

**SURVIVE**

the

Work from Home



Jungle

*e-Book by Candy Zulkosky*

**CHICKS  
AT  
HOME**

Business Success Tips

# Survive the Work from Home Jungle

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## Your Guide to Getting the Most out of Your Home Office.

By Candy Zulkosky



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# *Chapter 1*

A black high-heeled shoe with a yellow interior and a pair of glasses. The shoe is positioned diagonally, with the heel pointing towards the bottom left. The glasses are placed in front of the shoe, partially overlapping it. The background is a light, textured surface.

## *Are you a Card Carrying Member of the Slipper Brigade?*

**I have a confession to make. I have a real love/hate relationship with shoes. I adore sexy, stylish heels and sandals of all kinds and pink suede boots and even an occasional comfy walking shoe....**

**A**nd yet...one of the bonuses I like best about working from home is not having to wear any shoes at all. Working from home has enabled me to add an entirely new category of shoe to my collection—the non shoe, the slipper. Fuzzy slippers. Indoor-outdoor slippers. Crumple-able ballet slippers. Silly slippers. (It has to be said. Yes, the Two Chicks do have chicken feet slippers.)

Do you value having the freedom to not wear shoes as I do? Then you might already be a member of the Slipper Brigade. Or you might be primed and ready to join. Either way, you are who we want to talk to. You are working from home just like we are.



According to data published by Emergent Research, more than half of all small businesses in the U.S. are home-based. Even though your Aunt Betty dismisses your business as a hobby, we know the truth. Estimates place the number of home-based businesses at 6.6 million.

Those 6.6 million businesses are headed up by members of the Slipper Brigade who provide at least half of their household income from their businesses.

Just like Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz, millions of us are clicking together our ruby slippers to affirm that there really is no place like home.

While 6.6 million is a large number, the total number of businesses in the US is over 30 million. So why are fewer than 3% of businesses located in the home? One reason is that working from home is not for everybody. Not everyone is suited to the unique demands of maintaining a workplace in the home.

## The Myths about Working from Home

**A**nother reason is that there is a lot of misinformation about what it takes to work from home. Many who try fail because of unrealistic expectations. Many more don't try at all because of misinformation.

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Have you heard any of these *facts* offered up as truth about working from home? If you work from home, you:

- can make a fortune fast and easy
- will become a slacker
- are a scam artist or into multilevel marketing
- aren't really working.

And then there are the self-proclaimed experts on everything who tell you that you work from home, obviously, because you:

- cannot maintain a balance between personal and work life
- don't have any special training
- can work when the {insert word} is sleeping. {Baby, Dogs, Kids, Husband....}



And how about the envious ex-coworkers who say that you:

- will be able to take time off all the time.
- will have more time with family
- can run all of your household errands and do your housework and still have time to get your paying work done
- won't spend any money on child care

Then of course there are your own preconceptions that you:

- will treat your home office just like an onsite office.
- will dress up every day to start your day.
- will find that all of your friends and family will respect your designated work hours; they won't take advantage of the fact that you are at home.
- will make the same money as when you worked an onsite job.
- will need all the latest and greatest gadgets to work from home.

Are these statements true or false? Myth or fact? While some might argue for fact, the truth is that all of these statements are closer to myth than reality.

In this book we will demystify and expose the truth about all of these myths. And more. You will learn about the true advantages of working from home. We will be honest and open about the disadvantages of a home office as well.

# The Advantages of Working from Home

**W**orking from home has strong advantages and is simply a good thing. Here at [2ChicksatHome](http://2ChicksatHome), we are truly dedicated to the lifestyle and live it every day.

The benefits and advantages you receive for choosing to live the work from home life will be personal, if not unique. Everybody has their own story.

For Yolanda, it's mostly about control and making money. For Candy, it's mostly about freedom and flexibility.

But of course, there are many other reasons why we, along with millions of others, choose to work from home. Here are a few advantages that we will be exploring in detail in the pages of this book:

- **Personal Freedom.** You have control over when you work.
- **Lower Start up Costs.** No need to rent office space!
- **Reduce Stress.** Stress is inevitable. But most home workers find that both the type of stress and their stress levels are reduced significantly.
- **Be with Family.** Read number 1. You have control over when you work. This can also be a disadvantage, by the way.
- **Professional Satisfaction.** It is enormously satisfying doing what you love and being paid for it.
- **Tax Benefits** can be significant for a properly run home business.
- **No commute.** Do we need to elaborate?
- **In control of your Income.** This is another one of those plus and minus benefits. On the plus side, you decide what business to take on and when. You decide whether to grow beyond the home or remain there.

Anything there catch your eye? The items on that list you've just read are real. These are some of the universal benefits to working from home. Are your primary motivators on the list? If not, add your own reasons. Whatever benefits you identify and claim or your own are valid.

# The Pitfalls of Working from Home

**F**or all the truly great benefits to working at home, there are as many negatives as there are pluses. Being the eternal optimist and having worked this way for more years than I care to admit, I tend to gloss over the bad stuff. But we don't advise you to do the same.

Consider these potential pitfalls carefully and think about whether your home working experience might fall into any of these pits.

**Every Day is like the longest day of your life.**

When the journey between the office and home is transparent, it becomes a challenge to differentiate between the two.

**Potential** (make that almost certain) **conflict** between business and personal lives. Maintaining a balanced social and professional life for work at home chicks and roosters is a challenge, even if you live alone.

**Lack of social contact.** Read the last paragraph, and for a home working Mom, revise that to include lack of **adult** contact.

**Distraction**, distraction, distraction.

**SuperChick syndrome.** We know that chicks can do anything and everything. It is all too easy to expect yourself to be a one-chick bundle of work and home perfection.

**Self Discipline** is a necessary skill and not always easy to generate.

**Pressure.** Stress. The home worker must find safe and effective outlets to vent frustration and displeasure.

**Don't make it a tug of war.** It is really easy to let time management practices fall by the wayside. Not a good idea. Work time is work time. And it is up to you to make sure that everyone—kids, mate, friends, clients, co-workers—respect that.

**It's just a hobby.** Don't let anyone undervalue your work just because it's at home. A burned out chick (or rooster) is not a happy picture.



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**Your time is valuable.** Compensation is not optional. Avoid the “jobs” that expect you to work for free.

**Organize and keep records** or forget about getting it back from Uncle Sam. Keep your receipts. Keep a calendar. Invoice your clients.

**Don't lose yourself.** Becoming isolated and withdrawn is a real issue for home workers. Get out of the house. Do something for your soul and that inspires you to keep going.

**You wear all the hats.** Meaning that you run the risk of working too much or all the time. Being your own boss can mean that you are the only one around who can handle all the aspects of running your business.

**Jobs are hard to find.** Weeding through the many work-at-home scams may be a daunting task and you may find yourself falling into the trap of believing that there is no such thing as a real work from home job.

Have faith, chicks. There are bridges to help you slide right over every pitfall. We are here to show you which paths lead to bridges and which end in an open hole.

## The Real Story

**T**his book is written for people already working in a home office, who want to work from home, or are planning to soon be working from home. We've already discussed both the reality and the myth of a home office experience. In the remaining chapters we will address the specific challenges of working at home as well as provide tips to make it easier and more productive.

# *Chapter 2*



## *Manage the Hen House: Physical Preparedness*

**Your workspace is arguably the single fact of working at home that will most affect your productivity and performance. Privacy, few interruptions, comfortable temperature options, and control over the light levels are the main considerations when choosing your workspace....**

## Define Your Space

**A**bsolutely, you must have privacy. If that means setting up the ironing board like a desk in your bedroom closet, then that's what you do. Am I kidding? Only partially. If you have not yet started working from home, examine your options carefully before you make the leap. If you are already working from home, ask yourself if the current set up allows you to be your most productive.

Your situation is unique. At this moment I am writing this sitting on a couch with a keyboard on one of those beanbag lap desks. My



laptop computer is on a fold-up T.V. tray. This works for me. Is it ideal? No. I would rather have a desk and usually do. But this works. It is private because I live alone. It is the only room in this particular house that I can work in, since I require a lot of external light to be my most productive. And the only real physical distraction is the hypnotic effect the waves of the Atlantic Ocean have upon me.

Best scenario? A desk. A comfortable chair. A room with a door. An agreement from all within your household that when the door is closed, you are working and they must pretend you are not there. Respect for your privacy when working must be supported by the family or you will surely fail to prosper in your home office.

## Prepare Your Space

**Y**ou will need the basic office doodads. A phone. A Filing cabinet. Various office supplies.

You might go for one of those all in one printer/fax/scanner solutions for space, but regardless you need the functionality of all three devices. Or a Kinko's two doors down.

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***Do not overlook these details.*** Continual interruptions, even as minor as having to stop and find a roll of tape, can really impact your productivity.

Check your lighting. If you do not have adequate light, add a desk lamp or a floor lamp of some sort to your equipment list.

Desk drawers are useful but not absolutely needed. On the other hand, I consider at least a small book case to be irreplaceable. You should have the tools of your trade at hand and not shared by the rest of the household.

There are lots of creative solutions to making your office work. Don't assume it needs to be the status quo. You can use clear plastic boxes with colored tops to organize your projects, or get those plastic rolling drawers to store supplies so you can move it around to where you are working. Obviously the office supply stores have that stuff but be sure to check Target and Walmart because they have similar stuff at great prices. And then there's always the Container Store. You may not want to spend a ton of cash so you can always saunter the lanes at the Container Store to get ideas for working solutions.

Another great place to find stuff for small spaces; IKEA. Don't assume that having a separate room with the typical office stuff is necessary, you may find that you like to move around or go outside or sit on a balcony.

Decide what works for your productivity and work around that.

## Client Space:

**T**ruthfully, not all home businesses need a place to meet clients. Many, if not most, client meetings can take place at a quiet restaurant or coffee shop. When I was on the road selling printing (Ugh! Not my most favorite job), Coffee shops were my traveling office.

If you happen to live in a fairly metropolitan area, you might use an office-for-a-day service or ask a friend to lend you professional office space for a couple of hours.

If, on the other hand, you do intend to have clients come to your home office, here are a few do and don'ts.

- **Do** have a separate entrance or at the least an office that is RIGHT off the main entrance.
- **Do** have your meeting space reflect your professional image.
- **Do** make sure that your work space is clean and neat

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- **Do** make sure that any part of your home (inside or out) that the client will see reflects your professional image.
- **Don't** let in the kids, dogs, mother-in-law...you get the picture. Prepare the family for client visits so that they know how you expect them to behave.
- **Don't** answer the phone. Let it go to voicemail.
- **Don't** keep checking your e-mail or twitter on screen.

Bottom line, simply keep in mind what your business image is and make sure that the environment you invite your client into fits that image.

## Spread out Space

**N**o matter what, your home office will inevitably spill over into your home. Be prepared. Yolanda's life partner tends to fill every nook and cranny with car parts.

Set rules for yourself. If spending time with the family is important, then make sure that when you leave the "office", everything work-related stays there. Don't answer the business phone. Don't take the laptop to the living room to answer e-mail while you watch T.V. with the family.

If you have to use the kitchen or dining room table to organize a project, put it away at night.

Do follow your own rules. And be sure to also forgive yourself when an occasional project spills over into the living space. It will happen.



## *Chapter 3*

### *Chicks Keep it Together: Mental Preparedness*

**What? You say that you can't follow your own rules? It is just impossible to separate home and office? We believe that you can; but creating a physical distinction and maintaining it is only part of the solution. Your attitude and commitment are arguably even more important than having a door for the office....**

## No More Commute

**W**ow. That is exciting just reading it, let alone living it. When you work at home, you walk to work. And even better, it's usually only a few steps. It engenders an amazing sense of freedom and is also a fiendish psychological trap.

Find a way to mentally prepare yourself for the working day. Find a physical cue that says to your head—I am at work now. For some, it's closing the door to the office. For others, it comes with having the office on a different floor. Sometimes it is as simple as filling your favorite mug with your caffeine of choice and setting it on your desk. Find a cue that works for you.

Are you playing mind games with yourself? You bet you are. And don't you forget it.



## Choose to Control the Distractions

**D**o you love having CNN on in the background when you hang out around the house? Are you a closet TV Junkie? Flipping the channels and not even watching? Just background noise you say? For most, sound is a distraction that makes it difficult to concentrate. Conversational sound in particular is hard to tune out, but running the dishwasher, washing machine, and other home appliances in close proximity to your home office space can be equally diverting.

You might think that controlling distractions is more a physical thing, right? I mean, you can just turn off the TV. Ignore the vacuuming that needs to be done. Right. This may seem like a given, but think about it. Short of making it a physical

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decision by cancelling the cable, there will be distractions around the house that are simply not present in an office situation.

Choose to keep a professional attitude. Make a choice and stick to it. I enjoy listening to National Public Radio. But I have to limit it to the times of the day when music is playing. If I listen first thing in the morning when the news is on or when the features come on in the afternoon, I am pulled into the programming. So I switch it off and listen to silence or maybe one of those hundred extraneous music channels that my cable company so generously allows me to pay for, whether I want them or not.

When Yolanda is going to knuckle down and dig into a specific task or project, she puts on invigorating music. (And then tells me aalllll about it in an IM chat. I never realized it was possible to actually bounce around and dance in an instant message window, but she does it!)

This one aspect, finding a way to control the distractions and keep a tight focus, can make or break your experience as a home worker. It is critical that your mental approach to your daily work in your home office is to consider it a “real” job. Working from home requires discipline and that starts with commitment.

## Forgive and Forget

**T**here are going to be days when you break all of the rules you’ve set for yourself. And that is perfectly Okay. Hey, why are you working from home anyway? Playing hooky is not unheard of. It happens in every job. It’s just a whole lot more fun when you can do it from home.

Allow yourself some slack—then go back to work!

# *Chapter 4*



## *Bring the Corporate Coop Home:*

## *Be Professional*

**Ahhhh. Flexibility. Working on your own time at your own schedule. The stuff dreams are made of. Fortunately, there is a lot of truth in this dream. And the best part? You can break your own rules. Flexibility really is the queen of the at-home coop....**

### Set a Schedule

**H**owever. It is doubtful that we have to remind you of this, but you are running a business. As with any business, you need to establish working hours with designated break times. And you need to stick to those hours—routinely. You really will thank yourself in the end.

You see, no matter what, when you work from home your family and friends will all think that you don't work. And even those who believe that you have a job will be absolutely certain that you can just make it up later if they interrupt your day. And of course the worst offenders will be those closest to you.

**Warning:** spouse alert. This is the first person you must convince that your day at home is truly a day of work and not a lounge in front of the TV watching golf or soap operas.

Bottom line, if you respect your work time, if you stick to your guns and don't allow family and friends to interrupt, they are more likely to respect your work-day boundaries.



### Make it a Habit

**T**hink about your work life, not necessarily now but in general. Your history.

You have routines that you rarely change. Maybe you always listen to the same news report in the morning on your drive to work. Or it might be

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that you create a *TO DO* list at the end of every day and review it at the beginning of every day. Or maybe you brew a pot of your special coffee to savor all morning.

Everyone has routines that are based around your work habits and more precisely, provide a transition into your work day. Even as a young adult, those habits are likely ingrained and associated with the various activities of your day. It is important that you be sure to create or reinforce appropriate routines as you work in your home office.

In my first home office, I went out every work morning to the local donut shop. (Not for the donuts, honest! I went for their tea. I've only ever had better tea in England.) Because I was new to the work from home scene, I needed to go out, to feel like going to work was more than crossing the hall to the spare bedroom. The donut shop is no longer part of my routine, but a huge mug of steaming tea sitting next to my computer is.

Oh, and if possible, make sure that you separate your work habits from your leisure habits. Don't do the same thing on weekends. It is a small distinction, but huge psychologically. Unless of course you *want* to have no life.

The risk of working 24/7 is real and high for home workers. Find a way to separate, mentally, the work week from your weekend. (Even if you take your weekend on Tuesday and Wednesday.)

## Dress for Success

*"What", you ask? "Is working in your pajamas is a myth? There really is no slipper brigade?"*

**S**ettle down. You can work in your pajamas. The Slipper Brigade does exist. But you know, it's not a really good idea to lounge in your bathrobe. There are valid, compelling reasons to get dressed for work every morning. You should shower. Shave. Do your hair. Do your makeup.

Is it necessary to put on a three piece suite or killer heels? No. Of course not, you are working from home and can change your clothing if you have a meeting outside of the office later in the day. But prepare yourself to be presentable.

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Let me say that again. Prepare yourself to be presentable. No ratty t-shirts. No sweatpants. Presentable. What you would wear to the office on Casual Friday is the lowest you should go.

OK. That's the obligatory "what you should do" speech. What's the real story? You are going to work in your pajamas. You are going to be caught by the UPS man still in your ratty bathrobe at 2 pm. You are going to be embarrassed more than once by someone you weren't expecting to show up at your door.

Good intentions aside, there will be days when you won't shower. You will pull your hair up in a pony tail. You will put on yesterday's sweat pants. And it is all right for this to happen—occasionally.

Be aware of how easy it is to fall into this particular bad habit and strive to maintain a presentable appearance each day. Do not turn on the computer until after you have showered. No matter how much you want to reply to that e-mail that you thought about all night.

## Compartmentalize

**L**earning to separate work and home can be difficult. It can be done but it takes a bit of practice. Running several businesses, each with its own set of needs, requires time be given to each of them separately. Yolanda has become quite practiced but says it does take discipline. The more you do it the easier it gets.

In order to do your best, whether working or spending time with your kids, you have to learn to shut one thing off and focus on the other. There are simple tricks that help, like turning off the phone and computer when the day is over. When you are working shut the office door to clue others in that it's work time. Turn off the house phone, turn off the TV. These subtle brain cues let you separate one activity from another.

*"When I work on one business I turn off the phone for the other. I am lucky to have commandeered two rooms in the house so I can separate businesses in a real geographic way.*

*The hardest part is to close that door in your mind. It's hard to not to worry about whether you are missing an important call or a new customer, but it is necessary to stay focused."*

*—Yolanda*

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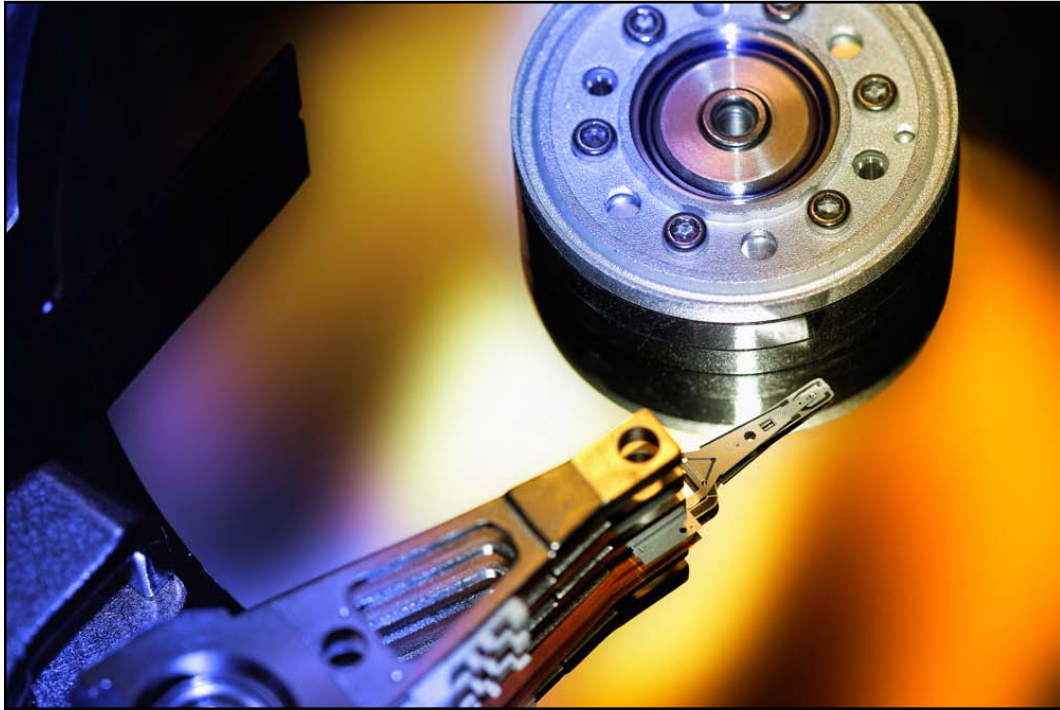
All the activities of running a business require your focused attention, whether it is talking with a client or doing billing activities. The act of separating is really a brain function and an attitude function. Cue your brain with acts of separation to achieve the attitude that the caller will still be there when you get back. Once you have that mind set, you will be comfortable in the knowledge that you can return calls later, answer emails later, and still be productive and profitable.

If you are pulled in five directions at once and never seem to be able to get even one task done right, give compartmentalization a try. You'll be happier, your customers will be happier, and your family will be happier if you separate your activities. And think of how great it will be to give each of them your most focused attention at the appropriate times!

*"Another great way to tackle things in a focused manner is to schedule specific times during the day. I usually check and answer email first. Then I do return phone calls. After that I don't do either until a few hours have passed. Then I check email and return calls.*

*I rarely answer the phone live, my customers know to leave a message and I will get to them and when I do return the call, they know they have my undivided attention for as long as they need it" —Yolanda*

# *Chapter 5*



## *Chicks Like Technology*

**Face it; you will want to cut costs when you start out. And that is the right track to take. But there is a huge difference between buying a used desk and office chair from Craigslist and sharing the household phone line with your teenager whose cell phone you've cut off because of over the limit charges and who is grounded for three weeks more....**

# Business Tools

One way or another, you have to have the tools of your trade. If you expect clients to call you on the phone, you need a dedicated phone line. So let's talk about phones and some of the other business tools that will keep you both productive and professional in your home office.

## Phone options

For all the technological advances that have come to the home office in the past decade, the telephone is one integral piece of equipment that hasn't evolved much. Aside from sexier designs and stronger wireless frequencies and caller ID, you won't find a huge difference between the cordless phones from the '80s and the one plugged into your landline right now. And yet, your choices are broader than you might think.

Do you need a land line? Is your cell phone enough? Or what about a VoIP?

## Cell Phones

If you are truly comfortable with your cell phone AND you know that the quality and signal strength is adequate AND you have a plan that will not discourage you from making necessary business calls, then by all means use a cell phone as your business phone. However you need a Bluetooth or some sort of headset. Handsfree phone use in the office may seem like a luxury, but it is not really. *Warning!* Once you go hands free, you will be hooked.

## VoiP

What about this VoIP thing? Voice over Internet Protocol is a good option if you are really concerned with the budget and want national and reasonably priced



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international calling. You can even get a phone number now. And it is unbelievably inexpensive compared to cell, cable, or landline services.

### Skype vs. Vonage

Check out Skype. They are still the best option. Vonage talks the talk but does not walk the walk. If you go with them, make sure you read up on the multimillion dollar lawsuit that they settled for fraudulent customer charges. (Personal experience here, they ripped me off for about \$300 that I still don't have back, but check them out yourself.)

### Headphones

There is one point about the VoIP solution that you should consider. Headphones (even wireless ones) attached to your computer are not convenient.

There is one phone that we know of (I have one and love it.) that will seamlessly marry your landline, cell phone, and Skype VoIP account via an intelligently designed handset/headset duo.

The handset lets you take calls coming in via your landline or VoIP service, and the Bluetooth headset wirelessly communicates with the handset as well as your Bluetooth-equipped cell phone.

The [Calisto Pro](#) is perfect for home-office workers, who value multitasking while on the phone (or while waiting for a call). And it's especially awesome if you make Skype calls, since you don't need to be at your PC to take an incoming call. It is not cheap. But neither are VoIP phones—and they only do one thing. This one does three. Check it out if it seems like the right solution for your home office.

### Voice Mail

You need this. No discussion. Do not use the household answering machine with the cutesy message from everyone in the home including the fake meow and bark and fishy gurgle. Most phone service contracts come with a voice mail option. Since you will be choosing one of your phones as a dedicated business number, that voice mail should also be business only.



There are many stand-alone voice mail services available for minimal cost, usually around \$10 a month for a basic account. The call Forwarding (sometimes also called Call Following) services are especially nice if you are juggling several phones. With the right voice mail options set up, a person calling you will have no idea that you are working from home.

## Your Computer

**W**e are not going to recommend which computer brand or model you should use. Suffice it to say, that's a decision that you almost certainly have already made. One cannot work from home these days without a computer and a high-speed internet connection. **(No dial up)**

We will talk about your screen, however. It should be as large as you can afford. If you are using a laptop, connect it to a computer screen. Laptop screens are great for on the go usage. But in your office, you need a larger screen. Hey, it is your eyes we are talking about here. You are going to be staring at that screen for a whole lot more hours in a day than you might like. So make sure that you've got the best you can afford.

## Watch out for Coyotes in the Coop

**O**K. You are wearing all the hats, now. You are the IT department, so it is your job to take extra pains to secure your home office network and computers from viruses, hackers and malware. Do your homework. Or bite the bullet and hire someone who knows how to set up your network and computer security.

## Don't keep all the eggs in one Nest

**J**ust like security, you are in charge of backing up your data. If you hired a specialist, let him advise you and do what he suggests. If you are wearing the IT hat, then check out the online backup and data storage options. Here is a

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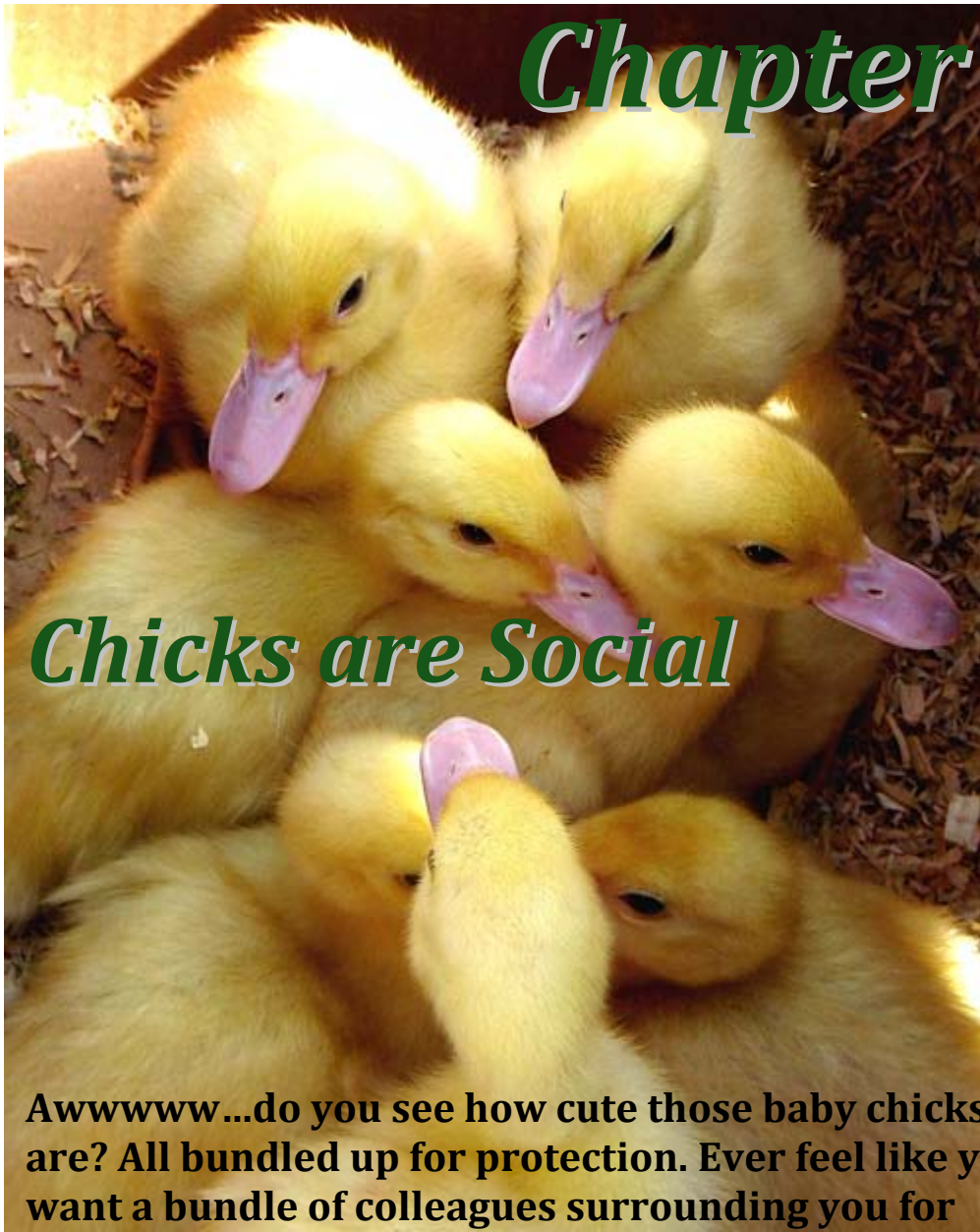
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review of [13 top rated services](#). Here is another review, it calls itself the [Ultimate review](#). We know both are independent reviews with no affiliate bias on the part of the reviewers. In addition to these links, you should research the available options fully before making your decision. This is competitive technology and changing fairly rapidly. Also, migrating your data from one service to another can be time consuming, so you will want to try to make the best choice for your needs.

One service we use that is not reviewed but we like a lot is called [Egnyte](#). What Egnyte offers that none of the others do as well (even though its pricing is not the lowest) is for \$15 a month you get both online file storage and online file transfer. The basic account allows up to 20 users to transfer files back and forth and to load files for storage in shared or private folders. It is worth a look and comes with a free month.

## Cloud Storage

**Y**ou should also look into services that offer online collaboration. [Backpack](#), [WorkZone](#), [GrooveSite](#), and [TeamSpace](#) are among the leaders, however there are many to choose from. Depending on the type of work you do, a service like this can offer both a secure back up of your data and an easy interface for sharing files remotely with clients, service providers, and coworkers.



## *Chapter 6*

### *Chicks are Social*

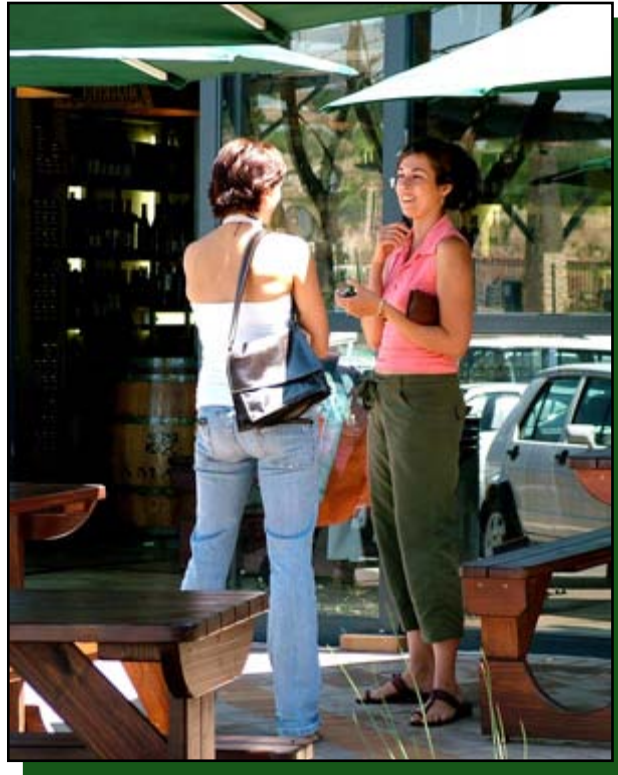
**Awwwww...do you see how cute those baby chicks are? All bundled up for protection. Ever feel like you want a bundle of colleagues surrounding you for support? Yes. Occasionally, no matter how much we like to think that we walk to our own unique drum beat, we want the kind of emotional nourishment only being with our own kind can bring....**

## Meet colleagues in person

**T**echnology is an amazing thing. It's what makes working from home full time possible. But online communication, despite easy and plentiful ways to *talk* via the Web, can only go so far. Face-to-face meetings with colleagues simply are necessary from time to time. In general, during personal meetings you will:

- experience deeper conversation levels,
- forge better connections which actually makes future online connects easier,
- experience a faster flow of ideas.

And there is a side benefit that most don't think about. It actually is good to regain touch with that person who used to dress every day to go to work. Workout clothes and jammies are comfy and all, but wearing them for days on end can do wonky things to your psyche. (Yeah, we told you earlier that you should dress presentably every day. You didn't really believe that's what you'll do, did you?)



## Co-work.

**D**id you assume that co-work means working with your actual colleagues? Not quite. This is a relatively new phenomenon that is largely only seen in densely populated, metropolitan areas. Co-working typically doesn't involve people you are working with directly. It really means you, grabbing a friend or two who are also working from home, and head to a coffee shop with Wi-Fi to work together for a few hours. On your own separate jobs, of course.

There are actually co-working spaces popping up for rent in some cities. I experienced this not long ago. Having just moved to North Carolina, I have been reaching out to meet people. I met a new friend at a local Panera. We joined several of her Co-workers and plugged in next to a fireplace. We worked and chatted and shared some ideas. It was great. Now, we have a regular co-work date scheduled every week. Everybody does not make it every week, but enough do to make it fun and there is no pressure to show if it's just not in the cards that week.

## Exercise

**Y**es, we know. You're working. However, it is important to get up from the computer and stretch. Oh, it is so tempting to throw in a load of laundry when taking a break at home. And sometimes that's a fine idea. But remember that mental game you have to play with yourself. Don't let around the house *errands* (you know, picking up the socks and shoes left by the couch, loading the dishwasher) turn into an hour of housework.

If you've got a spare hour, spend it getting some exercise to stay healthy and recharge your mind. Yolanda love to run, although sometimes I think that the dogs run her, but she usually runs with her two big lummoxes. I am a water sprite and think running should be reserved for escaping lions and tigers and bears oh my.

Whatever your ~~poison~~ pleasure, get out of your home office regularly to exercise. It will improve both your physical and mental health. Oh, and whatever you do, do not let the spouse convince you to put the exercise machine in your office.

# Chapter 7



*Cock-a-doodle-doo!*

**One of the pitfalls we mentioned earlier was the fact that you wear all the hats. This is especially true if you are running a business rather than an employee of someone who happens to work from home. And one hat that is vitally important to not leave hanging on the peg is that of marketing and promotion....**

# Tell the world

**T**ime to switch hats. Get out the Marketing Guru hat and place it firmly on your head. Okay, so you may not want to hold a full-scale, gala grand opening for a home business. But there is nothing wrong with a press release to announce your new business. A release to the business section of your local paper is a great way to make the business known to the community and lets friends and family know that this is serious, not just a hobby. Also remember to send press releases when you receive a new contract or achieve other important milestones.



If you are in a business that actively solicits new clients, then advertising is also important. Just be sure that you schedule any appointments with media sales reps. Sales reps of all kinds are notorious for just dropping by—and never at a convenient time.

# Reach out

**S**et aside some time each week to reconnect with former and current colleagues and friends on social networks. Send a few emails to catch up and stay connected for those long stretches when getting out of the home office and connecting in person are not an option. That is the kind of project that is relatively easy to work on during a co-work meet up at Panera or Starbucks or McDonalds.

## Social Media

**S**ocial Media has exploded in recent years across the internet. What started primarily as personal socialization has become a tool that you cannot overlook.

Effective use of social media has boosted careers and generated amazing entrepreneurial opportunities. Are you one of the many who are afraid to make the most of the opportunity social media optimization offers? No, I did not think so.

However, lack of knowledge and lack of time to gain that knowledge might be holding you back. If you are not interested in being a blogger or an affiliate marketer or an online guru or whatever buzz word is in vogue, then be comforted by knowing that you don't have to take that road.

Consider instead that Social Media is really about creating mutually beneficial relationships. When you promote via social marketing, even if the product being promoted is yourself, you are making connections, delivering content to a community in a context that is useful and even considered fun. This is what social media is all about. Making technology personal and making it about you and your goals.

Social Media is in its infant stages. Now is great time to learn the ropes and get involved. Your business will benefit greatly from learning to use Social Media to:

- connect with existing customers,
- make new contacts and connect with new people,
- turn strangers into customers.

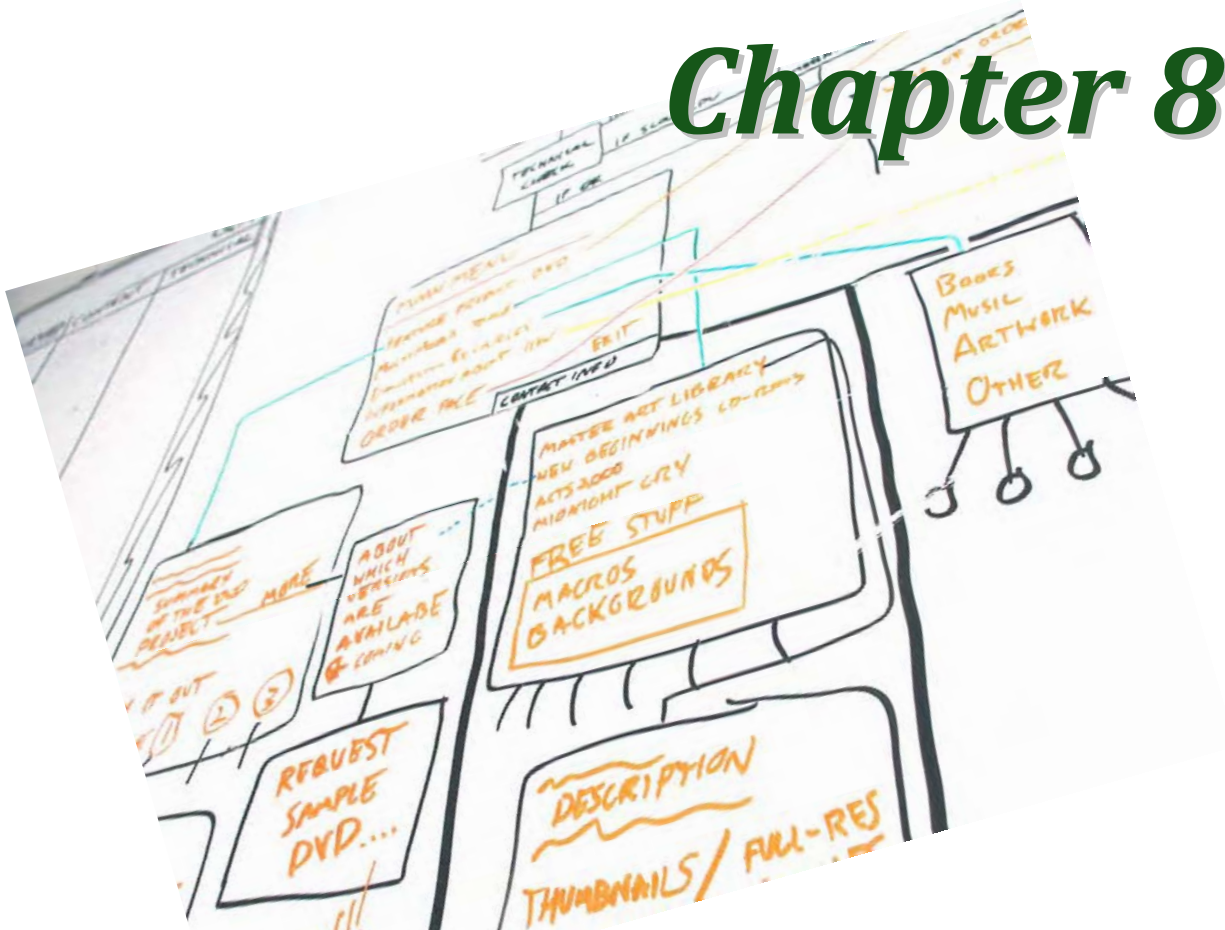


**your Social Media Sells** To learn more about the benefits of using Social Media for promoting and marketing your home business, visit [yourSocial Media Sells](#) and sign up for a free email course to get you started.



Thinking about a new career? Or make a change? Then visit [TutorialBytes](#) or click the logo above to learn more about the **Free e-mail course, Social Media and Career Change.**

# Chapter 8



## Chicks Think Ahead

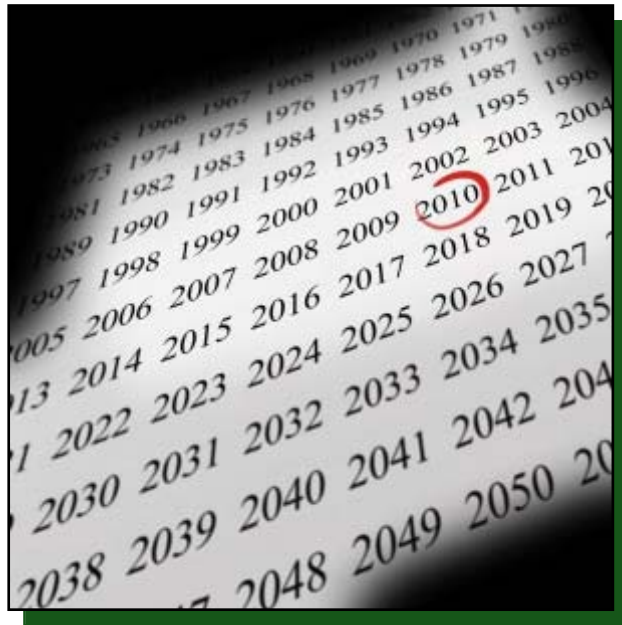
To a certain degree, we all live day to day the life that we are handed. But for smart chicks working from home, creating a plan and a strategy serves as an invaluable guide to growing a healthy business....

# Make a Plan

**A** business plan defines your business, identifies your goals, and serves as your business resume. It helps you make the right decisions. Your Business Plan can be your map to success.

Does it have to be formal or a huge undertaking? Nope. But you really do need to make a plan. And we strongly suggest that you make the process a family matter. Since you will need your family's support to be successful in working at home, it makes good sense to be sure that each member understands what you hope to achieve.

At the very least, you should set goals. The majority of home businesses that fail do so because of either the business owner's inability to adjust to working from home or because not enough planning and thought went into the decision and implementation.



# Define Your Business

**I**t may seem silly to ask yourself, "What business am I really in?" But ask yourself this question first, "Are you ready to fail because you never answered the first question?"

One man I know inherited his family business, a gas station and repair garage. The business had been on the edge for years, struggling to show even a meager profit. When he took over, he looked carefully at the business. It became clear that the money maker was tires. So he discontinued the repair work, reduced the gas to two pumps, and expanded the tire services to include fixing a flat on site. His profits improved dramatically.

# Ask for Help

**T**his book is not a *How To* manual for writing a business plan. The truth is that a business plan is often overlooked by home workers. And that can be a mistake. Making a plan, even a simple one, is a good use of your time if only for the clarity of mind it will provide as you move ahead in your business.

In addition to the discussion we provide in this chapter, there are plenty of resources that you can draw upon. Here are a couple of website resources for you to check out.

The Small Business Association

(<http://www.sba.gov/smallbusinessplanner/index.html> )

Microsoft Small Business Resources

(<http://www.microsoft.com/smallbusiness/resources/startups/business-plans-entities/how-to-write-a-business-plan.aspx#Howtowriteabusinessplan> )

The Entrepreneur (<http://www.entrepreneur.com/businessplan/> )

# Strategy

**L**ook, strategic planning is really important to big businesses. And it should play a part in your business plans, too. Think of it this way. With strategic planning, you will match the strengths of your particular business to the opportunities available.

Don't get hung up on this. It is really not as confusing or scary as it sounds. For a small business, strategic planning is more about research than anything else. In addition to understanding your business and the direction you expect it to go, you will need to research your market and your business arena, including competitors. A good strategy needs a base (research) and an action to follow (Business Plan and Marketing Plan)

You might start by defining a clear mission, goals, and objectives. If you are going to survive and prosper, you should take the time to identify the niches in which you are most likely to succeed, and to identify the resource demands that must be met.

# What does a Business Plan Look like?

**W**ithout going into too much detail, most business plans follow a basic pattern. Although there is no single formula for developing a business plan, we've summarized some of the common elements here:

## Cover sheet

## Statement of purpose

## Table of contents

### Part I. The Business

- Description of business
- Marketing
- Competition
- Operating procedures
- Personnel
- Business insurance

### II. Financial Data

- Loan applications
- Capital equipment and supply list
- Balance sheet
- Breakeven analysis
- Pro-forma income projections (profit & loss statements)
- Three-year summary
- Detail by month, first year
- Detail by quarters, second and third years
- Assumptions upon which projections were based
- Pro-forma cash flow

### III. Supporting Documents

## Survive the Work from Home Jungle

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- Tax returns of principals for last three years Personal financial statement (all banks have these forms)
- For franchised businesses, a copy of franchise contract and all supporting documents provided by the franchisor
- Copy of proposed lease or purchase agreement for building space
- Copy of licenses and other legal documents
- Copy of resumes of all principals
- Copies of letters of intent from suppliers, etc.

Obviously, your business may not fit exactly into this formula. So pick and choose the components that work for you.

One of the best ways to learn about writing a business plan is to study the plans of established businesses. You might want to check out this website ([http://www.bplans.com/sample\\_business\\_plans.cfm](http://www.bplans.com/sample_business_plans.cfm) [Affiliate Link]) for more information.

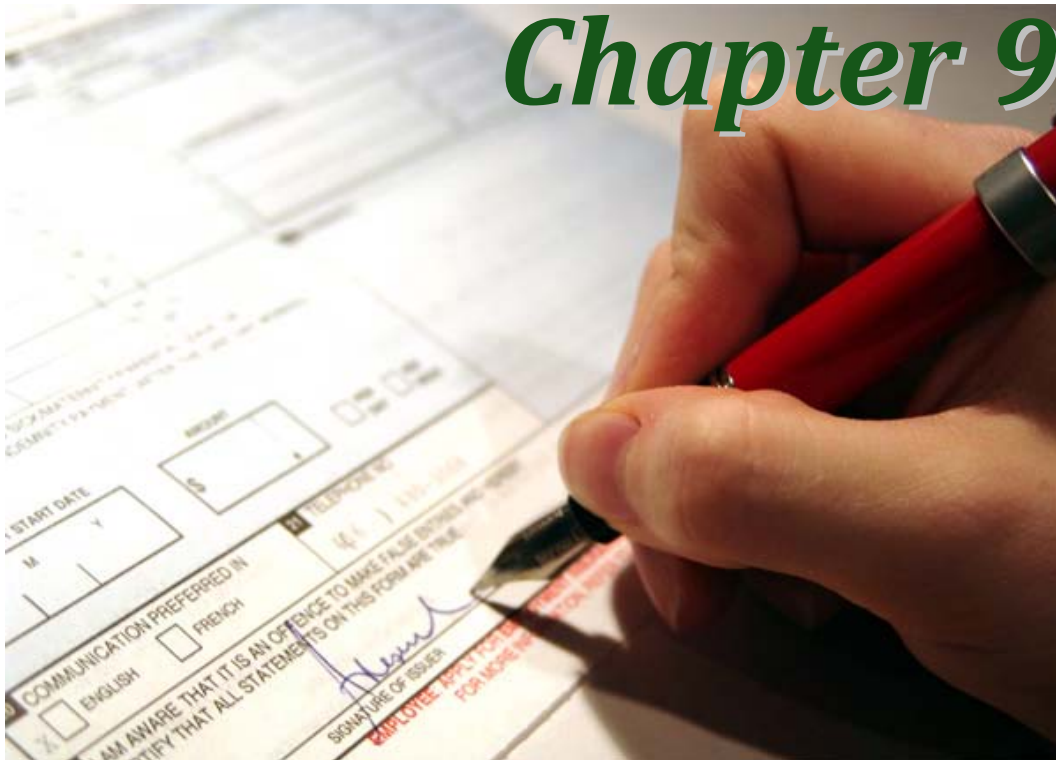
## Put the Plan into Action

**A** business plan is a tool. It requires a realistic look at almost every phase of your business and helps you see whether you have worked out many potential problems before actually launching your business.

Once you've launched your business, your business plan helps you evaluate your progress. Use your business plan to:

- establish timelines and milestones to gauge your progress
- identify roadblocks and obstacles so that you can avoid them.

Putting the plan into action does not mean that it never changes or that you must do exactly what you've written. Your plan must be as fluid as your business. Put it into action and modify it as circumstances change and your business grows.



## ***Chicks Do not Ignore the Boring Stuff***

**Maybe you find doing paperwork to be thrilling. If so, we're happy for you and might like to talk to you about hiring your services. The reality is that for most chicks who work at home, paperwork is a necessary evil. The challenge is to wrap your head around the fact that it is not evil, simply boring and do it anyway....**

## The Laws in Your State

**W**e really can't address this except to say that it is up to you to find out what the sales and income tax laws are for the state you live and work in. So do it. Every state has a website that will give you all the information you could want and then some.

While business licensing requirements vary from state to state, some of the more common types are listed below.

- **Business Licenses**—not all states and not all business types require a license. A state business license is the main document required for tax purposes and conducting other basic business functions.
- **Occupation Licenses**—state licenses are frequently required for occupations such as building contractors, physicians, appraisers, accountants, barbers, real estate agents, auctioneers, private investigators, private security guards, funeral directors, bill collectors, and cosmetologists. Don't guess. If you are unsure, check with your state licensing authorities.
- **Tax Registration**—if the state in which you operate has a state income tax, you'll have to register and obtain an employer identification number from your state Department of Revenue or Treasury Department. If you're engaging in retail sales, you will need to obtain a sales tax license.
- **Trade Name Registration**—if your business will only be operated in your local community, registering your company name with the state may be sufficient.
- **Employer Registrations**—if you have any employees, you'll probably be required to make unemployment insurance contributions. For more information, contact your state Department of Revenue or Department of Labor.

## Keeping Records

**T**he taxman cometh. Yep. Even if you don't care about keeping records (amazing concept), the IRS does.

- Keep a calendar.

- Keep track of expenses.
- Keep track of the cash you spend.
- Keep track of the money that comes in. And do it as it comes in. You really can't reproduce it on March 31 for the entire previous year.

## Ask the Professionals

**O**K. So maybe you ARE the professional. Providers of accounting, bookkeeping, and legal services make up a huge chunk of home workers. But unless you are in that field, you should seriously consider the best use of your time. Getting professional help for parts of your business that are not your forte is not a personal failure. It simply makes good business sense.

## Banking Considerations

**S**et up a separate account for your business. It does not have to be a business account, by the way. So long as you connect it to yourself using your EIN, it can be a personal account. A business account may not be of any advantage to you as a small business. Check the options with the bank of your choice and get the best deal you can.

## Your Address

**M**ost home based businesses use their home address. I think that might be because it seems the easiest option. Keep in mind, however, that a business address is freely given out and is expected to be freely available. There may be reasons, including personal security that you do not want to give out your home address as your business address.

Fortunately, there is a very simple solution. No, I'm not talking about a post office box. Yes. That is an option. But banks, suppliers, and even your customers don't really like PO boxes as an address.

Instead of a Post Office box, try your local [UPS Store](#). Most of them offer a unique kind of post office box—one that comes with an actual street address. It will probably cost you around \$100 for a year, and you can get shorter terms to try it out, so you aren't locked in if you change your mind. It really works. Your

address would be something like Your Biz Name, 1234 Something Street, Unit # 223, your town, state, zip. The Unit # is your PO Box, but the street address belongs to the UPS store, which is why it works. The USPS recognizes this as a street address, not a Post Office Box. Go figure.

## Social Security or EIN?

**Y**our Social Security number should not be used for business, even though it is legal to do so. You are a business. You need a Federal Employer Identification Number. Go [online](#) and fill out the application. Then use your EIN for bank accounts and both state and Federal IRS record keeping.

Consideration for when or if you should incorporate or change your business status to an LLC are beyond the scope of this document. In fact, don't ask us at all. We go to professionals we trusts (i.e. CPA or lawyer), to get those questions answered. And so should you.

## Microsoft Money, Quicken, or QuickBooks?

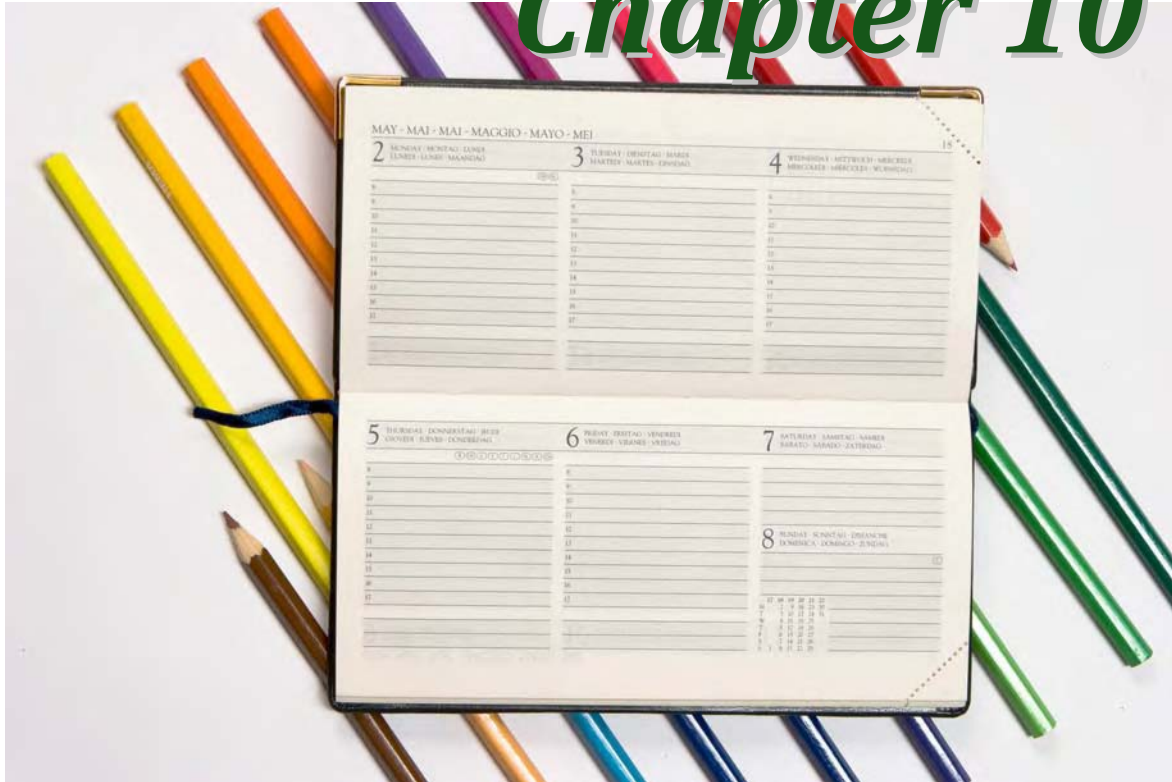
**Y**ou need some sort of electronic bookkeeping program. QuickBooks is the easiest double entry bookkeeping program and is the least costly. But you may not need all the power that QuickBooks puts at your fingertips.

QuickBooks is not difficult to learn, but it is complex to set up if you've never done anything like this before. Not to worry. If you screw it up, you can always start over after a month or so. QuickBooks allows you to create as many *businesses* as you like, but you can't easily mix and match the records from each business. You must maintain each as a separate account.

Quicken (and to a lesser degree Microsoft Money) might be enough. Quicken is an electronic checkbook. It has invoicing features, which makes it a better choice for a small business than it used to be. However, there are no inventory options and it is not double entry. It is designed for the consumer.

Still not sure what to use? Ask your accountant which program they prefer and use that one. After all, you will be providing your accountant with financial reports at least once a year. Might as well make it easy for both of you.

# Chapter 10



## *Chicks Dig Time Management*

**Time management is a tricky thing. It isn't all about the clock. In fact, we like to call it Productivity Management.**

**Being more productive is the ultimate goal, because we can have all the time in the world and not get anything done! And, although there a large number of things you can do to get more productive we find that these six are an important start....**

## Value of Time

If you don't value your time, no one will. You must define how and when you make yourself available to both your business associates and your family/friends. And here's the thing—not everyone is going to like it. And not everyone will understand. It's okay.

People come to have expectations based on what you allow, so if you aren't available all the time, they will learn to expect that you aren't. Review this story from Yolanda very closely. The lesson in it might surprise you.

Sounds cold. Maybe a little harsh. Yet this story demonstrates the perception most people have about time. And it's wrong.

Your time is yours first and foremost and no one should tell you any different. Not your family or friends, not your customers or vendors. You must respect your time if you expect anyone else to respect it. Yolanda still leaves her phone in the car and her friends are a bit more timely, it isn't a perfect world.

*"I have a cell phone with me generally. Mostly I don't answer it. Everyone except for my business partners or my mother goes to voice mail. So I meet some friends for dinner and they are late (which I hate) but it is not unusual for these folks. I wait. Then it hits the ½ hour mark and that is wayyyyyyy later than normal. I decide it's time to either eat or go.*

*I find out later that they've been calling the cell phone to tell me they can't make it. And my cell phone is in the car. I never take a call while I'm out with people. When I call them, they are beside themselves, but not apologetic for standing me up. They are upset because I didn't answer my cell phone.*

*These people know where I live and how long it takes for me to get to the restaurant. But they did not respect my time enough to call before I left to meet them. And it's my fault for not having my phone on me, right?*

*Wrong. I just don't do late. Someone consistently late is disrespectful of your time. And if they don't call before you leave your house, they don't respect you." –Yolanda*

## Time Vampires

**N**ow that we've established time respect let's start with some of the time offenders, the worst ones, the one's that suck the life force out of you. Time vampires, as we call them, are people who take your time without any thought whatsoever that you might actually have something better to do.

Friends and family are big offenders but customers and vendors can do the same. The problem with these people, these vampires, is that they've got all day. They might not have any place to be or maybe they have one of those jobs where no one is watching them or where they don't have to be accountable. So they can talk on the phone for as long as they like (or more importantly as long as you let them).

These are the folks that have family problems that never go away, or they request just one minute because they have one question. Maybe they have a soap opera going with friends and family or office politics. Maybe they just need to go over one thing with you but it turns into 5 or 6 unimportant things. Maybe they just need a quick meeting that turns into a 2 hour marathon.

Yolanda has another great example of a time vampire she deals with regularly.

You need to eliminate the vampires. Once you know who they are establish rules and tell them the rules. If someone needs a quick meeting, tell them they have 10 minutes and when the 10 minutes are up, that's it. Move on.

Or if you can't eliminate, then control when you give them your time. I have a family member who absolutely must begin at the beginning, no matter what. I can't eliminate him from my life. But I can (and do) keep him from being a part of my work day. I also prepare myself mentally to deal with him. I know he can't help it. It is how his brain is hard-

*"I have one guy...he calls to ask a question, right? Something like we need to make a change to the insurance to save money. Easy, right? Wrong. Instead of giving me the highlights and price differences I get a primer on every insurance company he's looked at, not just the one's he's considering. By the time he's halfway through I've lost my temper. Of course it might have something to do with the fork I've just stabbed into my forehead" -Yolanda*

wired. So I beef up my patience level when I know we are going to be talking. His wife is a Saint, so far as I am concerned.

If your friend Sarah (aka Susan Lucci, drama queen) starts in about her new boyfriend, just stop the whole thing, shut it down. "Sarah, oooooooo I wish I could chat right now but I have a customer on line two...." Okay so you don't have a line 2 but maybe Sarah doesn't know it.

The idea is to recognize, control, and stop it in its tracks.

## Scheduling

**S**cheduling isn't just for appointments anymore. The calendar is yours so use it to schedule all your activities no matter how trivial. This is especially true if they are important to you and necessary. Yolanda may not block out an exact hour of time to go out and run every day, but it is on her ½ day schedule; it's either on the morning list or afternoon list.

This is a great scheduling tip, by the way. Don't micro-schedule yourself. Keep a ½ day schedule. Break your daily schedule into a block for morning and another block for afternoon. It isn't always easy to get out the door at a specific time, especially if you get stuck on the phone or are in the middle of a critical project. List those appointments that are time-sensitive, but leave the rest flexible.

No matter the method you use, it is critical to have a system. It's important to put your personally important things on the schedule as well. If you exercise to be healthy (and hopefully also enjoy it), then you don't want to miss it. And we certainly think that on most days taking that hour to clear your brain and get outside is more important than entering receipts into QuickBooks.

Big projects should go on the schedule so break them down and stick them on there. Block out time for activities and when the time comes get to it. It will keep you more productive and teach you to be a lot more focused.

## Use Lists

**T**his is huge. Lists are tools to de-clutter your brain for the more important things. Write it down when you think of it. Doesn't matter if it's a grocery list with one item. If you need to call someone, pick up staples or order something write it down.

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Yolanda uses oversized Post-it notes. As she gets things done, she crosses them off. When everything is crossed off the note goes in the trash. The number of notes you have going at a time does not really matter. It takes a lot less brain energy to read a list than it does to keep and juggle a list in your mind. This is especially true if you are, like most of us, multitasking between work and home.

I like index cards. They are a bit more sturdy and I like being able to shuffle them and prioritize them and to keep them in a stack for neatness.

Once you write something down, you give your brain permission to let it go. That frees up space for more important tasks. Your brain only has so much energy for tasks so you want to save that energy for the big things.

You can also use a whiteboard or a corkboard. They have magnetized boards now or you can get a simple “to do” tablet. If you want to use your computer or iPhone that works, too. However, make sure that you have the list open and ready to use. If you save it as a file and never reopen it, you’ve defeated the purpose.

Get the habit of using lists your brain will thank you with better productivity.

## Baby Projects

**T**he worst thing you can do is decide to begin a project without first breaking it down. Golden rule: no big projects, only baby ones.

For instance, let’s say you want to write out your business plan. First, make a list of all the things you’ll need to get started. Then make a list of all the sections. Then make a list of the things you need to do for each section. So now you have three lists, each of which has a series of baby tasks.

Making a To Do list in itself has a few tricks that can be useful. One favored strategy is to have each item in the list begin with a verb. It keeps your to do list active. Another tact you might try is to group your To Do’s in order of how they belong or in order of importance. For



## Survive the Work from Home Jungle

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instance, one list per project, most time sensitive first, phone calls separated from desk work.

It is so much easier to start a 15 minute project than to take on a 2-day project. Nothing will gridlock your productivity like trying to get a handle on a big project in one bite.

There are few more satisfying moments in your work day than when you knock several things off your to do list. That's what makes baby projects so ideal; you can do them in a short amount of time. We can all usually find a ½ hour or 15 minutes to get something done. When we try to find 2 hours it becomes difficult. And, as a result, the task gets put aside.

Another great thing about baby projects is that you can have a few on-the-go projects. So if you are at the doctor's office waiting for your appointment you can take a couple with you and get them done. I usually take reading or writing projects. In 15 minutes I can have a skeleton blog post or at least an outline. Or maybe I take some reading material and go through it. I always have something with me. You never know when you might be waiting. Make the time productive.

So plan ahead. The next time you are standing in line at the post office getting more and more aggravated, pull out a baby list and check off a task!

## Regimen, Ritual, and Self-discipline

**F**inally, we can't talk about time management without talking about what it really takes to be more productive; self-discipline.

If valuing your time is the most important aspect, practicing self-discipline is easily tied for first place. The easiest way to become self-disciplined is to create regimens or rituals. We touched on this earlier when we talked about getting up and dressed to go to work. The same principle applies to your time. It isn't enough to make a schedule if you don't keep it or to make a list if you never cross anything off.

This may or may not be much of an attitude shift. Our experience with highly productive people, especially entrepreneurs, is that getting stuff done is ingrained. You enjoy the process and understand the importance of jumping in.

## Survive the Work from Home Jungle

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Yet even the most productive of us can use a jump start occasionally. Remember, when you feel a little uneasy about a project, the best thing you can do is find the baby projects and just start.

Follow the time management ideas above with regularity and you'll soon be on your way to a much more productive day.

It is nearly impossible to provide a comprehensive time management section but we think it is critical to the success of your working at home endeavor. In the future we will have a time management resource that gives an even greater in-depth look at productivity. In the meantime these tips will keep you busy!

# *Appendix*

## *Resources*

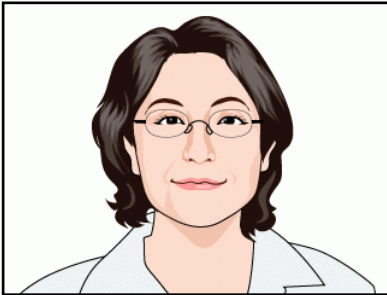
### [About Two Chicks](#)

Owing and operating a business is hard enough, trying to work from home and make it work from a professional stand point can be daunting. We created [2chicksathome](#) to make it easier and a lot less frustrating.

And, in an effort to lay out the feed so to speak, we want to make sure you completely *know* who we are.

### **Worksheets**

## Yolanda A. Facio



I'm an entrepreneur. My father owned his own business while I was growing up and I suspect my desire to boss people around came from that experience. As a teenager I worked for my Dad and was then referred to as *The Bosses Daughter* and it was awful.

Fast-forward through college.... I moved back to AZ, got a business degree and started helping to run my Dad's business. This time I was *not* the bosses daughter, I was the boss. 17 years later I still work with my father's business as their President/CEO but I do it from home and have for about 8 years. The family business was the biggest learning lesson I could have. Commercial construction, not a woman's field at all.

During that 17 years my significant other decided to stop complaining about working for someone. We started a specialty automotive repair business working primarily on Porsches. He had been doing it for about 10 years and I had zero automotive experience. So we jumped into that and we have been doing that for 8 years.

The last year and half has actually been from home. Yes, we fix cars from home. I act as President, Owner and Operator for [Exotic Motorwerks](#).

Finally, as an aside to those two things I help people with marketing as a 'co-sultant' and you can learn about that at [Marketing:Unhinged](#), again click the link.

There's not much else to tell, I spend my days at home with my dogs and significant other.

## Candy Zulkosky aka CaZ



Candy is also an entrepreneur, I suspect she picked up on it sooner than I did. After owning and operating Pointer's Training, a 'brick 'n mortar' business, she closed shop to sail the seven seas. There's some fast forward in there, the important thing here is she ran that business 10 years.

She spent the next 5 years sailing around the world and teaching folks computer stuff as she did it. What a job!

Here's the thing, Candy may actually be more bossy than I am because she is a natural teacher. So now that she's back to lovin' the land, she's working from home managing the very people who do the job she used to do. Like the Reese's commercial where they take the peanut butter and smash it with chocolate or the other way around, that's Candy – Entrepreneur "smash" Teacher.

Wild combination but it's perfect if you also want to start an online business teaching people computer skills online in less than 30 minutes, really. If you want, you can check out [TutorialBytes](#). While she's sitting on the sofa, staring out at the sea, she's working away at helping people fill the gaps in their skill set. There's not much else to tell, except I really think she needs a cat or a dog or even a small baby chick.

And if that isn't enough, we've conspired to create a whole new online venture working from home at a distance. You can learn about our joint venture about [Social Media](#) by clicking the link.

And there's more, but you can read all about it on the [2chicks blog](#) where we'll tell you exactly how we are able to do all this stuff while working at home.