

Four Important Tips for Working Effectively at Home

By Alvin Apple

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Alvin Apple
alvin@drnunley.com

Alvin Apple <http://alvinapple.com>

You've started your own home business and it's a beautiful thing. You've finally achieved your dream and gotten out of the rat-race. You've emerged triumphant from the commuters nightmare; you set your own hours, set your own dress-code and call your own shots. The world is your oyster and your raring to go, just be careful you don't fall into the classic "non-productive" work-at-home trap.

One of the most common problems behind the failure of a home business is lack of productivity. People get out on their own, and find that they just don't get things done. In the excitement of getting away from the frustrating rigors of the corporate world, people sometimes forget to bring a little of that corporate structure and discipline home with them.

When you've got no one to answer to, procrastination and poor time management can creep into your routine, and they're killers. Now I'm not suggesting you go running back to your cubicle in that generic high-rise downtown, merely that you take some of the productive elements of a 9-5 job and incorporate them into your home business. Here are some basic pointers:

First: Set a schedule. This is crucial to success. Saying "I'll get to work sometime this afternoon," just doesn't work. Something always comes up. Your work time has to be a top priority, so set a schedule and stick to it. Maybe this is 7-3 when the kids are at school, or maybe this is late at night when the kids are in bed, or a combination of both. Regardless of the time you choose, make sure you honor it.

Second: Police your productivity: Now that you're your own boss there's nobody looking over your shoulder. This is a great feeling, but it can also lessen your productivity. Once you sit down at your work desk, make sure you're being as productive as possible. No computer games, no web surfing, no personal phone calls. Now, don't chain yourself to your desk, that would defeat

the purpose of working at home, just be as productive as possible. You can always schedule breaks and phone time, after all you're calling the shots.

Third: Dress the part. This may seem silly, but it's really important. If you're dressed for business, you're more likely to keep your mind on business. Be comfortable, but look sharp. You don't have to wear a business suit, since you're at home you can go a little more casual, just don't sit around in your pajamas all day. You'll be surprised how lethargic that can make you.

Fourth: Create an effective work space. The basics of daily life are more disruptive than you realize. If you're stopping every few minutes to deal with kids, dog, and spouse, if there's a television on in the room or if you're right by the family phone, you're not going to get a lot done. Set aside a quiet, out-of-the-way office space in your house and make it off limits during your work hours. This may be a spare room, or just the corner of your bedroom. Whichever you choose, just make sure there's a door between you and the world.

Once you have your space, decorate it and keep it neat. Set up your space like a real office. Put up a couple of pictures, hang up your diploma, get a plant, whatever you think will motivate you. Then keep your papers organized and your trash bin emptied. A nice looking, organized space will really contribute to your productivity.

Take your home business seriously. If you follow these tips, you'll find yourself getting a lot more work done, and that only means more profit. There's money to be made out there if you know how to do it.

Alvin Apple helps everyday people start businesses they will enjoy. Then he teaches them how to succeed. Read all his helpful strategies, including his latest article, "Don't Let Clunky Web Site Content Sabotage Your Home Business," at <http://AlvinApple.com> Reach Alvin at 801-328-9006 or alvin@drnunley.com.

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