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Working From Home Is Serious Business

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Not that long ago, if you told someone you worked from home or you had a home office, they might have looked at you funny or not taken you seriously.

But that was then ... this is now.

For many entrepreneurs, home is now where the office (as well as the heart) is. Whether you are new to the reality of a home office or you are a veteran with years under your belt, it's important to focus on what really matters and makes sense for you and your business -- and to avoid wasting time on what doesn't matter. What's most important is the work you do and the business you build -- not the chair you sit in or the window you gaze through during the day.

Here are some key points to keep in mind when it comes to making the most of your home office:

- **Size Doesn't Matter...But Feel Does.** Your home office doesn't need to be the hugest or fanciest to be the best (for you). It does need to feel right, though. It should be a place in which you feel productive, inspired, efficient and calm. Take some time to set it up in a way that works for you on every level. The biggest ideas can be implemented in the tiniest of spaces, so don't fixate on size; focus instead on your business: your plan, your vision, your goals. When possible, this space should be just your office -- not your storage room, game room, rec room, pantry and/or mud room.
- **Close It. Period.** There aren't many "musts" when it comes to your home office, but this is one of the few: No matter where your office is in your home, how you have it set up, how small (or large) it may be or any other of its characteristics, you want it to be separate from the rest of your living/sleeping areas. It should have a door or some other kind of barrier that physically and mentally signals to you and the people in and around your house that this space is something apart from the rest. A separation will also help you leave the office and work behind when you are busy living the rest of your life.
- **An Office Is an Office.** Yes, your office is in your home -- the same place in which you eat, sleep, help your kids with their homework, watch TV and lounge on the sofa. But that doesn't mean it isn't a real office where you get real work done. Don't downplay the legitimacy of your home office. Be proud that you have the freedom to choose where and how you work. Do your home office justice every day by creating great things, having amazing ideas and making lasting connections from it.
- **Close to the Borderline.** Boundaries are crucial in all areas of life, and this is especially true when you work from home. Whether it's your kids, your spouse, your neighbors (who figure you are always "at home" and available), your clients or anyone else you work or live with, it's important that they (and you) are clear on when you are working (or not), when you are available for phone calls (or not) and when to expect (or not) a return email. The better you are at setting boundaries for your business and your life -- and sharing them with those around you -- the more efficient and enjoyable each of these areas will be for you and all involved.
- **Don't Be a Caveman.** Working from home can be freeing and empowering. It can also be lonely and sometimes just

plain weird to be by yourself most of the time (especially for those who have worked in large office settings with many people). Build time into your schedule for connecting with others and with the world outside your four walls -- lunches, networking events, phone or Skype calls, even walks in the park. Whatever energizes you and reminds you of how great it feels to be part of the rest of the world is something you should include in your regular plans. If you don't schedule it in, it likely won't happen!

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