

Home Business

By Bob Osgoodby

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So you want to start a home based business. Just think, you can work in your slippers when you want to - what could be better? No commute, not having to play office politics, no income - Whoops how did that sneak in?

Let's have a reality check about your home business. Can you work in your slippers? Sure, no problem. If you aren't going to be meeting face to face with your clients, it makes little difference how you're dressed.

Can you work when you want to? That really depends on a lot of things. If you are a freelance writer with little, if any contact, with the public, yes you can. However, if you are selling a product or service, and the public will be contacting you, that may not work. The normal office is open during the working day, but wait a minute. Typical office hours are 9-5 and if you call their number, you expect an answer. If you don't get an answer, you will try another source. But with the Internet, what are typical office hours? If you live in Florida and are on eastern time, how about all your prospects on the West Coast? When you're wrapping it up for the day, they're just getting back from lunch.

So do you increase your office hours to cover all time zones. If you're on the west coast, open earlier in the morning - if you're on the east coast close later at night. Right - wrong. That will be self defeating, as far as running your own home based business. Before you worked 8 hours a day and since you decided to get out of the "rat race", you now have to work eleven?

The first thing you should do is to post the hours when people can talk with you on your web site. But it is amazing how little attention some people pay to this. Calls will be received at all hours of the day and night. Now, remember that anyone who does call, is a more serious prospect than one who simply responds to an email.

Should you have a toll free number? While many will argue that this is a more professional approach, it will increase the number of calls from people who are referred to as "tire kickers". If they have to spend "their dime" for the call, they will be less inclined to call unless they are serious.

But this doesn't answer the question - how long should you be available to take calls, and what should you do with people who call outside your posted hours? Recognizing that there is a three hour difference for many people, you should try to be available during that period that overlaps the different time zones. If you live on the east coast, 11:00 AM to 7:00 PM will provide decent coverage. Voice mail or an answering machine should be available for those hours you are not

actually taking calls.

While voice mail or an answering machine will provide coverage, you must respond to inquiries received on a timely basis. While you have a better chance of closing the sale if you are available when they do call, this is the next best alternative.

Another thing that you should do, is to try to capture their telephone number, the best time to return the call and their email address if they do call outside your normal working hours. This works especially well if you follow up with an email sending them a carefully crafted message. In that message thank them for their inquiry, and if they respond, be sure to return their call. If they don't respond to your email, you should still follow up, however, the odds of making a sale have decreased dramatically.

No matter what you do, you will not close a sale with everyone who calls. If you present a "business like" image, the odds that you will be successful, will increase dramatically, and you will hopefully realize that dream of no commute, not having to play office politics, and hopefully there will be some income.

Bob publishes the free weekly "Your Business" Newsletter Visit his Web Site at <http://adv-marketing.com> to subscribe. As a bonus, get 40,000 FREE E-Books from Larry Dotson, when you visit <http://www.ldpublishing.com>

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