



Executive Life

MAKING A HOME OFFICE WORK

We asked **Ahmad Ezzedine**, assistant dean of executive and professional development at **Wayne State University's** School of Business Administration, for some tips on making the home-based business a successful enterprise. Here's what he had to say:



Ezzedine

■ Keep business and personal lives separate

"Separating the two makes your life a lot easier, especially when it comes to tracking expenses and doing taxes. It's as simple as keeping separate phone lines, computers, bank accounts, etc.," said Ezzedine.



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■ Create an ergonomically comfortable work space

Allocate ample space and, as much as possible, duplicate the layout and furnishings that worked for you in corporate settings — for example, desk style and layout preference, filing cabinets, bulletin boards. "If that environment worked for you in the corporate office, it should work at home," he said.

Ezzedine advises against having clients in the home. "Unless you have a very impressive setting that would easily compare to a normal office setting, I would advise against it. If a phone rings in a regular office while meeting with a client, it's not a big deal, but if the dog is barking or the kids are screaming, it's not a good thing."

■ Be professional

"Behave as if you're in a corporate setting in every area, from your business card to the way you answer the phone to staying involved with your clients. If it helps that you get dressed up each morning, then do it because that attitude can be reflected in the quality of work you do.

"There is a stigma that home office employees have to overcome and their challenge is how they minimize it and how ... they can demonstrate to their clients that their working from home is not negatively impacting the quality of the work they produce or the speed and efficiency of their operation."

■ Seek out networking opportunities and ways to develop new skills

To avoid feeling isolated in a home office, get involved in local civic organizations or professional associations related to your industry. "This is where chambers of commerce come in, not just for your sanity and to stay in touch with people in your business, but also for ongoing development," said Ezzedine.

■ Set boundaries

Set clear expectations for yourself and those in your household. "Choose a work schedule that works for you and your clients and stick with it. Help family members to understand that when you're in your office, you are 'at work' and interruptions should be few. Consistency is key and, in the long run, it will help.

— JoAnn Amicangelo



REBECCA COOK

Author Charlene Proctor made sure her office was built away from the rest of the house to help keep her work life separate from her personal life. See Page 18.

Home suite home



Creating a comfortable space, Page 19.

Profiles by
JoAnn Amicangelo

Five million Americans or 3.8 percent of the population work from home offices, according the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey 2004.

In Michigan, nearly 140,000 say they work from home offices, while the U.S. Small Business Administration's Office of Advocacy reports that 52 percent of all small businesses are home-based.

On Pages 18-20 is a look at three metro Detroit businesspeople who work from home and the spaces they work in.



Secrets from years spent working from home, Page 20.

EXECUTIVE LIFE

A space to escape from the activity of a busy office

Charlene Proctor, principal of **The Goddess Network Inc.** in Birmingham, knows all about the need for boundaries in a home office.

She and her husband, Tom Proctor, president and CEO of **Proctor Financial Inc.** in Troy, built their new East Coast-style home at Turtle Lake in Bloomfield Hills with the intention of designing private office space for both of them.

"(Not having a defined space) was a problem in our previous home. Because the office wasn't separate from the rest of the house, we discovered the issues of our life and work were becoming so enmeshed it was unhealthy. We never knew where our personal and work lives began and ended," Charlene Proctor said.

Perched above twin garages overlooking the lake, Proctor's studio is the serene setting she needs to do the more creative work of her business. She works from home about three days a week and the rest of the week at her downtown Birmingham office where



WHAT WORKS

- Lots of windows for natural light.
- Exterior and interior entrances.

her employees work.

"At my office in Birmingham, it's a flurry of activity, and most of my energy goes to managing the computer network and marketing the business, but my real work of creating and what comes through me as a writer will always happen at home," Proctor said.

Proctor has worked from a home office for a number of years, so she knew exactly what she wanted in



REBECCA COOK

Charlene Proctor has written two books and writes a monthly inspirational message for her online newsletter.

her space: facing the sunrise, a great view, lots of windows for natural light and a private entrance to give her the freedom of having em-

ployees work there without crossing over into the private quarters.

Visitors can enter the office from a separate exterior entrance

on the main floor, while Proctor can access the office from a staircase near the kitchen or from the home's second floor. When Proctor works at the solid wood desk she commissioned from a northern Michigan artisan, she has a view of Turtle Lake. A black glass-tiled fireplace flanked by white built-in bookcases is the focal point at the end of the room. Light streams in from four arched windows on either side of the room, from a round window above the fireplace and an opening to the rooftop cupola.

Proctor's design prowess is evident in the room's relaxed sophistication. She chose sage green for the wall color, because she said it's known to produce a restful effect on the eyes, and crisp white for the trim. Lightly stained wide-plank oak floors are topped with bold, floral-patterned rugs and an eclectic mix of old and new comfortable furnishings in shades of green and dark pink. New black lateral files from Pottery Barn provide ample storage for Proctor's work.



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