

Like most people, when you think about what it would be like to work from home, you probably think of the obvious benefits such as working your own hours, not having to face a stressful, tedious commute every day, actually seeing what your garden looks like in daylight hours, not having to answer to a boss, being home when your children are, working in a comfortable environment and so on. These are, of course, some of only many wonderful benefits of working from home.

Before long, though, you may begin to think back to your previous life and realize you actually miss those umpteen visitors who were constantly interrupting you when you were trying to work, the walk in the park at lunchtime with your best work-friend, drinks on Friday night after work, and being able to run an idea past a colleague for instant, valuable feedback.

Now, everything is just, well, quiet. And there's no-one down the hall to go visit who's over age four. You find yourself checking your email constantly, wanting to connect to someone. You find yourself wishing the phone would ring. You! The person who, when you worked in a job, cursed constant telephone interruptions and thought voice- and e-mail was the greatest invention since sliced bread. Welcome to another reality of home-based business ... home alone.

Here are some ways to avoid the isolation trap when running a business out of your home:

Establish a Structure

Nothing is surer to reinforce feelings of isolation as time that stretches as far as the eye can see like a straight, one lane highway through a flat, barren landscape. Don't start each day without a plan of what you intend to do. You need to structure your time so that it is not some endlessly vast terrain you must traverse alone. So write a to-do list, preferably at the end of the day before, so that when your work day starts you get productive straight away, before the isolation blues have a chance to take hold.

Reach Out

Overcoming Isolation In Your Home Business - Business Startup Resources

Written by Elena Fawkner

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When writing your to-do list, make sure you include at least two things every day that require you to interact with another person. Networking is a vital skill, whether you work for someone else or for yourself. So make contacts with people who can add value to your business, as well as connecting you with the outside world.

Joining a professional group or club, attending seminars and trade shows relevant to your business are all great ways to meet new people who have similar interests and challenges. Participate in the activities organized by these groups and take a good supply of business cards with you.

Establish Joint Ventures

Another way to keep the isolation blues at bay is to joint venture with other home-based business owners. Team up with other businesses that offer complementary services to your business. Not only will you send additional business each other's way in the form of referrals, you are establishing professional relationships with your joint venture partners.

Organize Your Own Functions

Once you have joined various associations and formed joint venture partnerships, take the initiative and organize functions that bring you all together. These could be business-oriented networking sessions or purely social get-togethers such as a barbeque in the local park. Either way, you are forging a relationship with people in your new arena, just as you did when you were working in a corporate office. The only difference is that now you must take the initiative to forge these relationships. These are not people you are going to be seeing every day at the office.

Join a Gym

You are, of course, health conscious and physically active, right? Of course you are! So, why not kill two birds with one stone ... stay fit and meet new people. If you establish a routine that

allows you to be at the gym at the same time every day, you will run into many of the same people and get to know them.

Use the Internet

Making online friends is another way of staying connected with the outside world. Be very disciplined here though. It's way too easy to spend a lot of work time on social email exchanges and in chat rooms. Don't fritter away your time, but do seek out and maintain internet friendships.

Background Noise

Sometimes, it's only silence that reminds you you're alone. If you come from a corporate environment, your workday was punctuated by the constant background noise of telephones ringing, other people's conversations, hysterical laughter from the other end of the office and lunch trolley pages over the intercom system. If you find absolute quiet irksome, turn on the radio and have it playing in the background while you work. Talk stations are good because it's like having other people in the next room, but if you find yourself becoming so engrossed with the talk topics that you stop working and start listening, switch to a music station.

There is no avoiding the fact that making the transition from a corporate environment to a home-based business is just that ... a transition. Most people will have to grapple with the isolation monster in the early days of their work-from-home career. But, as you can see, there are many ways of keeping isolation and loneliness at bay just by reaching out and forming new associations. Remember, just because you work alone doesn't mean you have to go it alone.

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