

HOME BASED? GET OUTTA HERE!

By: Angela Sutcliffe-Shea

After 18 years of owning my own business I am making the move to bring it back into my home. Moving home seems to be a trend for those of us who are tired of paying office rents in a market that, for a while, became over-inflated with the high tech boom. I've noticed, talking with my colleagues, that there seems to be two opinions on the benefits of working from home. The first is the lower overhead/higher profits concept. The second is the ease of commuting to the office, especially in bad weather. Sounds great – on the surface – but wait a minute, knowing what makes successful businesses successful is **my** business. That means that I know enough to see that things aren't always as good as they look.

When I had my office outside of the home, I met a lot of people, some of whom became clients, some whom became colleagues and some whom became centres of influence. We met on the bus, in the elevator, in the washroom, in the cafeteria. I didn't notice how many people I interacted with during the day until I realized that in my new home office the only person I was meeting in the hallway was the dog. Big problem. To paraphrase "Dr. Phil", the only way prospects could meet me was if they threw themselves across the hood of my car. Ironic, eh? Now I've decided to work from home, I have to get out more often. And because it's s-o-o-o easy to just sleep that extra half hour, or skip a meeting on a cold snowy morning (because after all I don't really have to go anywhere) I have to have my "meet and greet" plan committed to my daytimer to make sure I get where I need to go.

So here's the reality of building a successful business from home.

1. Find out where your target market hangs out – networking groups, association meetings, and professional organizations.
2. Make a plan that gets you out and in front of these people regularly.

3. Get out your daytimer and schedule two to three meetings a week – for the next 6 months. (when the weather is lousy and you're the only one who knows you're scheduled to attend, having it committed to your daytimer is more likely to get you there than just thinking you "should" be there.)
4. Have a great follow up strategy. What works best for me is "coffee day" – the one day a week I designate to have follow up breakfasts, coffee, lunches with people I need to get to know better.

As for all that extra money ... I'm investing it into memberships, coffees and lunches. It's still a cheaper way to buy visibility than paying for the office – and a heck of a lot more fun.

Angela Sutcliffe-Shea is a business strategist and success coach. She specializes in profitability practices for small businesses. Angela can be contacted at angela@angelasutcliffe.com or through her website at www.angelasutcliffe.com