

The Trap

By Bob Osgoodby

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Not a day goes by that I don't hear about someone lamenting about their decision to leave corporate America and work at home. Maybe they were laid off, opted for early retirement, or just decided that commuting four hours on the train, coupled with an eight hour workday was simply too much. Possibly, they will keep their job and work part-time at home to earn extra income. Who knows what the reasons are, but that is not important.

With "visions of sugarplums" dancing in their head, they decided to start their own home business. They believed the ads about working in their pajamas when the spirit moved them, and after a month or so woke up to reality. They weren't making a dime.

Where did they go wrong? Well, when they worked for someone else, they were expected to be at work at a certain time every day. Depending on the business, there was a certain dress code, and they had goals to meet. Granted, these goals were usually determined by someone else, but they were the ones who had to meet them.

It is easy to work for someone else, as they are the ones calling the shots. They actually lived under an umbrella of discipline. Granted it was someone else's umbrella, and maybe they didn't realize this. Possibly they did, and that was the reason they decided to work on their own.

One of the most common problems behind the failure of a home business, is the lack of discipline. Some think they can work when (and if) they want to, and their mailbox will "overfloweth" with twenty dollar bills. Well, I got news for you!

Running your own business, whether it is a brick and mortar establishment, or a home business, requires work. It usually requires more effort than if you worked for someone else. You will also have to do some things you don't enjoy. But, if you are the chief (or only) "honcho", you had better be able to handle all facets of your business.

So, how do you go about working at home? First and foremost, you have to have a regular schedule and adhere to it. This is especially true if you expect people to contact you by phone. If people try to call you, and don't get an answer, they quickly move on. You have to be available during normal business hours. If you are in an online business, this is usually from 9:00 AM to 8:00 PM. Yes there are three time zones in the USA. If you live on the east coast like I do, when you are getting ready to pack it in for the day, folks on the west coast may just be returning from lunch.

If you are not tied to a telephone, it is still important to maintain regular hours. More importantly,

you should have daily goals. If you meet those goals, the rest of the day is yours. But many people always think there is tomorrow.

For far too many, tomorrow never comes, and things that should have been done aren't. Maybe when the kids are at school will work for you, or possibly late at night. You might even have to pass up on your favorite "soap". Don't deal with hours - you're not being paid by the hour - deal with goal oriented results.

Working in your pajamas sounds great, and many of the offers you may hear state that you can. If I get an idea in the wee hours, I may hop on the computer dressed like that, but for normal business hours that is simply a myth. Who wants to spend their life like that?

You must have an effective work space, which is free of distractions. You should have quiet office space in your house, which is out-of-the-way, and off limits during your work hours. Treat this like an office. Keep it neat. While I am not the neatest person in the world, I do know where everything is. If I get a call from a client, I'm not fumbling about looking for the information I need. A filing cabinet next to your desk goes a long way.

When you get an email, take appropriate action the same day, then file it in a place where you can find it. Delete all emails in you "in-basket" older than 30 days. If they're older than 30 days, they're not worth anything anyway.

If you don't fall into the "trap", which many folks do, you just might make it in your own home business.

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