
Overview

Running a business from home is becoming increasingly common with the expansion of the internet. It is relatively low risk with low overheads. You can work from home while you build a business slowly before moving out to a separate premises or you can do it long term because it suits your finances or lifestyle. There are many challenges to running a business from home, including other people's perception of your business. It is important that you manage it so that the business prospers without taking over your entire home.

You might need to do this if you are:

1. setting up a new business or social enterprise
2. running a business or social enterprise

Running a business from home involves:

1. working in a way that best fits in with the needs of your business and your private life
2. projecting the level of professionalism that is needed for your business
3. managing the expectations of your family, your friends and your clients

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Performance criteria

You must be able to:

- P1 decide on the mix of working and non-working time that best suits you, any other people in your home and your business
- P2 set and stick to ground rules to help you maintain the mix of working time and home life that you need
- P3 decide whether to promote or disguise the fact that your business is run from your home
- P4 set ground rules to maintain the level of professionalism you need for your business
- P5 choose places to meet your clients that do not distract you or your client from focussing on doing business
- P6 make sure you are working from the best place in your home
- P7 make sure the facilities and equipment you use are the best for the needs of the business, the space available and your home
- P8 manage your family's and friends' expectations
- P9 minimise disruption for your neighbours
- P10 find out and comply with the legal requirements relating to running your business from home
- P11 seek advice about running your business from home when you need it

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Knowledge and understanding

You need to know and understand:

Yourself

- K1 when and how you do your best work (for example the time of day you have the most concentration for challenging tasks, the types of tasks you can do when there are other people in the house)
- K2 ways to keep yourself motivated and focused while working (for example wearing work clothes, not answering the door or taking personal phone calls, not doing household chores, setting yourself deadlines)
- K3 the balance you want and need between your work and your home life and how to achieve it (for example setting and sticking to working hours, setting time aside for holidays, using answer phones and other equipment, letting clients know your working hours, using a separate or screened off area for your work, not checking for messages when you are not working, changing out of work clothes)

Business focus

- K4 the professional image that is right for your business and how to achieve it (for example working in a quiet part of the house, using answer phones when it is not convenient to take calls)
- K5 the things that might give a negative professional image of your business (for example noise from dogs or children when you are on the phone, your behaviour when meeting clients in your own home as opposed to meeting them in their premises, using a virtual business address)

Home-based business

- K6 the benefits of your business being home-based (for example cost saving to your clients, empathy with clients in a similar situation)
- K7 ways to hide the fact that your business is home-based, if you feel there is a need to (for example using a virtual office address, not telling clients that your work address is also your home address, only taking calls when there is no background noise, making sure the telephone is always answered in a way that is appropriate for your business, not volunteering information about what is going on in the home while you are working)
- K8 what storage, filing and other equipment you need and how to maximise what is practically possible in your own home (for example analysing what storage space and equipment you will use, using space-saving equipment, storing files on computer)
- K9 what message taking and call forwarding options best suit the volume of calls you receive, your time away from the office and whether clients need direct access to you (for example virtual PAs, call divert facilities, answer phone, message taking services, letting your clients know what hours you are available, briefing family members on if and how they

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- should answer the phone)
- K10 the technology to assist you in working from home that best meets your business needs (for example adequate and up-to-date security on your computer system, storing backups of your work in another premises, pass-wording and protecting work areas of your computer, using free phone or local call rate numbers, using email, having an easy-to-update website)
 - K11 how to find out about your family's expectations with regards to household chores, time that you are available and so on (for example allowing time for discussion, scheduling in family meetings)
 - K12 ways to manage other people's expectations (for example setting times when people cannot visit you or when you will not take personal calls, agreeing signs -such as closed doors - to show when you can and cannot be interrupted, agreeing the only reasons you can be disturbed, explaining that there will be pay-back time for the extra work you have to do today, jointly agreeing with them what your work will entail and how this can best be fitted in)
 - K13 where you can achieve the atmosphere you require for your meetings with clients (for example cafes, restaurants or hotels, members clubs, clients' premises, rented office space, your own home)
 - K14 the things you need to consider if clients come to your house (for example health and safety, your personal safety, security, which parts of your house they will see, which parts of the house must be clean and well maintained, which doors you need to close, the likelihood of being interrupted by other family members)
 - K15 ways that your neighbours may be affected by your business (for example noise, smells, receiving deliveries, clients and colleagues parking)
 - K16 the implications of upsetting your neighbours (for example they could get your business closed down or cause your property to be re-rated)

Networking

- K17 the benefits of networking when running a business from home (for example to counter isolation, to make business contacts)

Law and regulations

- K18 what legal requirements relate to you running your business from home (for example registering so that you are allowed to keep client details on the premises, getting appropriate insurance, registering for change of use from domestic to business, not making alterations to the property without getting prior permission, what you legally need to do so as not to risk losing your home, when and how to claim property costs)

Information and advice

- K19 what to seek advice about and who can help you (for example an

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accountant, an independent insurance broker)

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Additional Information

Links to other NOS

1. EE1 Achieve your goals for the business
2. BI1 Create the infrastructure your business needs
3. BI2 Undertake freelance work.
4. BL1 Decide on a business location.
5. BL2 Choose a business premises
6. YS1 Explore your own motives.
7. YS5 Manage your time.
8. YS7 Balance your business and personal life.

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