

Reminders For Running A Better Business

By Chuck And Sue DeFiore

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The following tips are from an article we contributed to Compute magazine. These are ideas that we all should know, but many times forget. It constantly amazes us how quickly a basic tenet of business can be shoved by the wayside in the heat of daily transactions.

If we all try to keep these simple principles in mind, they may keep us on the straight and narrow in our pursuit of home office bliss.

1. Buy an answering machine. This will allow you to give your attention to a client and not the telephone. Be sure your message is done in a professional manner and includes business name, telephone number and hours of operation.
2. Be sure to have a separate telephone line for business. This will avoid your family using the same line and busy signals to prospects and clients. Keep your personal calls separate and insure your business line is always answered in a professional manner.
3. Read, read and read some more. You will constantly be learning about your business. Reading will allow for additional knowledge, change and growth.
4. Buy a fax machine. This will allow you to give your clients prompt responses and in many cases save on postage and telephone costs. It will also avoid having to leave your office to go and fax something at \$1.25 or more per page.
5. Have an identity package professionally done. Your logo, letterhead, business card, envelope and brochure will be the first impression a prospect or client has of you. To insure the impression is a good one, have your business package done by a professional designer. The cost is worth it.
6. If possible set up your office in a separate room of your home. This will allow you to close the door at the end of the business day and allow better separation of your personal and business life.
7. To project a professional appearance be sure your home is always neat and clean-nothing lying about. In addition be sure your yard is well kept. Remember, first impressions count.
8. Be sure your business name is descriptive of what you do. Business names that don't relate to your services can hurt a business. Avoid using just initials, that's fine when you get to be the size of AT&T, but remember, in the beginning no one knows you.

9. Make up a business plan. This will help you research, define and outline your market. It also avoids starting a business in a field that may be overcrowded.

10. If possible, be sure to have at least six months worth of living expenses in reserve. This will allow you to concentrate on getting your business up and running without worrying about paying the bills.

11. If possible, buy a copy machine. This avoids having to go out every time you need to make a copy. Also, it allows you to give a client a copy on the spot. This can go a long way towards enhancing your image as a real business.

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