

In association with:



Understanding... Getting ahead when working from home

How home-based working can
mean business success



Contents

- 03 Getting ahead when working from home
- 04 Why work from home?
- 08 Getting started
- 10 How technology can help you thrive
- 18 Management tips for home workers
- 20 Promoting your business
- 22 Being responsible
- 24 Getting advice



Understanding... Getting ahead when working from home

Welcome to 'Understanding... Getting ahead when working from home', one in our series of guides designed to help businesses compete and thrive.

In this guide we aim to demystify key topics by:

- Explaining the basic concepts of home working so you can see how it applies to your business
- Outlining key opportunities and benefits so you can see what is possible
- Advising on the best approach to move forward, helping you to make the right decisions for your business and to avoid common pitfalls
- Helping you to save time and money, simplifying the way you approach your work and technology to support your business

For further advice about technology and what it can do for your business, to access case studies and articles or to download copies of the other 'Understanding....' guides, go to BT Business Insight, a unique online resource for small businesses, at www.bt.com/insight

Guidance is also available from Growing Business, the UK's leading magazine for entrepreneurs. Go to www.growingbusiness.co.uk

To find out more about services that support women in business, see everywoman at www.everywoman.com

For information on starting and growing a business from home visit Enterprise Nation at www.enterprisenation.com

Why work from home?

Working from home used to be a complicated affair – whether you were a home-based business or a homemaker for a large company, it could involve reams of paper, boxes and files, not always having the correct information to hand and difficulties with customers and colleagues contacting you.

That's no longer the case. In today's internet and mobile-enabled world, home-based workers and companies can operate as though they are in an office, access the information they need, use same types of systems and services as large companies, and collaborate regardless of location.

Basing yourself at home is not only a great way to start a business, but is also a great way to grow your company – by offering employees the opportunity to work from home, on a part or full-time basis.

The benefits of working from home

At a time when office space is at a premium for companies, home working eliminates the costly overheads of renting or buying property. We're also in an age where we are increasingly conscious of our effects on the environment. Working from home can also avoid the pollution – not to mention the stress and discomfort – of the daily commute.

But being home-based is more than that. It also means you can work when and where it suits you – without being constrained by nine-to-five or time zones – creating a better work-life balance, and greater productivity for the business.

Providing you approach it in the right way in terms of time management and equipment, a home office can support a business that works around you – whilst enabling a potentially unlimited reach and scope.

Myths about home working

There are misconceptions surrounding home working which used to deter people from considering it as an option.

Historically, there may have been a perception that those working from home were poorly-qualified and poorly-paid because of the limited and largely administrative or piece-work opportunities this type of work offered.

Today, this could not be further from the truth as increasing numbers of people start and successfully grow businesses – even make their fortune – from the convenience of home.

They are benefiting from a 60 second commute, productive working time and an improved work-life balance, according to Enterprise Nation. This is all possible with advances in technology, making home business a very real career and business model for the future.

Mothers, young people and the over-50s seeking a fresh start out of the corporate environment have been the main drivers of a trend which is transforming the small business sector. But an increasingly varied range of professionals are also turning to home working to achieve a better work-life balance or to maximise the chance of success for a fledgling or growing business.

However, certain myths still prevail:

- I'll get lonely
- I'll lose my sense of purpose
- I'll have no-one to bounce ideas off
- I'll never earn enough
- I'll never get out of bed

The reality is different with the likelihood that you will see more people and colleagues with the freedom to go where you please, whenever you please.

You'll also discover new online worlds where you can interact with colleagues, contractors, suppliers and other home workers and discuss plans. Many, especially those running home-based businesses, also find that their sense of purpose and self-motivation improve as they pour all of their efforts into making their enterprise succeed.

Supporting yourself is a powerful incentive to earn money and home workers also find themselves making savings on childcare, travelling and food costs. Home workers also often begin their work before those who commute, who spend more time travelling.

UK economy, environment and society

Home-based businesses are having a particularly strong impact on the UK economy, environment and society. The home has now become the UK's most popular start-up location. More than 60 per cent of businesses are started from home and over 1,400 new home businesses are launched each week. They are fast becoming a key part of the UK's economic future with more than 2.1 million generating a combined turnover in excess of £364 billion and they now account for more than a quarter – 28 per cent – of the UK's employment¹.

The issues of climate change and transport congestion are never far from the top of the political agenda and home working is one way they can be addressed. The RAC Foundation estimates that it could cut peak traffic up to 10 per cent within five years. This would save 14.5 billion miles a year, equal to 17 million cars not taking a trip from Land's End to John O'Groats. Another green benefit is that office buildings are used more efficiently with lower heating and lighting costs as more staff work away.

But the concept also delivers benefits to society by enlivening and enriching daytime neighbourhoods. Home business owners are contributing to their local communities too, by being on hand for family and friends and spending time and money in the area. In a "work-life blur" poll taken on the Enterprise Nation website, 87 per cent of home working parents felt that their being at home was good for the children who are being trained as next generation entrepreneurs.

An increase in the number of people working from home means increasing numbers of start-ups, improved levels of productivity and economic activity from previously under-represented groups, especially people with disabilities and mothers/housewives. This has sparked job creation in knowledge-intensive and professional services shattering the long-held myth of low-paid drudgery.

¹ Home Business Report, compiled by Enterprise Nation, October 2007

CASE STUDY

Market opportunity to brand market leader

The inspiration for Sue Guerrieri's business, SugaPlum, came from shopping for her young daughter. She saw a gap in the market, did something about it and is well on her way to launching her own fashion collection. Not bad for 10 months worth of work.

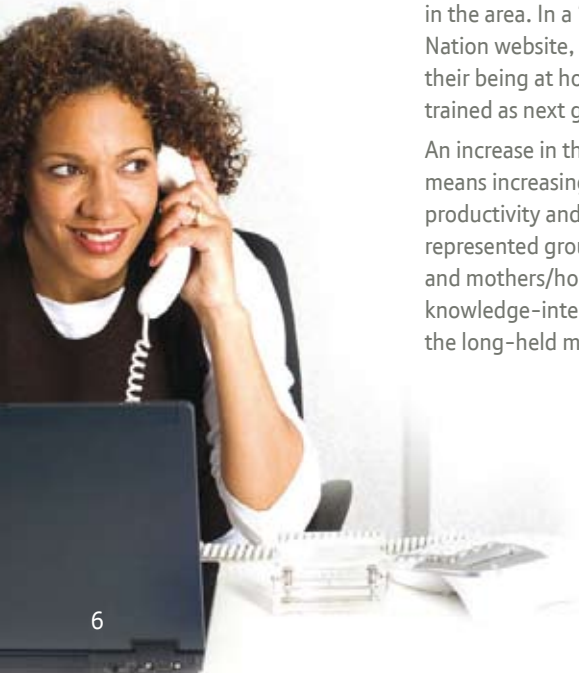
Sue was working full time as a civil servant in Whitehall when she came up with the idea for SugaPlum. It's a company that sells underwear perfectly designed for teens. The lingerie – manufactured in Italy – is made of the finest fabrics and created with glamour and comfort in mind.

Sue approached local enterprise agency, Croydon Business, who allocated an adviser to guide Sue through her start-up steps. Having had a strong start, Sue has now taken her full time job to a part time role so she can spend more time on building the business.

She's working on a new collection (with help from teenage daughter, Geneva) that will be designed and branded by SugaPlum and produced, depending on factory quotes, from the Far East or Europe.

Sue's plans for the future are to launch her collection, supply to a major department store and improve SugaPlum's profile, so Mums immediately think of the brand when looking for nice girly, age appropriate underwear for their daughters.

This is all being run from a home office that consists of a PDA and laptop and a spare room filled with products. It shows just what can be achieved from a home base.



Getting started

1. The right accommodation

Your home office should be just that – an office at home. The most productive workers are those who identify areas in their homes away from potential distractions.

Putting a laptop and phone on your kitchen table and expecting to be productive may lead to disappointment. In order to work effectively, make sure you have a dedicated working space so you can close the door behind you at the end of the working day.

2. Set up your home office properly

The first and most important consideration for any company should be around communications. As a home-based worker or business, you need to be contactable during the working day via a range of media, including telephone and email.

Critical requirements usually include a landline, mobile and internet connection as the basics to allow you to easily keep in touch with clients and colleagues.

A good broadband connection is vital. Not only does it provide home-based workers with high-speed surfing capabilities and faster email, it also opens up a range of tools making the life of a home or remote worker easier. These include collaboration and business administration tools, as well as a link to servers or networks.

Many of these tools, such as an additional Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) line, security software, collaboration tools and support are available for free or included as a standard part of good business broadband packages.

3. Control your work-life balance

A better work-life balance is the primary reason people set up a business or work from home². Working from home is a great opportunity to be as flexible as you need. Instead of being constrained by conventional work hours, you can choose when you're most productive or when is the best time for your contacts. Liaising with a client in California, for example, is no longer a problem as work hours are entirely yours to choose.

Working from home also allows you to work around your lifestyle. If you decide not to keep traditional hours, you should take steps to keep track of how much work you're doing. This can work well for you if you are clear about the parameters, when you start and stop work, and how it fits with the other aspects of your life.

4. Keep in touch

Just as working from home presents significant opportunities, it can also throw up some challenges. One of the most significant can be the lack of direct contact with people whether customers, partners or colleagues, so make a conscious effort to maintain regular contact with those important to you as you would if you were in the office. You can do this using a range of technologies from telephone, conference calls, instant messenger (IM), email and collaboration tools that allow you to share work and dialogue.

² Home Business Report, compiled by Enterprise Nation, October 2007



How technology can help you thrive

Protecting your business and electronic data

Security

Your business needs to be secure online and have a reliable support and backup service if things go wrong.

With hundreds of thousands of viruses having been identified and more being created every day, it is essential to have the best protection you can and to keep that protection up-to-date, so that customer and company information is safe at all times.

Just like an office-based business or employee, you need to make sure that you at least have anti-virus and firewall software installed on your machines and that your wireless network is password protected.

Security tools for business can seem costly, time consuming to manage and complex to use. However, for smaller businesses and home-based workers, there is a range of alternatives to help.

If you choose the right business broadband services, you can benefit from comprehensive security packages. In addition, on-demand or Software as a Service (SaaS) security software that can be downloaded over the internet, paid for on a monthly subscription and updates automatically processed, also keeps your systems safe with a minimum investment in terms of time and money.

Backup

Backup is also huge consideration for anyone working from home. Larger businesses generally have procedures in place, but backup often comes down the list of priorities for smaller and home-based businesses.

For a minimum charge, starting at around £5 per month, automated remote services allow you to set backup to happen automatically on a daily basis. These remote backup services securely transfer a copy of your data over the internet and hold it on protected servers, so you can easily recover your files should disaster strike – whether flood, fire or computer failure for example.

Business-grade support at home

Broadband opens up the opportunity for business-grade remote support, which allows specialist IT consultants, when authorised by you, to securely access and repair your computer over a broadband connection, whether it be something as simple as resetting a password or as complex as reconfiguring an entire system. As a result, there are real benefits for those based at home:

- **Configuration and setup**
Remote support takes the hassle out of setup and configuration, ensuring that the systems are set up by an expert from the start, saving you time and ensuring a seamless transition.
- **Remote support**
Remote support ensures that you can run the high-performance hardware and software your business needs, without the worry of what happens if things go wrong.
- **Flexible solutions**
Remote support is an efficient, flexible solution that helps you keep your PCs and software running.



CASE STUDY

Broadband is the real deal for The Pure Package

For The Pure Package, a company delivering nutritional ready meals made from the freshest and most natural ingredients, to their customers' doors, a rapidly growing client list in the fast-paced City of London market meant it needed a range of reliable IT services to help it expand. But these are not just any ready meals.

Customers want instant gratification, explains Jennifer Irvine, founder of The Pure Package: **"They want the information now. They'll call us up with a load of complicated questions. If we send them a brochure it's going to take a couple of days to arrive."** Also Jennifer adds that paper brochures are expensive to print, quickly out of date, and bad for the environment.

Providing the information immediately can mean the difference between customers buying and not, so The Pure Package came to BT for a straightforward and user-friendly solution.

The BT Business Total Broadband package provided a complete solution to fit The Pure Package's needs. All the services Jennifer wanted – internet telephone calls, email accessible from anywhere in the world, antivirus software, website hosting, wireless networking and a 24-hour helpline – are bundled with the broadband helping to save The Pure Package money. **"Plus,"** recalls Jennifer, **"it was really easy to get going."**

The built-in wireless service allows Jennifer and her staff to use the internet throughout the offices and kitchen without

hazardous cables, and the email system has had an unexpected benefit. Jennifer says: **"It's a really good backup because let's say you lost all your computers at the office, you can relocate and immediately be able to get into your emails again. That has actually happened to us, but our customers never noticed because we were able to restore so fast!"**

Web hosting has allowed The Pure Package to meet potential customers' expectations, as Jennifer explains: **"They can look at our website immediately and we can discuss it over the telephone with them; it's fantastic. We use it literally like a brochure, and the wonderful thing is that when we do something fabulous and new, instead of a print run we just make some tweaks to the website and voilà! It's done."** It has also cut down on paper costs and waste.

Jennifer adds: **"The service generally works. But when things didn't quite happen for me I called the helpdesk. I was quite shocked because a human being, someone who seemed to get a kick out of helping me, answered the phone. They were extremely helpful and really nice about it, and they didn't make me feel stupid."**

The Pure Package's technological development has been so successful that Jennifer is planning to start using the bundled BT Office Communicator software soon. She concludes: **"It'll be wonderful for our therapists who speak to our clients over the phone; the idea that we could actually see the customers as well would be fantastic."**

Software at your service

Software as a Service (SaaS) is a business buzz phrase at the moment, and is used to describe a wide range of different types of software and applications that are hosted, maintained and upgraded by a third party company and delivered to users over the internet or 'on-demand'.

SaaS applications are ideal for home-based businesses and workers as they allow you to use the latest business-grade software developed specifically to meet your needs free or on a subscription basis, removing the need for upfront capital investment in terms of hardware and software, as well as upgrade costs.

It also means that you no longer need to manage and support critical business applications in-house, as that is taken care of by the company supplying the service. Areas where SaaS applications could help you are:

✎ Email and collaboration

SaaS offer even the smallest home-based company a choice of options, ranging from free basic email access as an inclusive part of the business broadband package to tools that offer the ability to share information and services, such as company-wide calendars, address books and folders.

Online tools, which are often free, also offer added functions, such as calendars, forums and Instant Messenger (IM) services, as well as backup, because files are stored on secure remote servers in multiple locations.

✎ Voice over IP (VoIP)

Making calls over the internet can help reduce costs, with packages including capped price calls to mobiles and inclusive local and national calls, and offers a cost-effective, sometimes free, way to get an additional line for your business. It also has a range of other benefits for home-based businesses and people working from home.

VoIP numbers are non-geographic, which means that you can choose to have a business number with a different area code, for example, London, Manchester or Edinburgh, irrespective of where you are actually based. This means that you can have a point of presence where you choose, without the cost of an office.

In addition, VoIP also offers advanced phone features such as voicemail, call forwarding, online phone directories and automatic call forwarding to your mobile, which can be administered online.

Remote meetings

Remote access is the ultimate business-flexibility tool. Instead of being confined to one location, you are free to go anywhere and still work on your office computer.

It is now possible to hold meetings without leaving home, whether you are running your own business or are working away from your company office.

Phone and video conferencing also makes 'virtual' meetings easy, saving you valuable time and money on business travel.

Managing your cost base

Perhaps the most critical factor in launching, growing and running a successful business from home is managing and controlling costs. Salaries, expenses, equipment, utilities, taxes and business rates all need to be controlled and forecast.

Accounting packages do not need to be expensive and difficult to install, maintain and upgrade. In addition, staff expenses and benefits software can be integrated into the wider financial system and easily updated by finance staff or employees themselves.

There is excellent, value-for-money software available which can help you assess and manage all of your costs in the same way a large company might.

Web-based accounting and admin tools, delivered as SaaS, are a great way for a business to get access to the kind of software previously reserved only for larger organisations. From self-service expense filing and absentee notification to a full-blown integrated accounting package, SaaS is able to cut installation time and cost by delivering ready-made applications instantly and securely over the Web. There are also no upgrade costs, as hardware, software licence and maintenance are included in the monthly subscription.

If you choose the right providers, they will supply landline, mobile and broadband in one simple package with one bill.

Connecting to colleagues

A further option for small businesses that have home-based or remote workers is a unified communications system. Phone lines, PC connections, web access and email systems can all be wrapped up into affordable, all-in-one IP-based solutions to connect the people who matter to the business, regardless of time or location.

With all phone calls, voicemail, instant messaging, contacts lists and business applications at your disposal, home working can easily seem like office working. The set-up greatly simplifies communication and collaboration across the business, while ensuring that the entire office network is stable, secure and supported. Creating a virtual office scenario, unified communications will help the business respond to customer needs faster, and be productive and profitable.



CASE STUDY

Technology helps PM Squared to shape up from home

Home working used to mean taking reams of paper and files home, and only being in touch with the office by telephone and fax. But in today's broadband world, home workers can be virtually in the office and access the same systems and documents as they can from their desks.

This is what Stephen Brooks, founder of conference and event management firm, PM Squared wanted to achieve. He knew effective communication facilities would be critical to success. As a first step he chose BT Business Total Broadband, BT Business Email and BT Backup.

Stephen had originally planned to take an internet and business email service from a third party IT company. **"I looked at what BT had to offer,"** he says, **"and it was easy and more cost effective to manage myself rather than paying a third party to do it for me."**

A year on, PM Squared was a firmly established, growing company and opted for a range of new BT services to help that growth. Stephen Brooks explains the rationale: **"Like many organisations today, PM Squared is largely a virtual company. That means we not only need to be highly flexible and resilient, but also able to operate and respond proactively without incurring the overhead of a big central office."**

BT Office Anywhere ensures that Stephen Brooks has access to all the information he needs whether he is in his home office, delivering a project on site, or picking up

his children from school. It means that, when things are quieter, he needn't wait in front of his office PC for emails. BT Office Anywhere is a hand-held device that provides him with real-time access to emails, contacts and calendar. **"I can be out and about executing projects or winning new business without worrying I will miss a client call, so the solution gives me an improved work life balance with greater flexibility,"** says Stephen.

PM Squared have also benefited from BT PC Backup, which automatically copies business critical data to a secure off-site storage facility every day to protect the company against loss and are embracing the BT Business Broadband service, which will support both internet access and business telephony. This will be complemented by BT OneBillPlus, which combines the company's telephony, broadband, email, BT Backup and BT Office Anywhere spend on one monthly bill.

By sourcing all its communications from one supplier in this way, PM Squared realises significant savings in time and money. The services are designed to be scalable, giving the company a platform for future growth. Stephen concludes: **"I'm also planning to use free BT Tradespace as a marketing and networking tool. Overall, BT gives me a reliable and cost effective service that enables me to be more professional and it's great to have a partner that helps me realise the potential of technology and supports my business growth in this way."**



Management tips for home workers

From April 2009, all employees with children under the age of 16 have the legal right to request flexible working. The Government estimates the extended right will lead to more than a quarter of a million employees changing their working hours, while many will choose to spend more time working from home. This is not something for businesses to be scared of, after all BT has made a huge success of employing remote workers, but it will require some careful planning.



Recent advances in technology have made the kit required to work effectively at home accessible and inexpensive. Even initial concerns about the communication challenge of how to manage and interact with colleagues who are in different locations can be easily overcome with the right advice and approach.

Good communication skills are more acutely required than in an environment where ad hoc face-to-face meetings can be easily accommodated. There are also wider challenges such as ensuring home workers feel a sense of belonging to their wider business team and don't feel isolated. Some managers will also need to adjust to the business reality presented by home working and foster a working culture that rewards business outputs rather than measuring performance on inputs or hours spent in the office alone. Unfortunately some managers promote a culture of 'presenteeism' which can make home workers feel they are mistrusted or overlooked for opportunities.

BT Business has recently produced the Remote Manager's Toolkit, a comprehensive and practical toolkit for managers written in conjunction with the Centre for Future Studies and a panel of flexible working experts. The guide is also useful reading for home workers collaborating with office based colleagues. To download the guide, or to learn more about remote workers in a BT Business web seminar, go to <http://www.insight.bt.com/events/Managing-remote-workers>

You can also learn a great deal by sharing tips and experiences on flexible working with other remote managers and workers. One option is to join an online community of like-minded business such as the Flexible Working community on www.bttradespace.com

Promoting your business

A professional online presence is no longer just a 'nice-to-have' for your home working business, it is a prerequisite – no matter what size your company is or the sector you operate in.

For small businesses, in particular, a credible 'virtual' presence opens up a world of possibilities and opportunities, including creating a new sales channel, reaching new customers, providing cost-effective marketing and a platform to network with other businesses.

Starting out

One way to create a visible online profile is to start with a site which you develop yourself. This is easier than you might think, doesn't necessarily require specialist skills and can be done with tools that are available off the shelf, or as part of a broadband package from your Internet Service Provider (ISP). The latter provides an extremely simple route to marketing and selling online, with template-based software that requires no technical skills or training. BT Business offers a fully functional website and domain name for only £5 per month, which uses drag-and-drop tools that make getting started quick and simple.

As you grow online

The next option is to use a service where you supply the words and photography to the designers and they use a series of pre-defined designs and pages to produce the site. This is great if you want to add functionality and a more professional feel to the site. Another option is to use a web consultation and optimisation service, which will look at your website in detail and tell you areas where it could be improved in order to help drive traffic and sales.

A site tailored to your business

The most flexible option is to have a bespoke site built just for you. This offers you the ability

to choose the entire look and feel of the site and add in advance functionality to meet your needs. As well as the initial build cost, you should always consider the potential ongoing costs of having a bespoke site as updates and changes are inherently more expensive.

Social networking

There are now social networking sites, such as www.bttradespace.com, which have been specifically designed for small businesses and allow you to take advantage of the latest web-based technologies to help build an online presence.

Tradespaces are free and quick to set up, even for those without any technical knowledge. Users simply fill in the details and upload images and logos and choose the community that they would like to belong to, for example, 'business services' or 'weddings'.

Each BT Tradespace includes a blog, photos, podcasts, contact information and maps. You can also choose to add extra services like Click-to-Call functionality or multiple communities for a low monthly fee.

In addition to creating an online presence, Tradespacers can also use the service as a marketplace to sell goods to consumers and other businesses using the PayPal element of the service to process payments for goods and services securely.

CASE STUDY

How free bttradespace.com helped a gift business to 20% growth

HedgePig is an online business that sells a huge range of unusual & unique gifts to both consumers and businesses through its website. Lancastrian Lyn Hill and her husband formed the company in October 2006 to explore Lyn's love of imaginative gifts.

Lyn, 43, first heard about bttradespace.com via an email from a BT partner in August 2007, and decided to sign up. bttradespace.com is a unique and dynamic online community that brings small businesses and individual sellers together with potential customers and partners to do business. The service, which is free to join, allows businesses to quickly and easily create and post content on the web and link to complementary businesses.

Lyn and her husband created a page on the site which advertises their wares, links to their main website and allows them to view what both their customers and their competition are doing. The platform also offers blogging and podcasting capabilities, and allows customers to rate businesses according to their experience.

After just one month using the bttradespace.com service, the HedgePig Tradespace page had received over 1,600 hits. This linked to their main website which saw a substantial rise in visitors and sales, resulting in a monthly turnover increase of around 20%.

Lyn took advantage of the number of visitors to the HedgePig Tradespace to add transactional capabilities, through bttradespace.com partner PayPal, in an attempt to turn this traffic into sales and provide HedgePig customers with the same level of service they expect from the main site.

Lyn and John now feel confident in taking their business to the next level and offering a wholesale business-to-business service – with, of course, its own bttradespace.com page.

Being responsible

Entrepreneurs have always been aware of the financial contribution they make to the economy in terms of job creation, driving innovation and boosting gross domestic product (GDP). But increasingly, they also wish to add a further ethical dimension through what is known as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

CSR can be demonstrated in many ways, including reducing poverty, addressing skills shortages, improving the work-life balance that a company's staff experience. Businesses also want to reduce their negative environmental impact and/or to provide products and services which reduce pollution and waste. Entrepreneurs are also aware that policy makers, their customers and clients and their own staff are now demanding more than just economic and financial benefits from business.

The requirement to demonstrate environmentally responsible business practices is increasingly being enshrined in the tendering process. Companies whose behaviour falls short are being excluded at the outset so green business practices can help save money and help win business. A Henley Centre Headlight Vision study into sustainable buying behaviours conducted in 2007 found that 26 per cent of respondents would boycott firms that damage the environment – up from only 9 per cent in 2001.

You may already be doing your bit to help cut back on transport congestion and carbon emissions by avoiding the daily commute through practices such as home or flexible working. This is popular with businesses as it can potentially provide a better work-life balance for your staff as well as reducing your overheads. But you can extend your environmental credentials in the home by reducing your energy consumption, too.

The next step in greening your operations is to calculate your carbon 'footprint', so that you can gain an understanding of how much carbon dioxide your business activities create – and reduce your energy consumption. BT's carbon calculator uses data from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to help determine your individual carbon footprint. It is available at <http://www.btplc.com/ClimateChange/CarbonCalculator>

BT BEST, BT's Business Environmental Self-Assessment Tool, is designed to help all small businesses understand their environmental impact and take simple steps to becoming a greener more sustainable company. Go to www.bt.com/btbest



The environmental outlook of your business can help to attract and retain staff as well as winning new customers – and small steps taken by a large number of small businesses can make a big impact.

Technology is pivotal to enhancing your CSR credentials. Audio and web conferencing as well as emailing cuts down on journeys, and shutting down computers and other electrical equipment can also benefit the environment. Leaving a PC monitor on all night wastes enough energy to microwave six dinners, according to the Carbon Trust.

There is online software which allows you to store documents electronically, cutting down on paper use. These workspaces are like virtual meeting rooms, allowing colleagues to access information relating to any given project in one place. Technology is also available which allows electronic signatures to be used, meaning documents do not need to be printed, again saving on paper. Using recycled paper and packaging can also help you to reduce your carbon footprint.



Getting advice

The world of British business is changing. Hundreds of thousands of new businesses start every year, many from home. However, going it alone is as much about finding the right help as it is about relying on your own knowledge.

It's important SMEs get the right support from the outset. The good news is, there is a range of expert support and information out there to ensure home workers get off on the right foot.

BT Business Insight (www.bt.com/insight), Enterprise Nation (www.enterprisenation.com), everywoman (<http://www.everywoman.com>) and Growing Business (www.growingbusiness.co.uk) are four places where start-up businesses can get advice. The websites provide small businesses with information and advice about how technology and services can help them succeed.

Choosing the right approach

There are many ways of selecting suitable equipment and suppliers. A good supplier will address a number of issues to provide you with an effective solution:

- **Is it fit for purpose?** Products and services need to be tough enough for business use and fully supported. Consumer versions, though sometimes cheaper, often don't offer the flexibility or reliability upon which you depend.
- **Does it offer value for money?** You need to look at what's included in the packages you're considering as a home worker. Things to look at are, do they include an additional VoIP line, security software, hosted email, collaboration tools and Webpace?
- **Is it secure?** You need to be able to monitor and control access to your computer and files to protect customer and company information and to prevent fraud and abuse.
- **Is it fast enough?** Speed, whether broadband or computer processing speed, is important for most businesses, so it's worth looking at what you get in detail.
- **Will it support growth?** If you plan to grow, it's important you have access to upgrades, extensions, conferencing services and new applications to achieve maximum success.

CASE STUDY

How everywoman attracts and recruits a flexible workforce

As a small growing business we currently have ten full time employees and two members of staff that work part-time. Our offices are set up for, and are of a size that can comfortably accommodate twelve. This works well as we are not spending any additional revenue on unnecessary office space. However, at various times of the year, we do need to bring in temporary staff. Because key members of the team can all work remotely this doesn't cause problems for us – it simply saves us money. There have been times when we have had 20 employees on the payroll. If we had needed to pay for office space to accommodate this year round, the rent would have cost us an additional £30,000+ a year.

More importantly, being able to offer flexible working has enabled us to recruit some very talented women who, without the ability to work from home, would not be willing to commute into the City every day to work in our office. Since these team members are also key sales and client relationship managers, they often travel to see existing and prospective clients located across the country. Our flexible workforce is in touch by email and phone when they are on the road, and as a result we have succeeded in maintaining productivity.

As we grow, we need to hire smart, talented people and it is unreasonable to think that the best person for the job is going to live within an easy commute to our office. Addressing this challenge, by offering flexible working, has given us the competitive edge. We have been able to hire top talent regardless of where they live.

Offices worldwide

The services described in this publication are subject to availability and may be modified from time to time. Services and equipment are provided subject to British Telecommunications plc's respective standard conditions of contract. Nothing in this publication forms any part of any contract.

© British Telecommunications plc 2009
Registered office: 81 Newgate Street, London. EC1A 7AJ
Registered in England No. 1800000.

Printed in England.

PHME 56687/06/09

