

Parenting and Running a Home-Based Business

By Chuck And Sue DeFiore

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A recent Ann Landers column "Parenthood is not a job for the weak at heart" caught my interest.

Job Description for a Parent

Position: Parent

Job Description: Long-term player needed for challenging, permanent work in chaotic environment. Candidates must possess excellent communication and organizational skills and be willing to work evenings and weekends and frequent 24 hour shifts. There is some overnight travel required, including trips to primitive camping sites on rainy weekends and endless sports tournaments in faraway cities. Travel expenses not reimbursed.

Responsibilities: Must keep this job for the rest of your life. Must be willing to be hated, at least temporarily. Must be willing to bite tongue repeatedly. Must possess the physical stamina of a pack mule. Must be willing to tackle stimulating technical challenges such as small gadget repair, sluggish toilets and stuck zippers. Must handle assembly and product safety testing, as well as floor maintenance and janitorial work. Must screen phone calls, maintain calendars and coordinate production of multiple homework projects. Must have ability to plan and organize social gatherings for clients of all ages and levels of mentality. Must be willing to be indispensable one minute and an embarrassment the next. Must assume final, complete accountability for the quality of end project.

Advancement and Promotion: There is no possibility of either. Your job is to remain in the same position for years, without complaining, constantly retraining and updating your skills so that those in your charge can ultimately surpass you.

Previous Experience: None required, but on-the-job training is offered on a continually exhausting basis.

Wages: None. In fact, you must pay those in charge, offering frequent raises and bonuses. A balloon payment is due when they turn 18 and attend college. When you die, you give them whatever income you have left.

Benefits: There is no health or dental insurance, no pension, no tuition reimbursement, no paid holidays and no stock options. However, the job offers limitless opportunities for personal growth and free hugs for life.

This article is of special interest to those of us who work out of the home. Seeing this Ann Landers column made me think about why so many of us wanted to work out of our homes. One of the big reasons being to spend more time with our families. Balancing a family life and a home-based business can be a delicate one, especially when you look at all of the duties we have as a parent. Truthfully, it is amazing we get anything done at all.

If both partners or spouses are running the business there are some very different and other important factors to consider. Since we have already addressed and written articles on these issues, I will direct you to our website to the articles, Business / Marriage Partners: Will the Marriage Survive (Parts I & II)

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There are some good rules however, to help you balance family and business.

Rule #1 - This is one of the most important rules. Yes, this is your home, but it is also my office. What that means is the things you use in your business (like computers, files, fax machine, business phone, supplies, etc.) are off limits to them.

Rule #2 - Set office hours. This lets your family members and friends know when it's okay to disturb you; when your day is done. This will avoid them taking you away from your work.

Rule #3 - No one but you answers your business line, and if your office is in part of the house, there is to be quiet when you are on the phone. I know sometime pandemonium breaks loose. Well on those occasions it does, don't answer the phone, let it go into voice mail and call back as soon as you can get away or get the situation under control. Almost all phones today have a mute button, use it, especially with young children that cry and scream.

Rule #4 - Establish rituals. Just like when you worked an outside job, you if dropped them off at the daycare, or their bus stop or school, even if you don't leave the house, when you are ready to go into your office, tell them good-bye. When you are done for the day, say "I'm home", or if you take a break say "I'm back for a bit", but be sure to tell them when you leave again, so they know you can't be interrupted.

Rule #5 - Follow the other rules. Be sure that the above rules are followed. This is the most important rule. Rules not only help you, they help your kids, family and friends draw the line between your work and your home day.

Some other tips are:

1. Keep a stash of kid stuff in your office. Get a variety of things like paper, stickers, crayons and games, in case your children are in your office and you need to take a call.
2. Get a cordless phone as an extension to your business line. When you enter the "home" part of your house, take the phone with you. If it rings, answer it and walk back to your "work space". Let your children, family and friends know that when this happens, they should try to be quiet until you are out of earshot or ask the person to hold, and press your hold or mute button until you are back in your "work area" or quiet space.
3. Understand it may not be easy, but if you train your children, family and friends to respect your time, space and need for concentration, both your work and family life will be easier.

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