

THE HOME BUSINESS GUIDE

A GUIDE TO STARTING AND
GROWING A BUSINESS FROM HOME

BIS | Department for Business
Innovation & Skills

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INTRODUCTION

Record numbers of people are starting a business and becoming their own boss and over 60% of these businesses are started from home. Could this be an option for you?

Up and down the UK, people are spotting gaps in the market and realising there are customers for the skills, knowledge or assets they have developed through employment or personal passions. These entrepreneurs are using their home space to bring business ideas to life.

There are many benefits to a home-based business, including the 60-second commute, being able to build a business around family life, and reduced overheads from not having to pay for commercial premises.

This is why people choose to start at home. We're now seeing growing home businesses make full use of technology and communications to reach customers and generate income and profits without having to expand out of their home space.



Is a business based at home right for you?

Ask yourself:

Do I have a product or service that people will pay money for? This is no different to any kind of business in any location – a bright idea needs to be supported by good market research and a sound business plan in which you demonstrate how you will generate sales, pay the bills and make a profit.

See pages 6–7 on how to come up with an idea and pages 9–10 for how write a business plan. Check out Lord Young's Enterprise Report (www.bis.gov.uk/make-business-your-business-report) for links to useful resources and support to start and grow.

Are there advantages to me locating my business from home?

Is it flexibility you're after, including the ability to balance family commitments with making a living? Or is it about affordability, recognising that costs associated with work premises can be minimised by running a business from home?

Does my home lend itself to a business? What's the nature and scale of your business – can your home accommodate the business without disrupting family life and neighbourly relationships? Do you have space, perhaps an attic, spare room or garden shed, or even part of an active living space which could be utilised for business purposes?

If you answer “yes” to these questions then this guide can help. It can give you the confidence to get started and get a good business idea off the ground, backed up by a professional image. The guide covers business essentials like rates, insurance and health and safety considerations as well as practical steps and top tips from those already running a successful business from home.

1 **START WITH
AN IDEA
AND A PLAN**

Finding that bright and brilliant business idea

To get started in business, you need a business idea! Ask yourself these three questions:

Have you tried to buy something that you just can't find? Could others be looking for the same thing? If so, this presents a market opportunity. Have you ever wondered 'why doesn't such a product exist?' or 'why isn't a particular service available?' – if so, it's time for you to plug that gap!

Many people are turning what they love into a way of making a living. Best of all, when you work on what you enjoy doing it never really feels like work! Are you a dab hand at DIY? Have an eye for photography? A head for figures? These skills and hobbies can easily be turned into a business as you offer products or services to friends and family – they tell others – and before you know it, you're in business!

This is what happened to Laura Helps, who turned a passion for baking into a tasty profit with her spare-time business, Cakes by Laura (see next page).



If you've bought something and been unimpressed, why not step in, set up in business, and provide a better offer? Many good ideas stem from spotting products and services that can be improved upon. Think about whether you could package a product in a better way, offer a service more efficiently or add an extra bell or whistle to make something that's rather ordinary, quite unique.

* * *

Your idea will develop over time. Don't be surprised if in 12 months' time it looks different to when you started out. This is okay and a natural result of refining the business and clarifying the market offer. What's important is to get started with the beginnings of an idea – there'll be time to develop it as you get feedback from customers and input from others.

CASE STUDY

NAME: LAURA HELPS | BUSINESS: CAKES BY LAURA

Laura Helps was working from home as a customer services officer, and, in her spare time, liked to cook and bake. She decided to try her hand at making and decorating a Christmas cake.

"It was the ugliest cake you've ever seen but it sparked a passion. So I baked, and decorated, and soon got to the point where I was being asked to make cakes for friends and family. News of my work got passed on via word of mouth and Cakes by Laura was born!"

To ensure she was health-and-safety-checked to cook in the kitchen and sell the finished item, Laura ordered the 'Safer Food, Better Business' pack from the Food Standards Agency and worked through the items that applied to her activity (which wasn't much, as cakes are so low risk). She then called the local Environmental Health department, who sent an officer to check working conditions in her kitchen.

"We talked about the risks; she had a look around the kitchen, and passed me, subject to completing a Food Hygiene certificate, which I did."

With her first few customers being friends and family, Laura then started to secure orders via her website – which now accounts for 80% of orders.

“I spend time every week uploading new photos to the site and changing the content. I also use Facebook and Twitter to try and create a buzz around my products. Word of mouth is my second-biggest promoting tool and it’s completely free!”

In terms of advice for others looking to tread the same path, Laura has this to say:

“Research, research, and when you’re done, research some more. Read as much as you can about running your own business; ask questions of people currently running a business, as their experience may prove invaluable. But most of all – enjoy it! It’s so rewarding to see your business grow.”

■ www.cakesbylaura.co.uk | [@cakesbylaura](https://www.instagram.com/cakesbylaura)

Franchise is a good idea!

If you’d rather buy into someone else’s idea and a proven business model, franchising could be ideal for you. Buying into a franchise or direct-selling opportunity enables you to be self-employed and benefit from being part of an entrepreneurial team that provides you with templates, branding, training and help with finances.

Whether your passion is gardening, music, homewares or hospitality, there’s a franchise opportunity for you. And who knows, with the right idea it could be you franchising your business to others in the future!

It's all in the planning

After coming up with an idea and doing your research, writing a brief business plan is your first practical step to starting your business.

A business plan will act as your map; it will guide the business from start to growth, with reference to milestones along the way. The plan will include information about how you intend to get started and what your ultimate objectives are – and how you aim to get from one to the other. You might want to start a business and sell it in a few years' time, or grow to a point where you wouldn't want to grow anymore. And, of course, you'll need to refer to resources: what you have already, what you'll need and how you'll pay for it.

You may also need a plan if you're looking to raise money, whether from friends or family or from the bank.

With it in hand, you'll be off on your business journey. Or **IMOFF**.



I'M OFF

It's an easy way to remember the headings to include in your business plan: Idea, Market, Operations, Financials and Friends.

Idea

What's your idea?

Market

Who will be your customers or clients? And who is your competition?

Operations

How will you develop the idea, promote it, and provide good customer service?

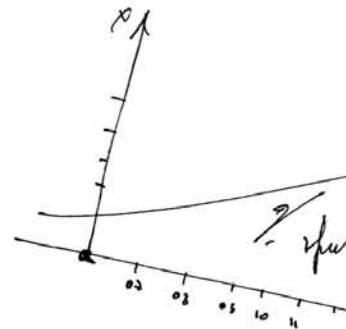
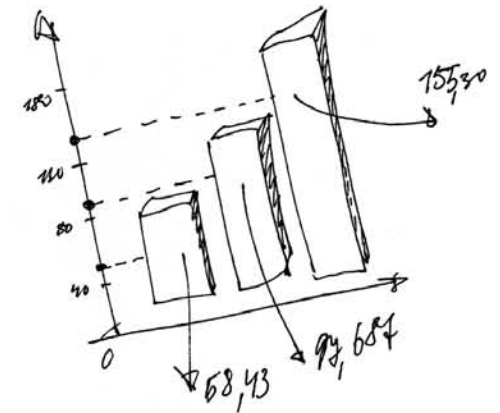
Financials

Can you earn more than you spend, so that the business makes a profit? Do you need any funds to get started?

Friends

Do you have a support network on hand for when you need business advice? Are there complementary businesses you've identified with whom partnerships are a possibility?

Have these as headings in your plan and you've taken a big step closer to becoming your own boss.



2 TAKE CARE OF HOUSEHOLD AND COMPANY ADMIN

With a business plan prepared, it's time to work on household admin and make friends with the neighbours!

When you start and grow your business from home, you may have a few questions about who you need to inform. Here are the answers.

Q: Do I need planning permission?

A: You'll need planning permission to base your business at home if you answer 'yes' to any of these questions:

- will your home no longer be used mainly as a private residence?
- will your business result in a marked rise in traffic or people calling?
- will your business involve any activities that are unusual in a residential area?
- will your business disturb the neighbours at unreasonable hours or create other forms of nuisance such as noise or smells?

If your house is pretty much going to remain a house, with your business quietly accommodated within it, then permission shouldn't be required. If you're unsure, contact your local council to seek their views. www.planningportal.gov.uk

Q: Do I need to tell the local authority I'm working from home?

A: This depends on whether you pass the planning test. If you need planning permission, you'll have to inform your local authority.

Q: Do I need to tell the landlord?

A: Yes, it's best to let them know that you will be working from home. The good news is that the government announced on 1 November 2010 that social landlords should review any contracts prohibiting people from running a business from home.

Q: Do I need to inform my mortgage provider?

A: Yes, it's best to let them know – even though it shouldn't mean any change in the mortgage repayment.

Q: What about my insurance provider? Do they need to know?

A: Yes, do inform your insurance company. Tell them about the equipment and stock you have at home. An upgrade from a domestic to a business policy is not usually expensive so don't be put off in making this call. Your insurance provider is likely to recommend that you also take out public liability insurance in case anyone who comes to visit suffers an injury

in or around your home office. See page 14 for details of the type of insurance you may need.

Q: Do I need protection for when customers and contacts come to visit?

A: Yes, carry out a health and safety check, which is easy to do by following the steps set out by the Health and Safety Executive in their homeworking guide (PDF available at www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg163.pdf).

- Health and Safety Executive | www.hse.gov.uk

Q: Should I tell the neighbours?

A: Yes. See to the right for more advice!

Everyone needs good neighbours

When working from home it's worth keeping your neighbours sweet and firmly on side. You don't want them getting annoyed by any deliveries or unusual distractions.

- Explain to your neighbours that you are running a business from home and that it shouldn't cause them any disturbance. (If it will cause them disturbance, see above: you'll need planning permission!)
- Keep your promise and try to keep disruptions to a minimum. Avoid big heavy deliveries at anti-social hours and streams of client traffic clogging up the roads.
- If the business reaches a major milestone, maybe host a party for your neighbours.
- Make friends with other homeworkers in your neighbourhood, so you can demonstrate together that the way you work is beneficial to the economy of the area and its safety, for example you can keep an eye on your neighbours' houses during the day.
- If you know of a time when there'll be an unusual amount of activity in your home office, let your neighbours know in advance and perhaps send a bottle of wine to thank them for their cooperation.

Be insured

There are different categories of insurance which you need to know about to secure the policy that's right for you. The main ones are:

Professional indemnity – relevant to businesses offering services and knowledge and provides protection if you receive a claim alleging a negligent act, error or omission committed by you in the course of the conduct of your professional business.

Public liability – advisable to have if clients are visiting your home office and/or you are supplying goods to consumers. This will protect you in the event of potential injury to business visitors and/or damages arising from the supply or sale of goods which have caused injury to a third party or their property.

Business interruption – covers your potential loss of revenue following a material damage loss.

Employer's liability – applies when you have employees and offers protection in the event of death or injury to them sustained in the course of their employment.

Motor insurance – this is different to standard car insurance, which does not include business use. If you have a vehicle dedicated for business use to carry stock and/or products, you should buy motor insurance or get a business extension on your car insurance policy when using your existing car for business travel.

Home insurance – you are likely to already have a home insurance policy but this will generally not cover business activities carried out at home or business equipment within the home. Speak to your insurance provider and upgrade to a business policy. This is not usually costly but it will ensure you're protected.

Registering the company and protecting your brand

As the business comes into being, so does a duty to register the company as a trading entity. There's also the company assets to consider (brand/name/idea) and how to protect them.

Register the company

When you set up in business there is one key organisation to contact and inform: HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) (www.hmrc.gov.uk). If you decide to start a limited company or a limited liability partnership you will also need to register with Companies House (www.companieshouse.gov.uk). Before contacting either, have a think about the company status that suits you best. There are a number of options:

Self-employed

As it sounds, this means working for yourself; you keep records and accounts of your own activity, and, in acting alone, get to keep all the profits – but are also solely liable for any debts.

If you set up as a self-employed sole trader you don't need to register with Companies House or take on many of the

accounting duties that come with being a limited company, as outlined below. Whilst there are continuing filing obligations with Companies House for a limited company or LLP, there is also the key benefit of the owners not being personally liable for any of the company/partnership's debts.

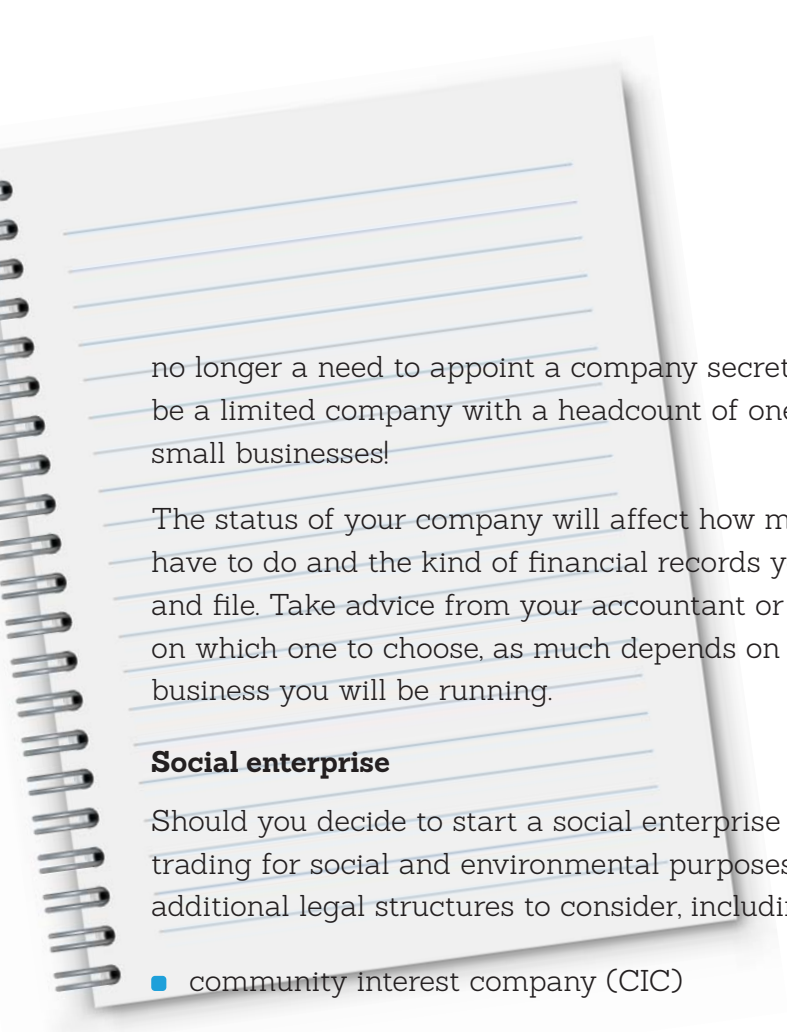
Partnership

If you'd like to be self-employed but want to work with a friend or colleague, consider a partnership. It means that two or more people share the risks, costs, profits and workload. Partnerships do not have to file accounts at Companies House but there are filing requirements with HMRC, as outlined below. A limited liability partnership or LLP is structured in the same way as a normal partnership but, as it sounds, limits the liability of each partner. An LLP is required to file many of the same documents with Companies House as a limited company.

Find out more about the legal status of partnerships on the Business Link site at tinyurl.com/6k7dmml

Limited company

Limited companies exist in their own right, with the company's finances kept separate from the personal finances of its owner(s). Limited companies have filing responsibilities with both Companies House and HMRC as noted below, but it's now much easier to launch a limited company as there is



no longer a need to appoint a company secretary. So you can be a limited company with a headcount of one, like many small businesses!

The status of your company will affect how much admin you have to do and the kind of financial records you must keep and file. Take advice from your accountant or local tax office on which one to choose, as much depends on the type of business you will be running.

Social enterprise

Should you decide to start a social enterprise – a business trading for social and environmental purposes – there are additional legal structures to consider, including:

- community interest company (CIC)
- industrial and provident society
- charitable status.

To find out more about launching a social enterprise or creating a community interest company visit:

- Social Enterprise UK | www.socialenterprise.org.uk
- CIC regulator | www.cicregulator.gov.uk



Companies House

When registering with Companies House there are two options from which to choose. You can either pay a company formation agent to incorporate a company for you, or incorporate a company yourself online with Companies House for a small fee. www.companieshouse.gov.uk (select 'Start a company')

Every year limited companies and LLPs must file a copy of their accounts and an annual return with Companies House. This then becomes public information.

HM Revenue & Customs

The rules on registering a new business with HM Revenue & Customs are pretty clear-cut. You are required to register as soon as you start earning from any business activity. As above, you can choose to register as self-employed, as a partnership, or as a limited company. Each category has its own filing requirements, which you can complete as outlined below.

Sole trader/self-employed

The calculation of tax due and National Insurance owing is done through self-assessment.

You either need to complete form CWF1 or call the newly self-employed business helpline. This should be done by 5th October after the end of the tax year in which you started your business in order to avoid a fine.

- Form CWF1 | www.hmrc.gov.uk/forms/cwf1.pdf
- Helpline for the newly self-employed | 0845 915 4515

Useful links

- Leaflet SE1 – ‘Thinking of working for yourself?’ | www.hmrc.gov.uk/leaflets/se1.pdf
- Helping you understand self-assessment and your tax return | www.hmrc.gov.uk/sa

Partnership

According to HMRC, a partnership is where:

“Two or more people set up a business. Each partner is personally responsible for all the business debts, even if the debt was caused by another partner. As partners, each pays income tax on their share of the business profits through self-assessment, as well as National Insurance.”

In terms of filing requirements, each partner should complete a partnership supplementary page as part of their individual self-assessment tax return. This is in addition to a partnership return, which has to be submitted by one nominated partner and show each partner’s share of profits/losses.

Limited company

As mentioned, limited company’s finances are distinct from the finances of their owner(s). What this means is that the company is liable for its own debts, not the individual owners, as is the case if you are self-employed or in a partnership. In April 2008 it became legal to form and run a limited company with just one person, without the need to involve anyone else (prior to this, by law you also needed a company secretary).

As well as registering with Companies House, you also need to let HMRC know you are operating as a limited company. You can do this by completing form CT41G. You can also do this when incorporating online. www.companieshouse.gov.uk (select ‘Start a company’)

You will also need to set up and register a PAYE scheme as you are an employee of the company.

- Register PAYE scheme | www.hmrc.gov.uk/newemployers
- New employer’s helpline | 0845 60 70 143

In terms of filing requirements, you must complete a self-assessment company tax return at the end of the accounting period. The return will show the company’s taxable profits and whether any corporation tax is owed, and can be filed online at www.hmrc.gov.uk/ct. Legislation also requires that all limited companies and LLPs must file a separate Annual Return each year with Companies House:

ewf.companieshouse.gov.uk/help/en/stdwf/faqHelp.html

On your returns, you can claim wear-and-tear allowances (capital allowances) on any work-related equipment you buy, and also an element of your expenses for working from home. You can also claim travelling expenses, subsistence and a proportion of your phone calls.

Visit the 'Tax allowances and reliefs if you're self-employed' section on the Business Link website to view the tax allowances, deductions and reliefs you can claim:

tinyurl.com/5sjt2sx

VAT

Whichever tax status you choose, if your business turns over more than £77,000 (2012/13 tax year), or you think your turnover will soon exceed this amount, you should also register for value added tax (VAT).

You can voluntarily register at any time. Being VAT-registered can bring credibility with certain customers, but adding VAT to your invoices may make you more expensive than competitors and you will have to file a VAT return four times a year.

- How and when to register for VAT | www.hmrc.gov.uk/vat/start/register

Useful links

- Starting a Business | www.hmrc.gov.uk/startingup
- Tax help and advice for small business | www.businesslink.gov.uk/taxhelp

Business rates

The final form of tax to bear in mind is business rates. A business working from a room in the business owner's home will generally not be subject to business rates unless the room is used exclusively for non-domestic purposes. Further information can be found on the Business Link website at www.businesslink.gov.uk/businessrates.

See page 12 to determine if you need to contact your local authority about planning permission and therefore the applicability of business rates.

Protect the brand

You have now registered with HM Revenue & Customs and possibly Companies House. Your final consideration should be your intellectual property. You may decide to register a trade mark to protect your company name or brand or, if you've come up with a unique invention, a patent. This means that companies can't come along and use your name or invention without your permission. You must also be careful to avoid using anyone else's intellectual property without their permission.

The four forms of IP


There are four different kinds of intellectual property that you can protect.

1. **Patents:** These are, essentially, what makes things work. For example, what makes a wheel turn or the chemical formula in your favourite toothpaste.
2. **Trade marks:** These are signs (like words and logos) that distinguish goods and services in the marketplace.
3. **Designs:** Protecting the unique look of the whole or parts of your product, from the shape of an aeroplane to a fashion item.
4. **Copyright:** Protects creative works like literary, musical and artistic works, films, broadcasts and software.



Visit the UK Intellectual Property Office website to carry out searches, register trade marks and read up on all things IP-related.

3 **CREATE THE
PERFECT
WORK
ENVIRONMENT**



One of the great benefits of basing the business at home is the ability to work where and how you like, whilst wearing what you like! Create an environment to suit and equip your office with the tools and accessories that will deliver a productive end result.

Find dedicated space

Try to create an area in the house that functions as your dedicated workspace. That way you can mentally adjust yourself to be in business mode when in that space. It helps you to know when you should be working and when you should be taking a break.

It will also help make it clear to friends and family that when you're in your home office or studio, you're working. And when the door's closed, it means, 'I'm busy. Please don't disturb'.

This dedicated space could be a spare room, in the attic, under the stairs or even the garden shed. For garden office dwellers, one blog you will like is Shedworking (www.shedworking.co.uk). Founder of the blog, Alex Johnson, says:

"I've worked in all sorts of spaces in various countries, from Real Madrid's training ground to a suburban Hertfordshire cellar, but nothing has come close to working in a garden office, which is why I set up the Shedworking website. It's a perfect place to work, a creative den of seclusion which offers the ceremony of going to the office but with a 30-second commute. It's the creative element that every shedworker I've met has commented upon, a space where you can really work efficiently (and comfortably)."

■ www.shedworking.co.uk | @shedworking

A light touch

Lots of light is good for your mood and work pace but avoid too much task-light shining on the computer monitor. As for colours on the walls, go for light shades as they will make the space look bigger, and consider mirrors to bounce light around.

Invest in a good desk and chair

Depending on the nature of your business, you could be spending a good few hours each day at the desk and in your chair, so be sure they're both sturdy and comfortable! Buy a chair that's designed for computer use – and try it out first. Sitting in an awkward position can put your body under stress, so make sure you can adjust the chair's height and angle to suit you. Ideally, your feet should be flat on the floor and your back straight. Getting this right will make working from home so much more comfortable!

Get a good, sturdy desk that can accommodate your computer, monitor, keyboard and mouse. The top of your monitor should be at eye level and the monitor itself about an arm's length away from you.

Double-up

Invest in storage boxes and turn your wardrobes into filing cabinets! Or buy big boxes, label them well and then find a place to hide them away; maybe doubling up as a chair for visitors.

A spring clean

Wondering what to do with all the stuff in the room that you want to use as your home office? Take space with a storage company and have goods accessible but out of the way, or give them up to a recycling company such as Green Works (www.green-works.co.uk) or Freecycle (www.freecycle.org), so your unwanted items can go to a home that does want them!

Vision board

Set goals and stay on track with the use of a vision board. A vision board is a visual reminder of what you're trying to achieve in your business and personal life and, attached to the home office wall, can act as a useful daily prompt and pep talk!

Buy a basic board and stick to it pictures that represent your ambitions; places you want to visit, targets for the company, and people with whom you enjoy spending time. Glance at it each day to remind yourself of everything you're working for and towards and to measure how the business is doing. Such a board will encourage you to stay motivated and hit the

targets you've set as well as maintaining the bigger picture of where you want the business to go.

Try a virtual vision board with www.pinterest.com.

Elle de la Mar's start-up is based at the dining room table but plans are afoot for the spare room ...



CASE STUDY

NAME: ELLE DE LA MARE | BUSINESS: THE STRAWBERRY THIEF COMPANY

Before starting her own business, Elle de la Mare was working as a publications coordinator for a company specialising in opera and ballet DVDs and Blu-ray discs.

"I worked closely with the producer for the company, the booklet editor and the designers, as well as the opera house whose title we were releasing to ensure that all the artwork was completed, approved and delivered to the printers to a deadline."

Becoming her own boss had always been a daydream for Elle and one she admits she probably would not have had the courage to do whilst employed, which is why being made redundant was the kick she needed to go her own way.

"Having been 'pushed' rather than voluntarily 'jumped' into having my own business I decided I would do everything I could to make a success of it – after all there are many benefits; I leave for work at 8.59am with guaranteed arrival at 9am. I play my choice of music in the 'office' and am able to deal with that last email without being late home!"

Elle started the business in August 2011 and is currently working from the dining room table. She has plans to

re-design a spare bedroom to double up as an office and is looking forward to shutting the door on work after finishing for the day and not having to pack everything away to have dinner in a civilised manner!

“My children are very supportive and respect the fact that even though I am at home I am really at work and that deadlines still have to be met. It’s a good idea to have distinct ‘office’ hours and ‘home’ hours; that way everyone knows where they are and I have a routine too, just as if I was out at work. However, one of the benefits of working from home is that should you be up against a deadline you can juggle family needs, go back to work in the evening, and still be a good (guilt-free) parent.”

Elle is now developing ideas in other areas to build her business, having always dreamt of using her artistic talent in drawing to earn a living. You can be sure she’ll make a success of it whilst still being on hand for friends and family.

Tech fit-out

When it comes to equipping your home office with IT, this needn’t mean starting from scratch or spending lots of money. Once your business grows you can upgrade your technology as and when funds become available. To start with, there are affordable solutions that can get you up and running in no time at all – you may have some of them already!

Computer

When starting out, using your home’s shared computer or personal laptop will be just fine. Bear in mind, however, that in the first few months of starting your business you may find yourself working more hours than usual, trying to get it all set up – so prepare cohabiting friends and family for the possibility of reduced access!

Also, when your business grows, the data you accumulate – information on your customers, clients and contacts, including financial details – will become more and more valuable. You might then think twice about sharing your computer with the rest of the family.

For that reason, and the flexibility you’ll have in deciding when and where you can work, you might consider buying a

separate laptop computer. There was a time when doing so was much more expensive than buying a desktop computer, but in recent years the prices have almost levelled off.

Multifunction printer

Imagine keeping a printer, scanner, photocopier and fax machine in one home office – you'd have no room to do any work! This is where multifunction printers come in as they enable you to have full functionality in one device and act as real space-savers!

External hard drive

These are great for extending the storage capacity of your computer – so you can keep more data and programs – but they're especially useful for backing up the entirety of your machine. They're easy to set up – just plug them in and they show up in your operating system as another drive. You can then just drag and drop important folders or use special software that automates the process for you.

Webcam

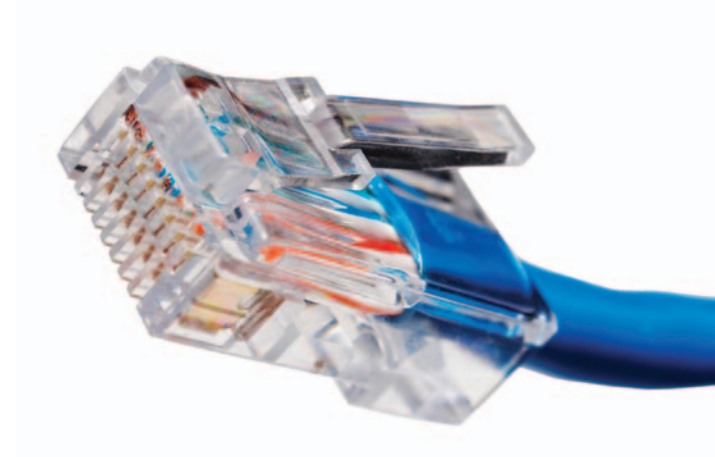
A webcam enables you to video chat with clients and contacts and is useful when you need to have a 'face-to-face' meeting but can't get away.

VoIP phones

You can make serious savings on your phone bill by using a VoIP phone. VoIP stands for voice over internet protocol and it basically means making calls over the internet rather than by using your phone line. As such, it's a much cheaper way of making calls (it's sometimes free). And it's the easiest way to set up a second phone line.

If you use VoIP or internet calling you can assign a landline-sounding phone number to your account, so you can receive calls at your computer using a VoIP handset or divert calls to your mobile when you're out and about.

Lee Fuller and Ali Gallop's business is completely reliant on technology; they use it, teach it, and live and breathe it!



CASE STUDY

NAME: LEE FULLER AND ALI GALLOP | BUSINESS: SOCIAL BIZZLE

Having known each other since the age of seven, it wasn't until they were in their early 20s when Lee and Ali decided to combine their skills and start a business. That business is teaching small businesses how to make the most of Facebook, and is run from a home that these two entrepreneurs share.

"We converted our lounge into a full office and recording studio and have a rented Regus office too. With living and running a business together, 99% of our conversations are around work, the other 1% is arguing about who is the better Xbox player on *Fifa 12*."

The partners are both responsible for the training products but do divide responsibilities when it comes to company operations, with Ali being the creative and technical genius whilst Lee is responsible for sales and marketing.

The partnership works well and the young company is attracting growing attention. To raise profile, Social Bizzle runs campaigns across AdWords, Facebook and StumbleUpon and forms joint ventures with other businesses that have a route to market. Lee and Ali are also midway through a UK tour in their Bizzle Bus, visiting companies to offer face-to-face advice. They are picking up press profile along the way!

Being able to start and grow the business from home has kept overheads at a minimum and means in the early days, time and investment can be concentrated in the business. And what a business this is set to be!

■ www.socialbizzle.com | @socialbizzle

Getting connected

You'll need broadband right from the start: during your research, while you're setting up your business, through to when it grows and takes over the world!

Your two main options are ADSL broadband and cable broadband with the biggest difference being that ADSL requires a phone line, while cable broadband does not.

The advantage of cable broadband is that if you don't have a landline phone, and always use your mobile, you can save money by not having to pay line rental on your phone as well as on your internet connection. It's often faster, too, but you'll need to check whether it's available in your area. ADSL broadband is more commonplace and there are lots of companies offering it.

As always, read the fine print before you sign anything. Here are some things to look out for:

Price – some broadband prices seem really cheap but often the prices advertised are for the first few months of an 18-month contract, so make sure you know what you're getting into before you sign anything.

Usage – some broadband companies will set restrictions on the amount of data you can download in a month and sometimes even charge you extra if you go over your agreed limit. These limits rarely affect most users, but if your business is the kind that needs to send and receive lots of information, look for deals with generous monthly download allowances. Or, better still, unlimited downloads.

Customer support – if you're installing broadband for the first time, you might need some help setting up and also, once you're up and running, knowing what to do when your connection suddenly drops. For these sorts of queries it's handy to have good customer support, so check to see what's on offer and, crucially, how much it would cost to call for help.

Superfast broadband

Network providers are investing billions to deliver superfast fibre broadband to two-thirds of UK homes by the end of 2015. If you live in an area with an activated exchange, new speeds will power your business and enable you to work faster online and download rich digital media in no time. Find out if fibre is coming to your home by visiting www.bt.com/superfastbroadband. (You don't need to use BT to access broadband.)

Network

Be connected all around the house – and even in the garden – by setting up a wireless network. Your internet service provider may have already provided you with a router – a device that allows you to share your internet connection with other computers in your home.

There are two types of wireless router: one for ADSL and another for cable internet. Check with your internet service provider to find out which is the best router for your type of connection.

4 **CREATE THE
RIGHT
IMPRESSION**

You may feel cautious about running the business from home for fear it might not look too professional to clients and customers. But clients should be happy you're not loading prices or fees with expensive office costs. You can also make the most of services that give your home business a truly professional look and feel.

Office address

You might not want to put your home address on a business card or promotion materials as it sounds too domestic (or you might not want people turning up on your doorstep!).

A limited company or LLP's registered office address is public information, but you can use a P.O. Box number for your day-to-day contact details. This can be set up with Royal Mail (www.royalmail.com/pobox). Alternatively, invest in a virtual office, which gives you a more tailored and personal service than a P.O. Box – plus you get a nice-sounding address and a place to meet other home business owners and clients. Having a virtual office enables you to choose the address that suits you best. You can also have post delivered to that location and then forwarded on to you. Companies providing this service include:

- Regus | www.regus.co.uk
- Mail Boxes Etc. | www.mbe.co.uk
- eOffice | www.eoffice.net

When holding meetings, consider hiring professional meeting space. Many offer serviced addresses and secretarial services too, so there could be great continuity for your clients if they only have to remember one location.



The rise of the Work Hub

To cater to a vibrant market of home based businesses, spaces and places have launched to offer meeting space, co-working, organised events and informal meet-ups. They are spaces that offer your business a professional image as well as a route to meeting suppliers, partners and potential customers.

These spaces are flourishing in town and country and include:

- Central Working | www.centralworking.com
- Enterprise Hub Network | www.enterprisehubnetwork.com
- The Old Church School | www.theoldchurchschool.co.uk
- O2 Workshop | www.o2.co.uk/business/tottenhamcourtroad
- One Alfred Place | www.onealfredplace.com
- Hub Westminster | www.hubwestminster.net

- Club Workspace | club.workspacegroup.co.uk

- IndyCube | www.indycube.biz

- Third Door | www.third-door.com

And most recently, residential developer, Berkeley Homes, has launched enterprise and co-working hubs across a number of its residential developments. Let's have more of this, we say!

To check for available space in your area, visit www.startupbritain.org/spaces



On the phone

When running a business from home, consider who will be picking up the phone! It's cheap and sometimes free to get an 0845 local rate number or an 0870 national rate number for your business. This will hide where you're based and divert your calls to wherever you specify. But beware: sometimes having such a number – especially with national rates – might put customers off ringing you.

If you use a landline number it's best to have a separate line for your home and your business. It will stop your business calls from being answered by the kids and also give you a chance to escape work calls when you want to. You don't have to invest in an actual second line if you use a VoIP (voice over internet protocol) phone, which uses a broadband connection to make and receive calls.

Another idea is to get some help from a call-handling service. They will answer your calls with your company name, text urgent messages to you and email the others, giving you a big business feel for about £50 per month. Here are some companies that provide this service:

- Moneyppenny | www.moneyppenny.biz
- Answer | www.answer.co.uk
- JetVirtual | www.jetvirtual.co.uk
- The Answer Centre | www.theanswercentre.co.uk

You might consider a 'follow-me number' to ensure you're available when you need to be and able to deliver the right impression to clients. This involves choosing a number and directing calls from it to your landline or mobile. The beauty is that you have the option to select either a freephone or a geographical number so, say you'd like to have a Manchester area code, simply buy a number starting with 0161. The same goes for hundreds of other locations.

Route calls to your mobile and choose a local number in any of 21 countries to have a virtual local presence with companies including Skype (www.skype.com). Offer virtual phone numbers where the caller pays a local rate, regardless of where you are, through companies like Vonage (www.vonage.co.uk) or direct calls to you from a chosen number using internet technology and a virtual receptionist at companies such as eReceptionist (www.ereceptionist.co.uk). Check out the wide range of companies offering these services online.

**5 WORK ON
THE MOVE**

Sometimes it's good to get out of the house! To work on the move and en route to clients, or to work in spaces with other business owners as outlined above. Meet up with partners and clients and take the technology with you! With a few simple tips and tricks you can enjoy unprecedented flexibility, and work almost anywhere. Here's how to keep your enterprise on the go away from the home office.

With your computer

If you already have a fairly up-to-date laptop computer, you have much of what you need to work on the move. Most can pick up wireless internet access from receivers already built-in. But if you have a slightly older laptop you can buy a small adaptor which you plug into a spare USB port.

The other thing to invest in might be a spare battery. Take a fully charged laptop on the go, and a fully charged spare battery, and you'll be able to keep working away from your desk all day. Some modern laptops have such long battery life that this might not be necessary, but it's good to have a back up.

Accessing Wi-Fi hotspots

If you use your laptop computer in a public place like a coffee shop, a library, hotel lobby or even some public parks, you'll find you can connect to a Wi-Fi hotspot. These are wireless internet connections that allow you to surf the web, check your email and instant message when you're away from your home office.

Some coffee shops now have deals with third party providers to offer Wi-Fi hotspots free of charge. Use MyHotspots to find your nearest Wi-Fi locations.

■ myHotspots | www.myhotspots.co.uk



Everything from anywhere

If you already use web mail, you'll be used to the idea of your messages and contacts being available from any computer connected to the internet. So, how about running your entire business from any computer anywhere?

Web applications are programs that run online rather than on your computer alone. You run them through your web browser and all the data is stored on the internet so, in effect, you can use them and your information from pretty much any computer anywhere!

One example (others are in the case study) is provided by Google, whose Google Apps offering (www.google.com/a) includes email, instant messaging, a calendar, word processor, spreadsheet and presentation software, as well as a website builder.

All the work you do is stored on the internet so you can log in and out from anywhere and see the same information. Also, if your computer crashes or you buy a new system you won't lose any data or have to reinstall it on a new machine.

CASE STUDY

NAME: MICHAEL EDGE | BUSINESS: KINDRED HQ

Michael Edge is co-founder of independent worker community site **KindredHQ.com**. Here's a man who practices what he preaches when it comes to working on the move with at least 70% of Michael's time spent working away from home.

"In the morning I usually tick off a few easy tasks at home so I can avoid the rush hour. Personally I'm not a fan of working from home all day, every day. Most of us find solitude challenging and it can easily have a negative effect on your productivity. As humans we generally need companionship, so I'll often head to an inspirational space, a café or a co-working event."

Having tried being a member of a co-working space, Michael soon became bored of going to the same place each day – it felt too much like being back at 'work'! Instead, Michael likes to mix things up and visits a variety of places through the week.

"My favourite spots in London are The Royal Festival Hall (which has one of the best views in town), Prufrock (great coffee on Leather Lane), Hoxton Hotel Lobby (very cosy) and Google's new Campus in Shoreditch (well equipped and

a nice buzz). I also help organise co-working events at venues such as Mozilla Space and The O2 Workshop.”

When it comes to the tools that liberate Michael to work from anywhere, he says the MacBook Air is the current weapon of choice due to its low weight, fast start-up time and battery life. He’s tried an iPad but just can’t figure out how to type fast enough!

“All my files are synced to **Dropbox.com** so they are safe and I can access them anywhere. We use Google Apps to run our email, calendars and contacts in the Cloud, and collaborate with clients and each other via instant messaging. I’ve also started to use **Bufferapp.com** so that I don’t have to constantly update our social media platforms.”

Michael consciously tries to stay paper-free as much as possible so he can keep everything on the laptop or hosted in the Cloud to enable working from anywhere.

“It still blows my mind that you can do so many complex things on such a tiny device. Only a few years ago you’d have to be chained to a desk with a giant machine and monitor to do anything like website design, video editing,

graphics or music production, but now I can literally do everything anywhere!”

Michael’s tip is to hunt out ‘local knowledge’ of the best inspiring work-spots with Wi-Fi and power (there are online resources for this such as **Worksug.com**) and not to forget to enjoy the freedom and spend some time outdoors.

This appetite for the outdoors may have come from Michael’s time in the Scouts, of which he says:

“My time in the Scouts trained me to always ‘Be Prepared’, and I think that’s the mindset you have to adopt as a mobile worker. Assume you won’t have access to anything. Bring along some water, charge your devices to full, have the right power leads and projection adapters. Make sure you’ve got some work you can do if you can’t scavenge any Wi-Fi or power. An old-fashioned notepad and pen always comes in handy. And always be prepared to promote yourself with business cards and your elevator pitch. You never know, that person sipping a flat white next to you could be your next big client.”

■ www.kindredhq.com

6 GROW THE BUSINESS WITHOUT OUTGROWING THE HOME

Your business is getting known and making money and you're looking at options on how to scale and grow.

Achieve this through:

- Product-ising
- Going global
- Outsourcing



Product-ising

If you're making handmade goods or selling knowledge, you'll have soon realised there's only one of you and you can only sell as much as you can make, or if you're selling knowledge can only be in one place at one time. As scientists haven't yet worked out how to make more of you, in order to grow the business you can take the knowledge/skill/talent you have and put it in a box!

- **Kits** – let's take the example of someone making unique dresses. Continue to make your signature style hand-made dress at a price that reflects your time and dedication, but consider adding a kit to the range that supplies customers with the material and instructions for putting together their own versions.
- **Courses** – maybe you're selling works of art or making fine cakes and want to 'product-ise' – in which case, how about launching and teaching a class as an ideal way to expand? You get to meet customers and have an opportunity to talk to the press and promote classes in the media and have your name and brand appear in front of more people. You can even sell your produce at the classes! When it comes to looking for space, consider your own home or approach the

owner of the local coffee shop to ask if he would be happy for you to use the space at times when they are usually quiet; that way you're likely to get space for free in return for introducing footfall. Other places to consider could be your library, community centre/church hall or even a local business.

Carol Powell has followed both routes in order to grow her business, Re-jigged, from the family home ...

CASE STUDY

NAME: CAROL POWELL | BUSINESS: RE-JIGGED

Carol Powell has always had a talent for sewing and a passion for fashion design.

"I learnt to sew when I was very young and at five years old made dolls clothes engineered from scraps of fabrics and tried to sell them in a local sweet shop! Whilst at school, I took a Saturday job working in a fabric shop and then worked for a local interior designer. Both jobs gave me great experience in cutting fabrics and making clothes. This experience stood me in good stead for Re-jigged."

The beginnings of the company came about when Carol made a dress for her daughter from an old jumper with holes in the sleeves and a shirt Carol couldn't bear to throw out. When other mums started to comment on the beautiful design, Carol thought she should make some more! In 2009, Carol's talent was turned into a fully-fledged business, creating employment for local mums and helping others with every sale.

"Before launching, I contacted lots of national charities in order to source unwanted, unusable garments. I wanted clothes that were damaged and of no use to charity shops and eventually decided to support local causes. I also wanted to give something back to those that support me, so

in return for clothing donations, for every garment I sell, Re-jigged donates money to charities, schools and groups.”

Children from the area are benefiting in other ways as Carol has launched sewing classes to help retain the skills of sewing and embroidery and inspire young people to make the most of their own creative talents.

In a further expansion, Carol is producing kits so customers can create their own Re-jigged clothes. It's a sensible way to scale the business.

“Making one garment takes a long time and is labour intensive and ideally I'd like more people to benefit from Re-jigged clothing, so we have launched our first kit which is a 'Tank top in a tin' that comes with a needle, thread, wool and instructions on how to make your own garment. These are selling fast and are much quicker to produce than us hand-sewing the garment ourselves.”

Carol promotes the business through social media and directs people to her professional, well-designed website. She also enters awards such as The Pitch in which she was a 'Best New Business 2010' finalist. Carol encourages people to sign up for her email newsletter so she can keep in regular contact with existing and prospective clients.

The business is run from a granary on the side of Carol's family farmhouse so this business owner remains on hand to be full-time mum. It's a way of life which has been re-jigged to perfection!

■ www.re-jigged.co.uk | @rejigged

Go global

With exchange rates in our favour and enabling technology to hand, there's never been a better time to look beyond domestic shores for business. By virtue of having a professional window to the world (i.e. website), start-ups and small businesses are going global faster than ever before – and doing so from home!

Access a free *Go Global* eBook (tinyurl.com/goglobalguide) and free downloadable app (tinyurl.com/goglobalapp), which offer five steps to go global and all the tools you need to be running an internationally successful business.

Small business managers can access tools to help them make greater and more effective use of the internet. This is about more than just selling online; it's about driving marketing

through social media and increasing website exposure through search engine optimisation. Web Fuelled Business (www.businesslink.gov.uk/webfuelled) provides these tools to help small firms achieve global and local reach.

Outsourcing

Grow profits by focusing on what you do best and outsourcing the rest. It's perfectly possible to achieve this and manage an expanding team from your own small office/home office.

With outsourcing you can free yourself up to dedicate your attention to sales, strategy or whatever the business activity is that you do best. So what can be outsourced?

- **Admin** – hire a VA (virtual assistant) to do the admin tasks you don't want or don't have the time to do. Visit VA directories and resources to find your perfect match.
- **PR, marketing and design** – outsource your PR to a specialist who can be pitching and promoting the business whilst you're at work.
- **Sales** – hire a sales expert to make calls, set up appointments and attend trade shows.
- **IT** – spending too many hours trying to fix a single IT problem? Outsource the hassle and save your time, money and blood pressure!
- **Accounts** – unless you are in the accountancy business, this is almost a must to be outsourced. Monthly payroll, accounts, VAT returns and corporate tax returns all take time and it's time you can't afford or simply don't have. A cost/benefit analysis is likely to show that it's cheaper to outsource to a qualified accountant. Ask around for recommendations of accountants in your area who deliver a quality service at a competitive cost and are registered with the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales.

Once you've chosen your outsourced partner(s), it's important to keep in regular contact and work together as a team. Make the most of online project management and collaboration tools to help you stay on top of projects and in control of the company.

Finding funds and meeting a mentor

Growing the business may require an injection of funds and some advice from someone who's had experience in growing sales and profits. You can find both via the Business in You site (www.businessinyou.org) which points to:

- Finance Finder (improve.businesslink.gov.uk/resources/business-finance-finder) – a searchable database of publicly-backed and private sources of finance including government grants and investment available from business angels and venture capitalists.
- Mentorsme (www.mentorsme.co.uk) – a place to find a mentor based on the stage of company growth and the region in which you're based.

The StartUp Britain site (www.startupbritain.org) is also a useful resource; highlighting events, awards, offers and useful links and content for anyone starting and growing a business.

Embrace all the support on offer via these sites, meet peers in vibrant online forums, connect with neighbouring home

business owners in local co-working spaces and enterprise hubs, and attend events and shows to be inspired on your business journey.

It's a great time to be starting and growing a business in the UK – and there's no better place to do it than at home!

**USEFUL
LINKS**

Case studies

www.cakesbylaura.co.uk
www.shedworking.co.uk
www.socialbizzle.com
www.kindredhq.com
www.re-jigged.co.uk

Admin

www.planningportal.gov.uk
www.businesslink.gov.uk/businessrates
www.hse.gov.uk
www.hmrc.gov.uk
www.companieshouse.gov.uk
www.socialenterprise.org.uk
www.cicregulator.gov.uk
www.businesslink.gov.uk
www.ipo.gov.uk

Work environment and tech

www.green-works.co.uk
www.freecycle.org
www.pinterest.com
www.skype.com
www.bt.com/superfastbroadband
www.royalmail.com/pobox
www.mbe.co.uk

www.eoffice.net
www.centralworking.com
www.enterprisehubnetwork.com
www.theoldchurchschool.co.uk
www.o2.co.uk/business/tottenham
courtroad
www.onealfredplace.com
www.eoffice.net
www.hubwestminster.net
club.workspacegroup.co.uk
www.indycube.biz
www.third-door.com
www.moneypenny.biz
www.regus.co.uk
www.answer.co.uk
www.vonage.co.uk
www.ereceptionist.co.uk
www.myhotspots.co.uk
www.google.com/a
www.dropbox.com
www.bufferapp.com
www.worksnug.com
www.theanswercentre.co.uk

Funds and mentors

www.businessinyou.org
[improve.businesslink.gov.uk/
resources/business-financefinder](http://improve.businesslink.gov.uk/resources/business-financefinder)
www.mentorsme.co.uk
www.startupbritain.org

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Emma Jones is a business expert, author, and founder of small business support company Enterprise Nation. Her books include *Go Global*, *The Start-Up Kit* and *Turn your Talent into a Business*. Following a five-year career at an international accounting firm, Emma started her first business at 27. That business was sold 18 months later, leading to Emma's next venture, Enterprise Nation – now the most popular for home business owners in the UK, attracting over 75,000 visitors each month.

Emma is also one of the founders of StartUp Britain.

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