



“An expert is a person who has made all the mistakes that can be made in a very narrow field...”

- Niels Bohr

# The TeleWorkers Digest

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**From The Editor -**

Welcome to the latest edition of the TeleWorkers Digest, an edition that introduces several new contributors and features that I'm sure will help you with your day-to-day and career as a teleworker or teleworker-to-be.

Whether you're a work from home parent or grandparent, telecommuting corporate employee or running your own home business we like to think we give you the best of the tools, advice, resources and opportunities that a teleworker can use from both sides of the Atlantic.

As stated before we love to promote a community feel with our subscribers, we're here for you, so if there are any reviews or topics you'd like covered send requests to [this email](#) and please feel free to 'connect' with our authors for further information.

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That's it – close your inbox, enjoy this month's edition and check out the freebies at the back.

Kindest Regards

Patrick Hennis  
Editor



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## How to Increase Your Chances of Successfully Negotiating a Telecommuting Agreement

- by Yasuo Long, [@yasuolong](#)

If you're the sort of person who enjoys their day job but would like that extra flexibility to work from home so you can spend more time with the family or doing the things you enjoy, then you might want to consider telecommuting.

To get a telecommuting agreement is pretty straightforward, provided your company already has the technological capacity to let you do it and you have enough negotiating leverage behind you to make your company take your request seriously.

The following 4 steps are the steps I used to secure my telecommuting agreement with my company and I am confident they will work for you as well.

### Step 1: Make your job telecommuting compatible

Do an analysis of your work process and see if you actually need to be in the office in order to get your primary tasks done. The easiest way to test this is to take a sick day and attempt to get a full day's work done from home.

Any weak spots in the telecommuting compatibility of your job will become immediately obvious. Once you have identified the areas where

your job may not be telecommuting compatible, attempt to come up with solutions to work around them.

### Step 2: Increase your value to your company

Your company needs to feel the fear of god at the idea of losing you as part of their company. This can be done by increasing their perceived value of you.

The idea here is to increase your value enough so that when they weigh the option of giving you your telecommuting agreement and against replacing you, they feel much more inclined to give you what you want.

### Step 3: Prove you are capable of working remotely

While you are still working in the office, prove that you are actually capable of working from home. A way you can do this is to take sick days and work from home, making sure your manager is aware you are working.

While you do this, ensure you keep track of your work output and make sure that it is the same if not higher than what you would normally produce if you were in the office.

By doing this, you are proving to yourself and your company that you are capable of being productive, even if you are not in the office.

### Step 4: Propose a trial run instead of a full blown agreement

One of the best ways to get your foot in the door of a telecommuting agreement is to propose a trial.

By proposing a trial and giving them the power to revoke your agreement if things don't seem to be working out, it feels less permanent and allows them to retain a sense of control over you.

Before you do this though, remember to do steps 1 through 3 to maximize your chances of success if they agree to your request.

#### Conclusion

So what has been the purpose of all these steps?

Well to break it down, being a valued employee means they will consider your request seriously.

Next, showing evidence that you are capable of telecommuting gives them confidence you will maintain productivity.

Finally, proposing a trial run reduces their fear of losing control over you and will help them feel more inclined to let you 'tryout' telecommuting.

The key here is to make sure you are well prepared by the time you get to the tryout stage so that once you're out of the office they won't have any reasons to call you back.



Yasuo Long is the lead technical writer for an international engineering design company and has been telecommuting full-time for the last 2 years. When he's not busy with his day job, he can be found at [tell-a-worker.com](http://tell-a-worker.com) sharing his experience as a telecommuter and writing about living purposefully, overcoming personal limitations and designing your ideal lifestyle.

## Most people use blogs to record their thoughts and lives, while a select few use them as a free way to make a fortune



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**Secrets Of Reaching Out Online** – by Antonia Chitty [@antoniachitty](#)

Do you feel that you're making the most of the internet to promote your business? As a home worker or telecommuter online promotion is perfect for you to reach a large audience without stepping beyond your computer. If you're not using social media and online promotion you're missing out on a chance to:

- Find out what your potential customers want
- Build relationships with your customers and potential customers
- Increase awareness of your brand
- Develop trust
- Increase sales
- Increase your profits

Read this clear guide and put the steps into practice to see your business and your profits grow.

**My Experience:**

For me, social media has made an enormous difference to my business. In the last eighteen months I have turned a simple site to promote one of my books into a blog that generates income for me every month. I've used Twitter to launch a new book and built up a following of over three thousand people. I spend one evening a month setting up promotional tweets that ensure that my followers are getting positive messages about my business every day. And as a result of raising my profile online, this year I've been asked to speak at more events than ever before, with the prospects of sales from each one.

**Your Experience:**

Now, let's think about your experience so far with social media. Here's a quick checklist for you to see where you are right now:

**Do you have a Blog?**

1. Yes and it is updated regularly
2. Yes and it is updated occasionally
3. Yes and it is I started it but never got very far
4. No

**Do you have a Twitter Account?**

1. Yes, and I send tweets out several times each day
2. Yes, I use it occasionally
3. Yes, I signed up but have never really used it
4. No

**Do you have a Facebook fan page or group for your business?**

1. Yes and it is updated regularly
2. Yes and it is updated occasionally
3. Yes and it is I started it but never got very far
4. No

Awards yourself 5 points for each time your answer is '1', 3 points for each time you answer '2', 1 point for each answer '3' and zero for each time you answer '4'.

Gain an extra point for each of these networks you are on and actively using

- Ecademy
- BTTTradespace
- LinkedIn
- Bebo
- MySpace
- Ning
- Babycentre
- Flickr
- Xing
- Jaiku

Your Score:

21-30 points: You're a social media queen. Social media is developing fast, so read on for some handy tips and tricks to help you stay in top.

11-20 points: You're a social media starter. It is easy to sign up for all these sites than it is to know how to make them useful for your business. Read on for practical tips to help you use online promotion successfully every day.

0-10 points: You're a social media newbie. Don't worry if you're really unsure about what to do to promote your business online. Read the article and choose one place to start that will work well for your business.

**Twitter is a key tool to help you reach many more people with your business offering. Read on to find out why and learn about how every teleworker with a few minutes to spare can make the internet into her business's best friend.**

It is really important to make the most of social media for your business. You wouldn't turn down someone offering you a handful of cash would you? Nor would you walk on by if someone came up to you in the street and said, "I've heard about your business and it sounds right up my street – can you tell me more?" If you aren't blogging and tweeting, though, you are actually turning away potential sales and missing the chance to tell customers all about your business and why it is just what they need.

Twitter is a simple concept, but it can seem hard to work out how best to use it. The sign up page is easy, and writing 140 character messages takes next to no time. What can seem tricky, though, is to get the right balance of messages that motivate people to buy and interesting items to attract followers. Plus, should you be tweeting about personal matters as well as business?

*Part 2 of this article by Antonia will be in next month's TWD.*



**Antonia Chitty helps mums develop their businesses through [www.themumpreneurguide.co.uk](http://www.themumpreneurguide.co.uk) and offers PR training and advice at [www.acpr.co.uk](http://www.acpr.co.uk)**

**Do I Need A Website?** – by Chris Messon - CTO at TWD – [chris@teleworkersdigest.org](mailto:chris@teleworkersdigest.org)

I first remember being asked this question in about '98, the Stone Age of the internet. My answer now is exactly the same as it was then: Yes. Absolutely. Don't ask stupid questions.

Back then building a website was seen as black magic, something you had to go to a digital Hogwarts to understand and conceive. Today you can just write your content, sales pitch, service description etc. and paste it into a ready to go template. Add a few pretty pictures and a paypal button and you're done. Open and ready for business.

Even if your product or service doesn't lend itself to being sold online (maybe you're a business consultant or a hairdresser) you still need to have some digital real estate to let people know you exist. When was the last time you opened Yellow Pages to look for anything? Doesn't happen – you Google it.

The real trick nowadays isn't building a website; it's getting traffic to it, its search engine optimization (more on this in later articles).

Another benefit of a website is that it levels the playing field. You may be a one man operation but if you put some effort into your website you can get just as many leads through it as a large corporation. We're in a world where the best service doesn't win, the one at the top of the search engine does.

So if you need a website where do you start? My best advice is NOT to outsource it. Do it yourself. When someone else builds your site you lose control of your most important marketing asset and it can cost you big time. Not only will you have the initial build cost but pretty soon you'll be paying some 'webmaster' \$50 a pop to change a sentence or add a picture. It really is so easy to do by yourself, and you learn a new skill that also acts as a pass card into other aspects of the web such as online advertising and link building. Check out the resource list for DIY web development.

**Resources:**

[Wordpress](#) – Probably the most used publishing platform on the net. There's a bit of a learning curve but its flexibility and the huge number of plugins make any website a possibility. (Check out the 'Freebie' section at the end of this publication for help)

[1and1](#) – If you're really looking for a 'chimp could do it' option then these guys make building your site a snip. They also provide great customer care and ecommerce solutions.

[HostGator](#) – Most hosting companies are created equal but for customer care, value and quality hostgator has consistently been at No.1

[GoDaddy](#) – If you don't go for an all in one package then this is the best place to get a domain name. Just look out for the upsells!!



**Chris has worked at home as a technology consultant since 1995 with companies such as Yahoo, Siemens & Total.**



**Outsourcing Home Business Chores** – by S Pritchard  
[@hiremyparents](#)

We all hate certain aspects of our daily home business routines; the data plugging, the end of day accounts, the blog updates (heaven forbid). My personal pet hate is searching for the perfect flexible jobs for our job board; it's at the heart of hmp but I hate it.

Thankfully we've had an in-house team of web squirrels to find these jobs since the launch of hiremyparents so I've been able to do less and less of it over time. Slowly stepping backwards, smiling all the time, no sudden moves. I can now focus on the parts of hmp I enjoy, things I'm good at.

However, there are home business owners out there that do everything. Think about it! Everything! The marketing, the buying, the data/web updates, customer service, fixing the crap that always seem to take up half a day, sales calls, blog, production, follow-ups, coffee – everything!

Its small wonder that most go to the wall with the owner's heart in tatters and 2 mortgages hanging round his/her neck.

The answer is, of course, outsourcing. Find yourself a quality and trusted job board (hint hint) and put your needs up there and wait for the resumes. But hold on ...that's more bloody work! Before you know it your inbox is filled with resume chuckers that throw you an email just because your job's in a certain category. So what do you do?

Filter them!

Instead of giving an email to send responses to give potential outsourcees a link to a Q&A form. You can set one of these up for free at places like [surveymonkey.com](#). Here you can get details of experience, expected wage, qualifications and whatever you feel relevant to the position.

The effect of this is twofold: **1)** you get to know what you want to know about the applicant not what their resume wants you to know, and **2)** you get rid of the resume chuckers – only people that really want the job and believe they can do the job are going to fill out a fairly lengthy form.

If you still get flooded with potential outsourcees then filter them again. Send them to another form that really drills down on your needs. After that you can be fairly certain that **a)** the individual really wants the job (half the battle when you're outsourcing), **b)** they're qualified for the job, and **c)** they'll do it for a price you can live with. Better results – less work.

**Steve is the CMO at [hiremyparents.com](#) and a consultant for small businesses with big web dreams – [steve@hiremyparents.com](mailto:steve@hiremyparents.com)**

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An advertisement for hiremyparents.com. It features the logo for hiremyparents.com on the left, followed by the text "Vetted • Screened • Tested" in a bold, sans-serif font. To the right is a photograph of a smiling man in a white shirt sitting at a desk with a laptop. Below the photo is a red button with the text "CLICK HERE!". Below the entire advertisement is the text "Paid Advertisement" in a smaller font.

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### The Traps Of Working At Home

– by Marc Pearlman – [yourmoneymattersradio.com](http://yourmoneymattersradio.com)

What seems like another life ago, I was an off the floor stock and commodity trader living in CT. I was not yet married and I had my office out of my home. It's an interesting work environment when I reflect back on it. While at first glance it appears as though it is a workers' paradise; not having to fight traffic, enjoying the perception of freedom, not having to pay for office space just to name a few, there are some strict pitfalls that can affect your productivity both personally and professionally if your home and work space are shared.

While technology has allowed for decentralization in many industries, some of the same obstacles I faced so many years ago are still present and since people do not change as quickly as technology evolves, these obstacles will continue to erode people's efforts. Here are some sample scenarios.

**The Workaholic:** I drifted in and out of this category for a period of time. Having the ability to go from my living room to my office to simply "check" something would often result in a two hour work session at 9:30 at night. While having passion for what you do is a positive trait, having your office a paper airplanes flight away from where you sleep can erode personal time. Not having a clear separation between personal and professional time can blur the lines and create dissonance.

**Solution:** Have space that is clearly designated as work space and use it only for that purpose. When you have a specific and designated place to conduct business, it helps to keep the personal and professional lines that define them bold.

Shut the door, turn of the answering machine and "close the office". When I would find myself reacting to every bleep and flash that came across my computer with some commodity related news, I reacted like Pavlov's dog. It was not until I learned to ask myself this question that I learned how to

turn off the lights. “Would I drive 35 minutes into my office right now to read this story and drive 35 minutes back?”

**The House Keeper:** This is another dissipation of work time. All too often people find themselves dealing with housekeeping issues while they should be working. Rationalizing that since you are already home, on a break you could deal with these things. Bad idea. Usually what would transpire when I did this was a loss of focus and continuity in my day. Since focus was critical in commodity and stock trading, losing it is akin to a baseball player having a conversation with a fan in the middle of a game.

**Solution:** Take a morning, afternoon or day off and try to schedule all your tasks. If people had a traditional work environment and had to drive 30 + minutes each way to an office, it is unlikely that unless it was really important, that they would drive to their office, come home, do whatever needed tending too and then drive back. Think as though it costs you money to accommodate these activities during your work schedule, because, in some form or fashion it does.

**Solitary Confinement:** When I was a trader working from home, I had all the freedom in the world so I thought, but I spent my days in what felt like solitary confinement. The only difference between Sunday and Monday was that the markets were closed. Waking up and not having to “go” to work can create some bad habits. The compulsion may not been as powerful As Jack Nicholson’s character in “The Shining”, but having compartmentalization in your schedule is important.



**Solution:** Schedule breaks in your day and get out of the house. Specifically go out. Do not go to another room and watch T.V for an hour or finish the basement project you started a week ago. Getting out of the house will provide a clear break in your day. Also, one of the benefits of working in a traditional office environment is that it offers some degree of socialization. Take an exercise class or something that your commuting time would have occupied.

Marc Pearlman specializes in behavioral finance and is the author of the *Positive Money Mindset* and host of the popular radio show *Your Money Matters!* For more about Marc please visit [Your Money Mattersradio.com](http://YourMoneyMattersradio.com)

**Mind Set – Beating Limiting Beliefs** – by Anna Aengel, [mylifesupport.com](http://mylifesupport.com)

Whether you are self-employed, or working from home for someone else, the mind-set you choose to adopt will have a huge impact on the way in which you work, rest and play. This can make all the difference when it comes to the quality of life you enjoy and the dip of the work/life balance scales that you experience. The right amount of positivity in your beliefs will ensure promising action in your deeds. However, too much of the stuff can create as much of a problem as having too little, so it is essential to know how to adopt a mind-set that empowers you to live a life without self-imposed limitations.

*State Your Intention*

You cannot get clearly focused on achieving your goal if you are unable to clearly define what the goal is. In order to make sufficient and steady progress in a positive direction you need to know which way to look, which in turn will help you acknowledge the best tools to assist you. In other words, by stating what you want to achieve you will unconsciously be opening your mental floodgate and welcoming in creative thoughts, ideas, suggestions and possibilities, that will help you in your endeavour.

Stating intention can be done in a number of ways. You can simply action the intention by writing down your plan as a list of objectives. You can verbally define your desire to others. Or you can personally make a pact with yourself by visualising the intention like a mini movie in your head. Your desired outcome will generally guide you to the best method of intention statement for your particular objective, but on the whole the more obvious your intention is the greater the chance of fruition. After

all there's not much point telling yourself you want to do something if you don't have a visual reminder of it every day.

Stating intention is a little like making a promise. By clearly defining your ideal goal you are in effect promising to bring this idea to life, by your subsequent creative ideas and action. Without intention your goal merely remains a passing thought.

*Manage Your Energy, Not Your Time.*

Energy is all around us, every minute of every hour. It is what propels us to get out of bed in the morning and to get things done throughout the course of the day. Energy also controls our thoughts and motivation and works in mysterious ways. Yet we can choose to harness this power it has over our personal lives by acknowledging how much it can positively create. We can increase our energy levels purely by applying positive thought, which in turn creates and powers positive intention.

Not sounding plausible? Just stop and think about Friday afternoon...You sit daydreaming about the exciting weekend ahead you have planned, and your reverie is suddenly ruined by the thought of something urgent you forgot to do. Do you sigh and wave your weekend plans goodbye? Or do you leap into action and plough through the tasks in Guinness Book of World Records time?

Learning how to focus your energy can have dramatic results instantly, but must be managed and controlled if you want to avoid unnecessary burnout. This method of managing mind-set also requires a certain amount of personal development and exploration so will work best for

those individuals who are ready to create changes in other areas of their life.

### *Manage Yourself*

Being practical and realistic about what is and isn't achievable reduces stress and combats anxiety. So too does understanding what works and doesn't work for you, what you accept as balance and how effective you think your actions are. Your wellbeing is entirely in your hands so identifying stressors and removing your exposure to these, if possible, will enable you to change your mind-set in a more harmonious fashion.

By looking after yourself you will become a lot more capable of managing stressful situations that may develop through performance pressure or other work-related responsibilities. Being realistically aware of the restraints around you will also allow you to adapt to changes or create new opportunities to explore. Understanding and accepting that there are always new ways of making things much easier for yourself may be all you need to start managing your valuable time a little more effectively.

### *Personal Review*

In much the same way that a company boss or manager may annually review performance, it is worth giving yourself a personal review from time to time. This could be done at regular intervals, or perhaps after the completion of a big important project. Mind-set is in effect all about how you manage yourself, so checking your levels of performance, productivity, efficiency, creativity and stress will inspire you to keep giving your best.

Being successful is about setting a goal or defining an intention and progressively working your well towards achieving this aim. Reviewing your input and output however, is not simply about how many individual successes you score over a specific period of time – even if you happen to work in a Sales lead environment.

A review must take everything into consideration, and the conclusion should be that you are working well and heading in the right direction, and that you are able to successfully balance the demands of work and life. Give yourself permission to re-evaluate yourself whenever you feel you might benefit from a little more self-awareness.

Honesty is always the best policy, so admitting your mind-set could be improved will help you find ways to create these changes effortlessly.



**Anna Aengel is a Freelance Journalist, Soul & Spirit Healer, Intuitive Life Coach, Future Life Progressionist/Past Life Regressionist, Soul Contract Interpretator, Angelic Alchemistic and Holistic Massage Therapist. Anna is based in Kent, UK but works worldwide.**

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### **This Is Why You're Already Good At Marketing**

– by Helen Lindop - [businessplusbaby.com](http://businessplusbaby.com)

We usually think of someone who starts a business as a born entrepreneur - a natural extrovert who has no trouble selling a product. But if you're starting a business so you can spend more time with your kids, you could be a very long way from this indeed. In fact, you might find that the thought of selling brings you out in a cold sweat!

Relax, because marketing is no longer a one-way-street where the seller tells the buyer about their product. These days, it's about the business having a conversation with the customer. That's great news if your image of selling is the hard sell; pinning someone to a wall and not letting them go until you see their credit card.

If we think about marketing as a conversation, suddenly all our tension goes. That's because most of us are actually pretty good at having conversations.

Here's what you could talk about.

- Connect with your customers

Do they like your product/service? How could you improve it? What else are they looking for? Who else is selling what they like? Can they help you spot new trends? Can you give them something so useful or interesting that they want to tell their friends about you? How could you turn them into your fan club?

- Show them you're an expert

Prove to them that you really know your stuff. Customers no longer want to be told that you sell the best widgets in the South-East - they want to make up their own mind. How can you help them to do that?

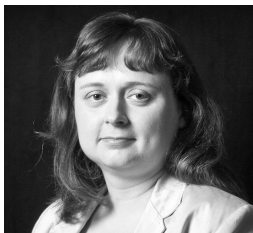
- Build your brand

Try to get across what your business is about, what it stands for, its values. Again, not in an old-style 'this is our mission statement' kind-of way. Think about the things that matter to your customers - help them to solve their problems, keep them up to date with the latest news, point them towards great resources. Then let your business brand shine through what you do.

If you're a one-person business, don't try to manufacture a brand for yourself. You already have a brand – you! Think of your strengths – honesty, reliability, helpfulness, quirkiness, creativity or whatever. How you can use these in your conversations with customers?

How do you start the conversation? Try blogging, podcasting, writing free e-books, creating a website full of useful content, getting involved in charity events, Facebook, Twitter, Linked In, You Tube, presentations and speaking engagements, surveys or questionnaires (online or off), newsletters with useful content (not just adverts), business networking, newspaper or magazine articles, online articles and news releases, online forums. Or just old fashioned talking to people in the street, on the bus, outside your children's school or anywhere at all!

What kind of conversations are you having with your customers?



Helen Lindop is the owner of [www.businessplusbaby.com](http://www.businessplusbaby.com), a website dedicated to helping parents of babies and toddlers take control of their working lives by starting their own businesses.



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### **Making Telework A Win-Win For Employers & Employees**

– by Graham Lowe [www.grahamlowe.ca](http://www.grahamlowe.ca)

Employers have been slow to adopt telework. Corporate lack of enthusiasm for telework reflects the persistence of traditional approaches to organizing work and managing people. And this is despite information technology having opened up greater possibilities for virtual work.

In fact, only about 5 percent of employees in Canada and the US work at home during regularly scheduled hours at least part of their work week. Yet estimates suggest that close to 40 percent of jobs can be made more flexible by giving employees work from home options.

Narrowing this gap requires a stronger business case for telework.

Companies have different motivations for adopting telework. Some companies recently included telework in their disaster response plans in preparation for last winter's global flu threat. And to help realize a firm's environmental commitments, it's easy to calculate the reduced carbon footprint for home-based or satellite-office employees who do not have long commutes to a corporate office. Less commuting also results in better work-life balance for employees, who will have more time for family, community, volunteering, and education. Increasingly, human resource experts see telework as a way of meeting the needs of an increasingly diverse workforce – such as older workers wanting more work time flexibility or disabled workers with limited mobility.

But what's missing in all these telework scenarios is a clear understanding of how this type of flexible work arrangement fits into a comprehensive workforce engagement strategy. From this perspective, telework isn't just another job perk. Rather, it is a strategy for improving performance by giving employees greater job control.

There is lots of evidence showing that job control -- essentially, being able to make decisions about how and when to work – is associated with lower stress and better work-life balance. Because job control contributes to wellbeing, it lowers the costs associated with absenteeism, presenteeism, and health benefits. It also contributes to job performance, because employees who feel they can manage their job demands are more motivated and committed.

Four changes are required in management thinking and practices to achieve these payoffs.

1. Managers must trust employees to take full responsibility for work results. No more micro-managing. And employees, for their part, have to step up to the plate and demonstrate they indeed can deliver. As their accountability for results increases, they will need more autonomy to figure out the best ways to achieve results, guided of course by clear corporate values and strong ethics.
2. Any type of flexible work option can't be imposed as a requirement. What's important is that employees perceive they have these options available and can negotiate their use as required, through consultations with their supervisor and team members. The flip side is that the application of telework must be perceived as fair, not something doled out as favours or rewards at the whim of managers.

3. Effective virtual work requires more than good technology. It also requires a human support system, mostly provided through a supervisor and coworkers who understand the importance of providing off-site team members with the information, resources, learning opportunities and other resources required to succeed.
4. HR professionals who develop telework policies must help employees and their supervisors take the steps needed to manage the potential for blurred boundaries between work and home. This means putting clear parameters around workload, deadlines, and availability. In practice, telework should be scheduled paid work, not unscheduled free overtime.

This positive picture of telework surely appeals to employees. However, today's workplace reality is quite different. For example, a recent US survey found that the majority of employees do not have a choice about when to take bathroom and refreshment breaks. Given such constraints, telework and other forms of job flexibility could be seen as a less pressing need.

Yet looking into the future, organizational experts see greater demand for customized employment arrangements. Companies focused on cultivating their human capital recognize that an increasingly effective way to attract, retain, engage and develop talent is through a flexible approach to employment. In other words, success increasingly will depend on equating employees' autonomy and choice with improved business results.

**Graham Lowe, Ph.D.**, is president of The Graham Lowe Group Inc., a workplace consulting firm ([www.grahamlowe.ca](http://www.grahamlowe.ca)) and the author of Creating Healthy Organizations: How Vibrant Workplaces Inspire Employees to Achieve Sustainable Success - ([www.creatinghealthyorganizations.ca](http://www.creatinghealthyorganizations.ca)). He can be reached at [glowe@grahamlowe.ca](mailto:glowe@grahamlowe.ca).



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A woman with blonde hair and glasses, wearing a white shirt, smiling while holding a laptop.

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**Whose turn is it to empty the dishwasher, clear the dinner table, hang the washing out....?**

- Majella Wilkins of [Return2WorkMums](#) wrestles with the dilemmas of working from home

Working with professional women returners, I come across many women actively seeking working from home opportunities in order that they can balance work and family life more effectively. Home working can be a very effective solution for combining parenting and work roles *except* when it is accompanied by unrealistic expectations that mums can accomplish all their household duties to the same standard in addition to working 15 – 20 hours a week from home.

Here are some survival tips I've learnt along the way of being a home working parent:

**1. Develop your kids into team players working and supporting each other.** Do this by sharing out some of the regular household tasks – making beds, clearing dinner/breakfast tables, loading/unloading dishwashers, hanging the washing up. Naomi Richards 'The Kids Coach' believes small simple tasks can and should be undertaken by even young children from about age of 5. This sets an early expectation about your family life and how you all work together to get jobs done so that you can all enjoy some fun time.

**2. Resist temptation to criticise the efforts of your children and partner.** The bed may not be well made; they may have used 2 pegs to hang up

one sock on the washing line but bite your tongue on any negative response and just say thanks, give a hug, kiss or a smile – whatever is appropriate for your child and his/her age.

**3. Use humour as your weapon.** After a day at work and the children home from school, it is very normal for family members to be tired and a bit cranky. This is the time when patience can be running on empty and voices start to rise. You may not feel like laughing but humour is a powerful tool for diffusing tension and frustration. Check it out for yourself – when you are next feeling a bit down just practice smiling. Whatever may have been upsetting you will not have magically disappeared. Your ability to cope with it, however, will have received a little positive boost by just using different facial muscles which in turn triggers different signals to the brain.

**4. Give at least a 5 minute warning of something you need to happen.** When we are on a journey, such as an aeroplane, there is a warning of at least 20 minutes before landing that passengers need to prepare for landing. The same principle applies to your children. If they are engrossed in a TV programme, for example, they will not want to stop immediately to come and lay the table for dinner. Just as in your flight the captain informs passengers of the expected arrival time, try and set an expectation up front of the length of time your children have for a fun task. Then warn them at least 5 – 10 minutes before times up, that they need to prepare to stop doing what they are enjoying ready to move on to the next activity – laying the table, getting ready for going out, etc.

**5. Seek co-operation whenever possible by offering some choice of tasks.** It will not always be possible to offer choice and I certainly don't recommend offering too many choices as this just confuses us all. However, you could explain that Mum is really busy and requires some help. And then ask which job will they help with?

**6. Offer small rewards for co-operation.** I'm not suggesting that these should be high value monetary rewards. In fact it is often better if the rewards are shared time doing something together. Rewards are important, that is, after all why we work in return for the reward of earning money so that we can pay for living expenses; the reward of social engagement with our colleagues; the reward of our own personal development as individuals. All this is also true for your children and encouraging them to help you out at home.

I will not promise you overnight success with these tips – that would make life too easy and boring! However, some gentle but confident steps will help your children acclimatise to Mum not doing all the household tasks.



Article written by Majella Wilkins, founder of [Return2WorkMums](#) - a new online community for Mums to connect with experts for inspiration and support for returning to work. [Return2WorkMums](#) keeping you informed and connected for a confident return to work.

## Want To Get Your Message To Over 2,500,000 People Each Month?

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### How to Use Twitter As A Customer Service Platform

– by Heinrich Muller, [The Link Building Guy](#)

User friendly and effective customer service is a key component of running a successful business. The term "customer service" has been tarnished of late and a lot of people have had poor experiences. The use of a badly run call center or impersonal emails can scare customers away and can damage your business.

New opportunities have opened-up over the last two to three years due to the growth of social media. Social media has millions of users and it is therefore the ideal platform for businesses to use for customer service. You can engage your customers, solve their problems and build a solid brand reputation through the use of social media.

#### Why use Twitter as a customer service platform?

- Quick attention to problems - Twitter is a lightning-fast platform that can help sift through and solve problems quickly without the wait times experienced at a call center. Customers with problems requiring detailed interaction can be directed to alternative platforms.
- Free marketing - Twitter is one of the most viral platforms around and great customer service will get tweeted about thereby promoting your business to millions of new users.
- Staff motivation - Using Twitter is more interesting to staff than using email or the phone and they have the ability to measure their impact on customers. Staff performance can be measured and recognition given to the top performers on a monthly basis.
- Reducing costs - It is always important to look at new ways of reducing overheads and using Twitter will reduce the time spend per customer and will cost far less than a dedicated call center.

#### How to use Twitter as a customer service platform:

##### Promote your Twitter profile

People need to know about you in order for them to interact with you. "Follow me" buttons on your website, advertisements and information about the customer service platform that you provide should be made available.

##### Monitor conversations about your business

Use Monitter or Tweetbeep to track keywords related to your business or products mentioned in conversations on Twitter. Know what people are saying about your company or product and engage with them.

**Be quick to reply and interact**

When a customer complains you need to act quickly and provide them with the information needed in order to sort-out the complaint. The speed and quality of your response is vital.

**Keep it personal**

Use this platform to talk with your customers and to promote any success stories or new features. It is very important to always build your brand and with this platform you can get your customers to participate in discussions about your business.

**Keep it real**

Never promise something than you can't deliver or tell a half truth. It has become very easy for customers to research the information that you have provided and if they find that you have lied to them they will pull you apart. Due to the viral nature of Twitter this may have disastrous results for your business.

Twitter can be a great customer service platform if you manage it correctly. It is important to adapt to your customers and to make use of the technology and communication platforms that they prefer. Always remember that brilliant SEO strategies and marketing campaigns can be nullified by poor customer experiences.

H.E. Muller is the owner of [The Link Building Guy](#) and he provides optimization services for webmasters. Feel free to visit his website for more information, services or articles.



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### How To Promote Your Facebook Fan Page & Get Lots Of Fans

- by Ann Smarty, [@seosmarty](#)

One of the most frequent questions I'm asked is about the most effective ways to promote a Facebook fan page. So here you go: **the most effective, not really difficult to implement and quite obvious ways to promote your fan page:**

#### Round 1: Create fresh content for people to want to join:

- **Aggregate your blog feed.** [Simply RSS](#) allows to automatically update your fan page wall with your blog RSS. You may also want to **import your blog feed to your fan page notes** (for that go: "Edit page", find "Notes" under "Application" and click "Edit", then "Edit import settings" and at last provide your feed URL).



- **Try Static FBML** is another app to keep in mind: it adds advanced functionality to your Page using the Facebook Static FBML application. This application will add a box to your Page in which you can render HTML or FBML (Facebook Markup Language) for enhanced Page customization.

- **Add a personal note:** Add your personal photos, personal welcome-videos are also great (create a short video welcoming your fans and describing what they can do on your page);

- **Provide a place for interaction/self promotion:** Start a thread on your Discussion Board that allows your fans to promote their sites or inviting to share Twitter IDs and to follow each other.

#### Round 2: Invite your friends to join:

There's no way to invite all your friends in bulk but you can spend a few minutes to select (all) your friends and send an invitation to them;



Now, once you are done, go ahead and ask your best friends to invite people as well

**Round 3: Try social ads:**

The best thing about Facebook advertising (well actually there are two: one is that you can pay as little as \$1 per day to test it and the second one...) is that it can be very well-targeted (still, it won't work for *all* niches and campaign types but sometimes it works quite well). The Facebook ad campaign can be targeted (opposite) to:

- Location;
- Age group;
- Sex;
- Education;
- Keywords;
- Work place;
- Relationship status;
- Language;
- **Connections** (fan page, event or group) – this means you can for example target fans of your competitor;
- Friends' connections

**Round 4: Promote on Twitter**

If you (or your friends) have solid following on Twitter, promote your Facebook fan page there. Besides, you can link your page to your Twitter account by simply clicking [this link](#):

**2. Targeting**

**Location:** Ukraine x

**Age:** 18 - Any

**Birthday:**  Target people on their birthdays

**Sex:**  Male  Female

**Keywords:** Enter a keyword

**Education:**  All  College Grad  In College  In High School

**Workplaces:** Enter a company, organization or other workplace

**Relationship:**  Single  In a Relationship  Engaged  Married

**Interested In:**  Men  Women

**Languages:** Enter language

**Connections:** Target users who are connected to:  
Enter your Page, Event, Group or Application  
Target users who are not already connected to:  
Search Engine Journal x

**Friends of connections:** Target users whose friends are connected to:  
Enter your Page, Event, Group or Application

### Link Your Page to Your Twitter Account

You can now export your Facebook Page updates to Twitter. [Click here](#) to enable this feature.

There you can select to share status updates, links, photos, notes, and events with your followers on Twitter, directly from your Facebook Page thus promoting it to your Twitter followers:



#### Link Your Pages to Twitter:

#### Round 5: Leverage your email contacts

Doing business and networking on the Internet, you are likely to have a huge number of contacts in your email address book, so why not take advantage of that:

- Include your page URL in your email signature for business correspondence;
- Include your page URL in your email signature for Customer support, customer status updates and other automated messages;
- Leverage Gtalk status: let your facebook fan page URL display whenever your IM contact hovers over your profile name:



Ann Smarty is the Director of Media at Search & Social where she serves as the Editor of [Search Engine Journal](#). Ann's expertise in blogging and tools serve as a base for her writing, tutorials and her guest blogging project, MyGuestBlog.

### Networking 101 (For Anyone A Little Bit Nervous)

- by Alli Price, [@motivatingmum](#)

It can be intimidating walking into a room full of people at the best of times. Even more so when you've been out of the workforce for months (possibly years), the most intelligent conversation you've had recently has been with a three-year old and you're launching a business you most likely have no previous experience with.

When faced with this scenario it would be very easy to turn around and walk straight back out of that room (and many mums do) but what if the possibility of a bright and exciting future makes you determined to stay? You need to get prepared!

The proverb 'Forearmed is forewarned' was developed with networking in mind. If you have no idea what to expect your brain has carte blanche to create a million possible scenarios, each scarier than the last. Following are some tips on how you can conquer those nerves, dazzle the room and look like a networking pro:

1. Call the organiser and ask them to explain how the session runs, let them know it's your first time and that you're nervous. If they know you're anxious they may look out for you and take care of first introductions (if they're not too busy).
2. Ask for a list of attendees with web addresses (if it isn't already supplied). Armed with this information you can research who's coming along and prepare preliminary questions to ensure you never run out of things to say.
3. Get clear on who you are and what you do. What's great about your product? What does your service achieve? What aspects of these may appeal to the people attending the event? Is there one thing you want to ensure you tell everyone? Think about how this can be worked naturally into a conversation.
4. Arrive early, first if possible! This will mean you can chat to the organiser and other attendees as they arrive when it's quieter. It will also mean you won't be walking into a packed room full of people who look like they have already found the people they want to talk to.



5. Don't psyche yourself out! Your brain will try and tell you that everyone has been going to this event for years and they are all best friends. This is not true!! At least 50% of these people have probably never been to this event before and 10% have never been to a networking event at all.
6. If you feel anxious about 'selling' remember this is not what networking is for. Networking is about forming relationships, out of which business may be done, either at that time or in the future. Be open, honest and enthusiastic and let your product/service sell itself.
7. Create a talking point. Wear a beautiful piece of Jewellery, get chocolates made up with your logo on the wrapper, wear a flower in your button hole; something that will be a great conversation starter and enable people to remember you.
8. Talk to everyone! Even those people you feel aren't your market/won't be able to help you. You will be amazed where you will find referrals, suppliers and business.
9. Follow up. A personal note letting people know you enjoyed meeting them and following up with referrals or advice you promised will mean you'll have firm friends at the next networking event and maybe even some business...

**Alli Price is founder of Motivating Mum, a website and events business offering support and advice to Mumpreneurs or those wanting to be. She has two daughters, Amelie, 3 ½ and Freya, 3 months and wishes just once she wasn't on the computer at 12am at night!**



Follow her on Twitter at [@motivatingmum](https://twitter.com/motivatingmum) and check her out at [www.motivatingmum.co.uk](http://www.motivatingmum.co.uk) and [www.motivatingmum.blogspot.com](http://www.motivatingmum.blogspot.com)



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**Turbo Charge Your Sales!** - by Susan Bryant, [@susanatwinweb](#)

**With economic conditions picking up, there couldn't be a better time to brush up on your sales skills. The recent downturn has made companies think twice about who they are dealing with and has made them potentially more likely to switch suppliers. This opens up a great chance to attract people to your firm?**

Here are a few ideas to get you and your sales team fired up!

**Don't give up on your bottom 80%** - The rule of thumb has generally been that top 20% of your customers generate 80% of your revenues. However, due the slump, don't give up on your bottom 80% of your customers. Your best clients for 2010 might not have spent anything in 2009. Hopefully you're still on their radar for when they are ready to spend again.

**Map out a sales plan** - It's worth laying out a sales plan so your reps aren't running off in all directions. Map out a timeline for every step in the sales cycle. Look at researching prospects, making initial contact, presenting the product and closing the deal.

**Get the CEO some face time** - I've always been a proponent of getting the CEO out in front of clients so he or she really knows what's going on. It also sets a great example with the sales team. And nothing says "I really want your business" more than a CEO who makes the effort to meet with potential customers.

**Listening vs. Boasting** - Successful salespeople listen a lot more than they talk. They're able to ask focused questions, such as "What is the greatest challenge you see your company facing in 2010" and listen closely to the answers. This will likely reveal the customer point of pain which you and your company can address. Or, on the flip side, get your potential clients to paint a picture of success and inquire what has stopped them from achieving it. Figure out what you can do to help them get there.

**Be realistic on what you can deliver** - Your sales people might be landing business at prices lower than your cost. Talk to your team and make sure they know they can go this low, but no lower.

These are a few sales tips that should help you to gain more sales, no matter what your business!

**Susan works from home as the Marketing Manager at [WinWeb.com](#) and lives with her husband and three children.**



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## Tools & Services

1. [Skype](#) – Free Internet Calls
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3. [SpringPad](#) – Online Organizer
4. [Wordpress](#) – Blogging Platform
5. [Electronic Transfer](#) – Online Payment

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## Companies

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3. [Blue Zebra](#)
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1. [Commission Blueprint 2.0](#)
2. [Facebook Ads Guide](#)
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1. [Robert Allen's Wealth System](#)
2. [Partner With Paul](#)
3. [Surveys4Checks](#)
4. [The Rich Janitor](#)
5. [Blogging To The Bank](#)

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## This Month's Survey Results:

Each month we open up our online survey so **you** can rate and suggest a top 5 of work-at-home resources for your fellow teleworkers to take a look at.

There are 4 broad groupings to view and if you disagree or would like to suggest alternatives we encourage you to have your say via the link under each group; this will take you to the individual survey page.

Positions are determined by combining the results of 5 criteria in each group.

*Please note:* These are the results formed by *subscribers of TWD* and do not reflect the opinion of this publication or any of its partners. Each option on the survey must have been suggested by at least 5 subscribers to warrant inclusion and deter spammers.

**NOTE: Not all services available internationally**

**A Commuter's Tale** – by Paul Diamond

Tuesday morning. It's dark and raining.

You walk to the train station avoiding the puddles. Your umbrella keeps you dry for the moment but the same umbrella will soon make you and your neighbour wet through on the crowded train.

“Remind me again why I’m doing this?” you say out loud. Thankfully, there's no-one close enough to hear you this time.

Your job is OK. You're at a good company and you work with good people. You know what you're doing and it's all under control. “So what's the problem?” you say to yourself. Still speaking out loud but a little more softly this time.

The more you think about it - and you have thought about it a lot lately - you don't hate your job. You're just not one of those people who enjoys what they do. You don't envy people who are happy at work either. “They should be praised for proving it's possible,” you think to yourself. There are people around you now, so you choose not to speak out loud.

“It's up to me to figure out what's missing. To understand what I want. Not just from my job but from my future and for the rest of my career too,” you quietly resolve to yourself.

You splash into the station but carry on thinking as you roll your umbrella. The umbrella rolls up in a smooth, practised motion. You've done it so many times before. It's a familiar, satisfying feeling.

“That's the feeling I want from my job!” you say out loud. Much louder this time.

More than one person hears you, including the ticket collector, the same one you see every morning.

You look a little embarrassed but she's smiling, and right there you realise she knows how you feel because she wants that same feeling too.

A very different feeling to being sat on your train.

...



**About Paul - I have spent most of my career working with a wide range of people, listening to their career stories and offering support as they made decisions for their future. Earlier this year my first book, The Career Explorer's Journal was published. A new kind of career book that places you in the driving seat, supporting the choices and decisions you want to make. You can find me and plenty more on this topic at [exploreyourcareer.com](http://exploreyourcareer.com)**

The banner features the text "AUTOBLOG SAMURAI™" in large, bold, yellow and white letters on a black background. To the right, there is a red samurai character icon. Further right, the text "Money Generating Blogs In Minutes" is displayed in white on a blue background. Below this, there are icons for RSS, WordPress, and Blogger. A prominent orange button with the text "Download Now" is positioned on the right side of the banner.

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**This Month's Freebies:**

(Click to download each freebie. They are in .zip format so you'll have to unzip them using a tool like [7-zip](#) )

[30 Tips For eBook Authors](#) – writing isn't nearly as hard as you think...If you know a few 'Tricks of the Trade'.

[Xtreme Software](#) – 15 free tools to help you run an online business (caution: big file)

[TRAFFIC](#) – 7 totally free ways to get more traffic

[Time Management Strategies](#) – Concentrate on the things that earn you money!

[Indispensible Internet Marketing Newbie's Guide](#) – Great introduction to the business



**The CASH Code** How To Set Up A High Profit Online Business In Just 2 Hours...  
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We like to think that anyone teleworking, or thinking about it, can benefit from our free publication.

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**Interview Portfolio:**

### **Tyrone Shum Talks Outsourcing**

Tyrone tells us how, why and where to offload those tedious jobs so you can concentrate on your business.

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### **Stefan Töpfer Talks Cloud Computing**

Here we get the low-down on cloud computing and how it may be cheaper, more secure and less hassle for your business.

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### **Ran Aroussi Talks ‘Other Peoples Talent’**

Need a product to sell or service to deliver? Why not use the skills of other people for inspiration and content.

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### **Dee Kumar Talks Traffic Exchanges**

Dee de-mystifies what traffic exchanges really are and how they can bring floods of traffic to your site.

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### **Bryan McConnahea Talks Website Authority**

Bryan McConnahea from [AuthorityPro.com](http://AuthorityPro.com) talks about all the variables needed to give your website, and so your product or service, authority in any market.

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### **Brian Evans Talks List Building**

Brian Evans of [listprofitbootcamp.com](http://listprofitbootcamp.com) acts as a list building expert to many Fortune 500 companies so you should listen if you want to make your list grow in size and profit.

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### **Garland Coulson Talks Unique \$200/hr Services**

In one of our most interesting interviews yet Garland from [ebusinessstutor.com](http://ebusinessstutor.com) talks about crafting your own unique \$200/hr service.

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### **Sara Sutton Fell Talks Flexible Jobs**

Sara is the founder and CEO of [flexjobs.com](http://flexjobs.com) a specialist job site for those looking for more flexibility in their life and work.

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