if you're serious about making the type of income you dreamt about.

→ Business management and productivity

When you are a "one-man-show" small business dreaming of doing multi-million dollar big business, you'll definitely need these tips:

6. Set your working hours

The number one mistake people make is thinking they can work whenever they feel like it. This can backfire, so make sure you set regular working hours such as 10.00am to 5.00pm and stick to it as much as you can. Of course since YOU are the boss now, you can set your time as you like, and you can always adjust a little here and there.

7. Have an efficient follow-up system

Use email auto-responders, voice message recorders and even toll-free numbers to manage inquiries and follow-ups. This would free up tons of your time and also help you to focus on planning your next strategic business moves instead of being a phone operator.

8. Don't get distracted

If you use email notification software (like Gmail Notifier) or instant message services like Yahoo Messenger or MSN Messenger, turn all these off during work hours. Don't be checking your email throughout the day, as it DOES NOT help you be focused. Instead, dedicate a few hours in the morning or evening to answer emails. If you find that the bulk of your daily time is spent looking at emails, then you're having the wrong strategy and focusing on the wrong priorities.

➔ Finance and Profitability

When you stop getting a paycheck at the end of the month, it can be both the most exciting and most terrifying thing at the same time. Here are some tips to avoid financial black holes:

9. Be debt free first

If you want to start your own home based business, but you're already straddled with huge amounts of credit card debts and loan repayments,

make sure you clear all or a significant part of it first. It's too risky carrying around all that debt on your shoulders when you start a business, where there is no safety net and fixed income to protect you.

10. Correct any financial “bad habits”

If you run a credit card debt by spending lavishly, you need to correct this first before going full time in your own home based business. It really doesn't matter how much money you can make by working at home. All that matters is how much money you keep at the end of the day.

11. Don't be afraid to explore new sources of income

There are more ways to make money out there than you can possibly imagine. Don't dismiss any opportunity without thoroughly researching it, or you could be missing out on the opportunity to retire richer, earlier! I once ignored trying out [paid autosurf](#) programs simple because I was too lazy to study it. Two years down the road I realized that I passed up the opportunity to add an additional RM2,000 monthly to my income. Don't do the same mistake!

12. Plan and monitor your cash flow

If you don't want to get up one day to find your wallet and bank account completely empty, plan your cash flow. Make a list of payments you will be receiving and the expenses you need to make. As an employee, the company plans WHEN and WHERE you get your money, but as an entrepreneur, *you* need to learn to master cash flow. Don't confuse “cash flow” with profits, since you can go broke even if your business is profitable but you don't see any real money in your bank account.

13. Aim for profitability before expansion

Make sure your business is profitable before you actually decide to go full time. If you need to spend more on your business than what you make, you are in a dangerous zone. If your home business is not profitable yet, you should have a back up plan to support your expenses, and you could consider part-time jobs to pay the bills.

14. Focus on residual income

If you make RM3,000 a month but need to work for 6 hours a day, it would be better if you hired someone to do the bulk of the job and only get RM500 for yourself. Even though it's less, this now becomes part of your residual income, i.e. income that you get without working. You now have the time to explore other sources of income instead of being tied-up to daily routines. Think like a business owner, not like an employee.

→ *Swatting the Loneliness Bug*

When all your friends are busy slugging at their 9-5 jobs and you're at home with lots of time on your hands, the truth is it can get pretty lonely. Here are some tips to overcome your post-employment loneliness:

15. Don't limit yourself to any location

If you ONLY work at home, then your situation is not much better than it used to be when you struggled for your former company. If you have a laptop or notebook, then you're already as 'mobile' as it gets, so explore your options! Work in the library, at Starbucks, in the park, on the beach, by the swimming pool, or anywhere else where it's quiet and relaxing enough. After all, what's the point of having your own home-based business if you don't enjoy the perks?

16. Invite friends over for lunch

Even if you can't or don't cook, invite friends over for lunch. At least you'll have some company and you'll get to see the look of envy on their faces when lunch break's over for them ☺

17. Host parties and networking sessions

Now that you're your own boss, you actually have the time and freedom to plan stuff like this. A simple barbeque dinner can help you re-establish bonds with your old friends and create tons of useful referrals.

18. Join network marketing

Even if your home-based business is not centered on network marketing, do join one with a reputable company. This will put you in a situation where you meet tons of new people every day and some of them will eventually become your new business partners or even newfound friends.

➔ Marketing and Promotion

Your home business is NOT about YOU. It's about everyone else around you, how you connect to others and let them see the value that your business can provide:

19. What's your Instant Impact Message?

Most small or home business owners can't describe their business in one sentence. Even when they do, it speaks nothing of the uniqueness of their business. *"I do internet marketing"* is a statement that does nothing to promote your business to others. Instead, if you say *"I help small businesses with low budgets find unlimited clients over the Internet using affordable and simple solutions"* then you now have a 'value statement' that will stick in the minds of others even when they sleep. Having your own Instant Impact Message is the toughest, and

most important thing you can do to successfully market your business. Don't describe what you do – describe the value that others can get from YOU.

20. Don't forget the power business cards

If you used to hand out business cards to clients in your former company, why stop now? Business cards are a cheap and good way to advertise and promote. But instead of putting useless jargon and boring titles, put in your Instant Impact Message.

21. Offer free coaching

No matter what type of business you do, you can always offer free coaching to your prospective clients. Just do a simple class where you can teach them how to speak better, listen better etc. etc. Free coaching can help you cement your position as an expert in your field. When people like what they get from you for free, they are more likely to become paying customers and self-driven marketing machines for your business. Remember that the best way to master your skills is to teach them to others. As Jim Rohn says, "Service to many leads to greatness"...

22. Maximize your local contacts

So over the years you developed a good relationship with the owner of the restaurant right opposite where you live. Now that you have your own business, you have to maximize ALL the contacts you collected over the years. The people you've met in your previous job or social functions can give you extra marketing leverage. So talk to the restaurant guy. See if you can work out a mutually beneficial business relationship. Everyone around you, if you know how to do it, can help you grow your business.

About the Author



Gobala Krishnan is an author and home business entrepreneur. His company, Liberty Straits (<http://www.LibertyStraits.com>) helps underachieving and frustrated employees discover their skills and passion and turn it into a profitable Internet-based home business.

If you're dying to learn how he managed to quit his "small-pay-big-stress" corporate job to start his own home based business at the age of 25, go to www.LibertyStraits.com where you can get insights into the best business opportunities and sign-up for private free-coaching that will help you get the income, respect, freedom and satisfaction that you really deserve.

He is also a freelance writer for the [IAHBE](#), a travel and nature fanatic and a true blue "rock star guitarist" at heart with his band.



[The World's Most Ambitious Railway Project](#)

Next stop for me: Qinghai train station, 2006. I'll post pictures after I have been to Tibet, the roof of the world.

Or maybe, you'll come with me?

Sincerely,
-gk-