

Working Your Way Home to Entrepreneurship



By Sharon McMillan

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Your level of success or failure will vary as a result of many factors related to your education, experience and skills.

You must do your own due diligence to determine whether you have the skills, personality and perseverance to succeed as an entrepreneur (full-time or part-time).

That being said, I hope the resources provided here are helpful to you.

Enjoy your new business!

Author Sharon McMillan

Sharon McMillan has spent over 15 years creating successful marketing materials and public relations campaigns for small businesses and associations in the U.S. and Canada.

From her perspective, the Internet isn't just a boon for businesses but a way for many women managing family life and careers to develop a path to entrepreneurship, new career choices or a mix of both.

To help support more informed lifestyle choices for entrepreneurial and career women, Sharon created the Small Business Study (www.smallbusinessstudy.com) where she offers free online marketing guides, ideas and inspiration geared to part-time and full-time entrepreneurs.

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Introduction

You've got the skills, you've got the motivation, you've got the ideas... but there's still one stumbling block preventing you from taking that step towards entrepreneurship and that is your JOB. Your job provides the employment income your family needs and you can't imagine giving it up. You also aren't interested in borrowing money to replace your income while you build a home business. So where does that leave you? Right here with a book written specifically for the "employed" entrepreneur.

There are plenty of guidebooks on the market providing advice on how to start a business from home but many of those good books are focused on the point at which someone can dedicate full-time hours to their entrepreneurial pursuits.

This is a book specifically for those of you who are managing a job outside of the home, managing family life responsibilities at home and trying to figure out how to get your business off the ground without financial loans, and at a pace that suits your life.

Pace is an important thing in my life and I bet it is in yours too. You won't find strategies for earning the most money in the least amount of time in this book. Why? Strategies like that don't work for most people. More importantly the focus here isn't on quick money; it's on creating a profitable business that suits your lifestyle.

Speaking of lifestyle, some of you may have jobs that are paying you quite well and you're not too sure you want to give it up even if your home business takes off. Starting a business that you can comfortably operate during your off-hours might provide the financial supplement you want for your family now and for your retirement in the future.

Others reading this book may be in a job where there's great uncertainty or where they don't feel there's a fit. In that case starting a business on the side just makes sense. It's a way for you to take some control of your career and your financial security. Again, the Internet has created numerous options for those that need to replace their income in a timely way and we'll examine those choices in this guide.

Whatever the pace you need, I think you'll find ideas and strategies in this book to help you build a home based business while working outside the home.

Let's dig in!

Wearing Two Hats: Is it Manageable?

The question you're likely asking is whether or not you'll be able to manage working full- or part-time, while starting a business and caring for your family during those hours you're not at work.

The truth of the matter is women (and men) have juggled jobs, family responsibilities and family businesses throughout history. How successfully they may have managed it in the past may be debateable. The challenge today is that we have higher expectations. It's not enough to work really hard. We have to have the time to enjoy those things that are important to us like family and faith.

So I'd answer the question of "manageability" by saying that it is possible to manage work/business/family priorities much more successfully today because of one of the most significant technological advances in our lifetime – the Internet.

From paying the designer for your website to handling projects with contractors, you can address many operational aspects of your business completely online thanks to the Internet. Ultimately what the Internet offers are choices that allow you to operate your business without the need for many (or any!) face to face meetings with clients or vendors. That's very good news for entrepreneurs with daytime commitments to employers and evening commitments to the family.

You can connect via email or using project management tools easily and quickly throughout the day or at your convenience during your off hours since communication doesn't have to be "real-time."

Scheduling:

One tool that is invaluable for the entrepreneur with a job is a schedule. The hours before work and after work have to be divided between caring for children and/or the household and tending to the needs of your business.

Here are some tips to help you create a functional schedule:

- Set measureable and achievable goals for your part-time business. How much do you want to earn and how much time do you want to dedicate to your business throughout the week?
- Get up before your children get up so that you have some quiet time to plan or work, depending on your preferences and energy level in the morning.

- Break your work down into manageable “chunks.” Instead of scheduling 3 hours to “write an e-book,” break-up that project up into smaller tasks.

For example:

- 30 minutes – develop outline
 - 30 minutes – develop key points for each chapter
 - 60 minutes – work on chapters 1-2, etc.
- Keep your schedule with you at all times and adjust throughout the day, as needed.
 - Identify those areas in your day where there is time to focus on your business. You might, for example, indicate opportunities to proof business materials on the commuter train home or in the passenger seat if you’re being driven home.

Family Naysayers

It’s difficult to start a business at home when you don’t have the support of the people around you. To avoid the “negative response” to your new business, discuss your business plans with family members who are old enough to understand.

Explain to them what you do and how you get paid in the simplest terms. Sometimes just being in the dark can make someone less receptive to your business ideas.

How your Employer Receives Benefit

If you’re planning to leave your employer as soon as possible then you may be less interested in this point but there is benefit to be gained for employers who have sharp “moonlighting” entrepreneurs on staff.

For one, these employees are training themselves in operational skills and tactics that are designed to grow businesses. In all likelihood the skills they are picking up as online entrepreneurs are going to be skills that are readily transferrable to their current job.

It’s a well-known fact that corporate America was slower to pick-up leading online marketing strategies than their small business, solo-preneur counterparts. Larger businesses don’t always have the flexibility to adopt new and emerging technologies in a timely and efficient way.

Employees in these organizations are also often reluctant to adopt new ways of working, unless they are already familiar with the strategies.

Imagine how much easier it is for managers in big business to introduce and implement leading edge marketing strategies when they have on their staff individuals who are already doing the research and trying out these strategies in their own “off-hours” businesses.

What Kind of Business Should You Start?

For a lot of people the decision to start a business while working is really all about creating some financial security for themselves and their families.

Since the notion of a “job forever” is history, many smart, forward thinking people are thinking now about what they might do in the event they are downsized. For these entrepreneurs there may be no dream that they are trying to realize other than to use their skills to create an income earning business.

Other people may have an “idea” of what kind of business they’d like to start but need to fine tune that idea into an actual, workable business idea.

Assessing your Skills and Experience

A good place to start is with you. What skills have you developed over the years?

Can you edit copy? Why not think about starting a copy editing business? With so many people launching websites today there will be an increasing need for people who can write and edit effective website copy.

Do you have a keen sense for graphic design? That skill is a valuable one to have if you are a marketing consultant charged with preparing engaging and eye-catching advertisements and promotions for businesses.

What about your people skills? If you are a good public speaker and have the ability to motivate others you just might be able to launch a successful (and lucrative) business “life” coaching individuals seeking motivation to realize personal development goals.

Your work experience is another asset that is yours. Often times we overlook the knowledge and tactical skills we’ve developed over the years through our work experience.

Perhaps your job has caused you to develop a keen eye for detail or for working with difficult people. These strengths can translate into attributes that could help you to succeed at certain types of businesses that you would enjoy doing.

For instance, you might have developed a keen eye for detail as a corporate accountant, however you might have no desire to work with numbers all day as a business owner. Instead you might decide to take that experience as a corporate accountant with a keen eye for detail and translate that into a business providing project management services for entrepreneurs with several businesses.

Or you might be a secretary who wants to translate her skills in typing, editing and anticipating someone's needs into a business that will triple her income. One of the hottest fields for this skill set is the Virtual Assistance business.

With the rise in internet based entrepreneurs there is an increasing need for individuals to help do the client coordination, document creation, project scheduling and the multitude of other tasks that go into managing a business online. These individuals are called virtual assistants and some savvy VA's are not only offering these services at rates as high as \$75/hour and more, but they are subcontracting the work they receive so that they are able to build larger virtual assistance "firms" generating revenue well into the six-figures.

The point to be made here is that you likely have skills and interests that could be very valuable to you as an entrepreneur.

Visualize Your Ideal Business Setting

Knowing your strengths is important but you also need to identify what it is that you enjoy doing. Chances are if you start a business that involves you doing tasks and activities that you dislike, your business won't last very long.

Remember we're dealing with a situation where you are working full- or part-time so anything you do during your off hours better be something you enjoy doing otherwise it will be too easy for you to throw in the towel.

Why work 8 hours a day only to come home and push yourself to work on a business that involves work you hate?

Think about the kind of work you want to do as your own boss. Are you designing marketing strategies to sell products through your website? Are you doing online research for clients? Are you creating jewellery for your online store?

Brainstorming in this way is time well spent...before you invest your time and resources into creating a business that's not a good match for your interests.

How to Conduct Research

Now that you know what it is you want to do, you need to find out if there is a market for your product or services that you will offer. One of the most marvellous things about the Internet is that it allows you to conduct informal research to answer these questions at little to no cost.

Using tools like Google you can get an idea of the volume of people searching for your business topic or product. For instance if you were going to sell wood blinds online you might enter the term “wood blinds” into Google search engine.

Your return will show that there over 600,000 entries using that term, however, the top 10 will give you an idea of who your competitor is in this category. Knowing who your competitors are will also give you an idea if this is a hot market item or not.

For instance when I entered “wood blinds” into Google I got in my search return some of the largest companies in the window coverings sector, including Levelor. With this information I could do further searches to find out trends in this sector, how successful the leading companies are doing with regards to their wood blind sales, etc.

A Gold Mine for Research

If your market research budget is pretty slim you can conduct “in the field” market research for far less than the thousands of dollars a market research firm would charge you. Using an online polling service like Survey Monkey (www.surveymonkey.com) you can set up an online poll and then invite members of the public to participate.

How you get to members of the public is through social media networks like Twitter and Facebook.

There are more than half a billion users on Facebook and many millions of users on Twitter every day. While you may have a much fewer number of followers in these social networks, sharing your poll with your followers is a great beginning. Encourage your followers to tell others about your poll. People love to be asked for their opinion and this natural propensity to share will serve you well.

If you are strategic, you will be developing followers on these social media platforms that are interested in your type of business or service. That way when you issue a survey the response will be highly valuable as it will like have been completed by those who follow you and are already interested in what you have to offer

How to Set-up Your Business Online

You're Not in Business without a Website

The new storefront for business today is the website. Even if a business has a brick and mortar location, if there's no website a company won't be taken seriously.

A website will give you access to the world. A website also makes it possible to use text, images, audio and video in your marketing, all within one medium. Using the web to promote your business provides a great deal of exposure for a relatively small investment.

Even if you want to run your business strictly on a local level, a website can still be a great asset. It will allow your target market to see your work at their convenience, without having to even leave home. It can also make it easy for them to contact you when they are ready.

Here is how to set up your website:

1. Purchase a domain name. Try to find one that is as relevant as possible to your business. Think of words that people would search for online when trying to find what you offer. Including keywords in your domain name will help you get better positioning in the search engines for those words. If you're planning to do business locally, consider using your city, county, or state in the domain name.

To register your domain name you might try www.GoDaddy.com

2. Get web hosting. There are lots of different hosting companies out there, all with different prices and features. It's important to get hosting that's within your budget, but it is also crucial that your hosting company provides good support and maintains its servers well.

For an affordable web hosting service with great support try [Mom Webs](#).

3. Choose a format for the construction of your website. Unless you are a web designer, you're going to one to choose one of the easiest and most flexible platforms for the creation of your website. Today that platform is a Wordpress website.

Wordpress is actually a content management system that provides an easy user interface to allow you to add and edit content on your website—without having to hire

a website expert to update your website. Wordpress is free and can be downloaded from Wordpress.org.

If uploading and customizing your website isn't something you're interested in doing you might consider outsourcing that work to a website content management service provider like www.webtechresponse.com.

4. If your business involves the selling of products, you will need shopping cart software. Some hosting plans come with integrated shopping carts. If yours doesn't, you'll need to purchase software or find a third-party shopping cart online.

Here's a reliable and affordable shopping cart that includes an autoresponder and shopping cart at a far less expensive rate than the leading competitor offering similar services – [WAHMCart](#).

Marketing Your Business Online

Marketing is all about connecting a target market to a service or product designed and priced to appeal to their preferences. Marketing is, therefore, extremely important to the sales process. Without effective marketing strategies sales will suffer. Prior to the rise of the Internet, small businesses/entrepreneurs were often at a disadvantage to larger firms because they didn't have the financial resources to launch comprehensive marketing strategies that might include TV advertising and direct mail campaigns.

The Internet has changed all that. Not only is it far more affordable to reach 100 or 10,000 people on the Internet than it is through a direct mail campaign or traditional advertising, but it is easier to execute. Affordability and ease of execution has had a significant impact on the ability of entrepreneurs to compete successfully in the marketplace.

Some online marketing tools include list services and autoresponders which essentially capture prospect names and emails through a strategically located and promoted form on a website. The "autoresponder" part of the service can then be filled with several different marketing messages written to appeal to your market and build loyalty. The really appealing part for busy entrepreneurs with jobs is that the autoresponder can be set to issue messages at different times of the day or night.

The process is fully automated (with the exception of drafting the necessary copy for the emails) and allows you to be at work while timely messages about your product or service discount are sent to everyone on your business' list.

Constant and strategic contact with your "list" will help to nurture a relationship between you and the individuals who agreed to subscribe to whatever you were offering (newsletter, free download, etc.). Customer relationship building is an important part of the marketing process. Online entrepreneurs who understand this concept tend to have good conversion rates (the rate at which visitors or prospects become purchasers of your product or service).

Identify where your Market is Online

In order for you to build your list, you have to get your website out in front of your target audience. Search engine optimization (SEO) is one way to do this. SEO is basically the process for increasing the visibility of your website in search engines. This is done by directing links on other popular websites to your website, creating links on your website to other areas of your website and by positioning on your website the most popular terms used to find your type of business or service. Search engines then begin to return your website following user searches.

Your goal is to get your website to the top of the list of returns! This will happen as you begin to update your website more frequently and you develop links to your website from other sites that ideally are more established than yours.

Once you've pinpointed your target market and created a website that has been optimized with your keywords you're ready to more aggressively market your business online.

Using Social Networking

Forums: One of the best ways to raise the profile of your business is to share information and participate in discussions in forums where your target market frequents. The thing about forums is that you don't have to participate in "real time."

You can read a comment in the morning, give your reply before you leave to work and check back when you return in the evening. Including a good signature in your posts is great way to promote in these forums. When post a helpful response to query or share some good news, people will instinctively want to know who you are and what you do.

A well written signature (which can be part of every post) will position you well. Include your name and anchor text that clearly and succinctly describes what you can do for a customer. You might want to promote a discounted special or something else that is still valuable to the reader but stands out from the other signatures. Remember the link you want to include in your signature is to a page that will keep your reader on your site. That won't necessarily be the home page, and instead may be something for more specific.

You can be Sincere and Automate Too

It's not often that I recommend anything that is automated, however, Hootsuite (www.Hootsuite.com) is ideal for the entrepreneur with other daily commitments like a job that prevents her from posting during the day. Simply enter the message you want to tweet or the status update you want to give for a particular date and you're done!

Be sure to mix in those automated tweets with live tweeting and interaction for friends in these networks. You'll quickly lose followers if all you do is issue automated tweets but do not engage with anyone.

Once you sign onto Hootsuite you'll be able to add your social media profiles (LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook to name a few). If you want every blog post to Broadcast into each of your status bars in each social media platform, simply follow the easy instructions provided on the website.

Success Stories

Ready to get your business started? Great, but first here's a parting gift: I asked three women who've inspired me with their work to entrepreneurship journey to share their stories with you and they kindly agreed.

I hope you enjoy reading about their experiences and take away some practical insight.

Kelly McCausey



I was working full time as the manager of my church office when I first started to moonlight on the web. It was a great job with a lot of variety, benefits and personal satisfaction but sadly, the paycheck was lacking. As a single mom I was drowning in debt. I'd actually left running a lucrative family daycare to work at the church so I wasn't necessarily looking to make top dollar, but I sure needed to be able to pay the bills.

The business I started online was supposed to be centered on desktop publishing, but I soon realized the demand was for web design and graphics. I started to offer my services in this area and was introduced to the Work at Home Mom community that way. I fell in love with the world and made dozens of new friends who were doing all kinds of things to work at home. It was so intriguing! It was the following year that I launched Work at Home Moms Talk Radio.

The biggest challenge I faced was managing my time. My job at the church was pleasantly flexible but I did have a lot of scheduling issues surrounding church events and my son's needs. When I started doing interviews for my radio show I found that I often had to run home midday to accommodate a guest's availability. Later as I started to work with coaching clients it was a crazy time for sure.

I honestly had no intention of leaving my day job at this point. I was enjoying both worlds, even with the challenges they brought. It wasn't until the fall of 2005 when I paid off my last outstanding debt and realized that I could start spending the money I made on something other than bills that I sat down and did some math. I was making as much working at home as I was making at the church. That was an exciting eye opener. If I could match my full time income working part time at home, what would happen if I devoted more attention to my internet business?

All in all it took me four years to transition into working at home full time—from my tentative start in 2002 to walking away from the day job in 2006.

Kelly McCausey, <http://www.kellymccausey.com>, <http://www.wahmtalkradio.com>

Aurelia Williams



Describe the kind of work you do full-time or part-time outside the home while you manage your at home business.

I am the office manager of a Pest Control company that services the Washington, DC, Maryland and Virginia areas. It's a rather demanding job and uses many of my Administrative skills that I've developed over the years. I've been in this position now for 7 years and work part-time from 8:30am – 2:30pm daily.

Describe the business that you started and continue to run from your home?

I've been working from home now for over 10 years and I absolutely love the flexibility that it offers. I am a Personal Life Coach and I work with women from all walks of life. I'm also an Internet Marketer and Author. I have several resource websites that provide products, services and content that speak to women today and enable them to live more organized, peaceful and productive lives.

What is the biggest challenge you have in managing both your part-time day job and your at-home business and how do you overcome it?

The biggest challenge that I have had in the past was concerning time and how I would feel guilty when I felt as if I didn't divide my time equally amongst my part-time day job, my home business and my family. Since my day job offers me some flexibility, I am able to do some online marketing for my at-home business as things slow down during my day job. This would then at times cause me to work "double time" and lead to me being overworked on several occasions. Also in the evenings when I would devote time to my at home business, I would then run into feelings of guilt when it comes to how to properly divide that time with my duties as a mother and spouse.-

4. Do you see yourself working full-time from home in the future and if so what kind of timeline have you set for yourself? OR if managing both an out-of-the-home job and your at home business is a choice you want to keep for now, please state that and explain the reason for your choice, if you can.

I'm often asked that question and for some reason I usually feel compelled to say that I will be working from home full-time in the near future. The fact of the matter is I probably will continue to manage both an out-of-the home job (part-time) as WELL as my current home business and keep things fairly the same as they are today.

I really find this to be an advantage for me, my clients and my family. I have now been able to find the perfect balance for me and that has helped me to keep things afloat without feeling as if I will drown.

My 'out of the home' job allows me the face-to-face personal interactions that I enjoy and since the job is a part-time job, it also allows me the scheduling flexibility that I need to keep my at-home business thriving.

As a part-time personal life coach I find that I am able to keep the home business manageable, with a few long-standing clients. The home business doesn't consume all of my time and energy and allows me to continue to give my clients the fresh perspective that they deserve.

As a certified life coach who received her Personal Life Coaching Certification from [Coach Training Alliance](#) and is accredited by the International Coach Federation, Aurelia Williams feels truly blessed to be given the opportunity to fulfill her lifelong dream of helping others find a healthy balance between work, family and self. She shares her life coaching expertise with clients and potential clients alike at <http://www.reallifecoaching.net> .

Laurie Ayers



When I started my first home business I was employed full time for the federal government as an administrator. I was also a single mom and a college student. I started a direct sales business. The biggest challenge I had in balancing work, family and school was time management. I never felt like I had enough time to get everything done or that I wanted to be able to devote more time to the business than I was able. It was a double edged sword because I knew I wanted to work at home to be there for the children, but I didn't feel like I was ever going to have the time to invest into the business to get to the point to where I could stay home.

The best thing I did to achieve success in my direct sales business was to change my attitude and my 'stinkin' thinkin' about how I could make this work. First of all I quit placing unrealistic expectations on myself. I stopped feeling like I was failing because I wasn't realizing the same success of my counterparts who started at the same time. I quit comparing myself to those who didn't have a similar situation. Of course someone who wasn't the sole income provider or who wasn't in college may have more time to invest. So it was silly of me to compare myself to someone in that position. I cut myself a break and stopped comparing apples to oranges. That attitude adjustment made a world of difference.

I also stopped focusing on all of the obstacles and instead highlighted all of the positive aspects to my situation. Working outside the home and being in school afforded me the opportunity to have exposure to a multitude of people I would not have had if I had already been at home. So while people now still say, "you're lucky you get to work at home" (I assure you it's not luck, it's sheer determination and A LOT of work) I also think, 'ya but, the only person I see is the mail lady on a daily basis.'" It's hard to continue to build a business when you don't actually SEE people.

If you're wanting to start a business and you're also working outside the home, there are plenty of opportunities to do so – before or after work, at lunch or during a break; and don't forget that you can build relationships with others while walking down the hall, or traveling to and

from the parking lot. Don't put unrealistic demands on yourself. Even if you only have 10 minutes each day to devote to your business... do SOMETHING each day. Don't think that if you can't devote 1-2 hours a day or 8 hours a week that you might as well not even try. It may take you a bit longer but think of the tortoise and the hare. Consistency is the key!

<http://www.thrivingcandlebusiness.com>

You're Invited

I hope you enjoyed this book and were able to take away ideas and strategies that you can implement in your life and business very soon.

To support your journey, I'd like to **invite you** to view and download the free resources and articles provided to members of the Small Business Study (www.smallbusinessstudy.com). This is a free membership site.

I wish you much success in your employment and in your journey to running your own business from home!