

# Organizing Minds Want To Know

*An eBook from Members of Mom Masterminds*

How to get more organized as a work at home mom and internet marketer is a common thread of conversation on the private forum at Mom Masterminds. Because our members all seem to enjoy talking about it so much, we asked them if they would like to write about it too.

What you'll find here is great home office and internet business related organization advice and tips from women who are living it. Sometimes they've also included their personal thoughts about what their Mom Mastermind's membership has meant to them and their businesses.

We know you'll enjoy reading and be able to make great use of the advice and resources provided.

The image shows two handwritten signatures in cursive. The signature on the left is 'Alice Seba' and the signature on the right is 'Kelly McCausey'.

Alice Seba & Kelly McCausey  
Co-Owners, Mom Masterminds

The eBook is free and you are welcome to share it with others as much as you like – so long as you make no changes.

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## Interesting Web Survey Results

*A web survey in spring of 2006 asked Work at Home Moms Talk Radio listeners to say how important being organized is to them and also to share some of their top organizational challenges. This is what they had to say:*

### Is getting more organized a high priority?

55% said "Yes, it's very important to me."

25% said "I would like to be - but I don't worry about it."

20% didn't respond to this question

### The home office:

- It's a mess! I have an L shaped desk and it needs organizing in a major way.
- My office is located off of our kitchen. We have a split level home and our kitchen is actually in the bottom part of our house (kitchen). I have a horseshoe shaped desk with room for 2 computers (one in each corner) and a small 4 foot cutting table.
- I have an office in my guest room/office with three computers. I work on one, my daughter has one, and hubby has one. It's a nice place, all decorated etc. We even have a TV back here. We spend a lot of time in the office together. :)
- My home office is a spare bedroom that we set up with a desk (a messy one at that) a computer, a printer and some book shelves - pretty boring if you ask me :(
- I have a lovely work space in our home. It's a 13x13 room with built in shelves and a walk-in closet with shelves in the closet as well. I only have one filing cabinet that has 2 storage drawers and 1 filing drawer.
- It's a little disorganized right now, but I am working on it. I just don't know where to start. I have a cluttered desk with paperwork everywhere. I can find things pretty easily this way, and even though I have a hard time finding things when they're "organized," I just feel better when things are organized and look nice.
- It is in my bedroom right next to my bed!!! (just the computer...my work station is actually in my laundry room!)
- Due to lack of space my home office consists of a four foot by 3 foot stock storage area in the basement and an overloaded computer desk in the living room. Also my files are in boxes behind the couch near the computer for easy access when I'm online.

- Junky! LOL! I have a large space for office but I have the hardest time keeping it organized! Phone books, books I'm reading, unopened mail, issues of the WC, coffee cups and more - all over the place. HELP ME! LOL!
- My office is a separate room that would have normally been the formal living room in our home. I have doors that I can close, and use a closet in the bonus room for inventory/storage.
- I have my laptop with me downstairs in the kitchen and family room most of the time, that's where I do most of my work...with my planner on my counter. My upstairs office has my filing cabinet with all my paperwork, etc. Doable but sometimes messy!
- Cluttered with baby stuff all over the place... still trying to start something going... too many interruptions.
- My desk, with our home computer, is covered in my stuff (not necessarily "work" stuff), my husband's stuff and my kids' toys and papers. No organization, except that my stuff's generally on one side, and DH's on the other.
- It is a mess! I just cleared out my bookshelves and went to the book resale shop and got \$14!! Yea! Now on to the rest of the mess!
- Very cozy with a large desk and French doors. Very neat & tidy until you look into the closet which is a mess of boxes and kids art supplies and the two drawers in my desk are in need of a good going through!
- One room in my home is devoted to my office. It has all manner of electrical equipment, computer, wireless network, printer, scanner, fax, 2 phones, desk and bookcases. I spend too much time trying to organize it.
- My home office is an area located in our living room. I have a large computer desk with an elevated space for my monitor and speakers. There's a space for my CPU, files, books and such. There's an attractive file cabinet and ergonomic chair. Because it's in our living room it's important that the area looks great, as well as functional. It's next to our balcony so I can open the doors, let the outdoor sounds and smells enter.

### **Number one organizational need?**

- Getting things done in a timely manner so I can have more family time. Everything seems lost in my office and on my pc.
- I am currently in the process of laying out my new storage room for my inventory. I need industrial/commercial shelving that can accommodate my heavy reams of

paper and paper organizations and then also some bins to keep all of my miscellaneous inventory. Also I would love to be able to have a time management schedule so that I can keep to it and not continue to work 12 to 15 hours per day. I would like to be able to spend more time with my family.

- I like to have calendars and to do lists. So really as a need, I'm good. I just need to have more time! LOL So I guess better time management.
- A better way to organize & file my paperwork.
- Filing System, Record Keeping, Email Organization
- Time management and making time for my family
- A day planner
- My house is always a mess and I need to find time to keep it clean. With 6 kids you'd think I could enlist them to help keep it clean, but it's not that easy! So mainly I need some type of system that will help me make the time to tackle all my many priorities!
- A real home office and a way to manage my multiple home business contacts
- Filing system
- Need to have LESS PAPER in my office....after all isn't that what computers and automation is all about!!
- More time alone - without baby.
- I need to organize my things to gain more space.
- What to do with all those papers!!!!
- I need to know how to juggle working on various businesses and take care of family and home.
- I need more time.
- balancing being mom and working from home
- PAPER!
- Paper, paper, paper. It can easily get out of control due to homeschooling, work, home stuff and my school stuff.

### **Organizational tools wanted:**

- I've heard of something that organizes your eBooks and eCourses by author, site & title (didn't catch the name though). That would be handy with all the stuff us MM/WAHM use and/or create.
- Daily planning, Time Savers & Tips
- I think moms need to hear about TO DO LISTS and how to manage them.
- Filing systems & decorative storage solutions.
- I'd like to hear how other moms setup their office and filing systems. How they keep track of business stuff, leisure stuff, and important family papers. I'd like to hear how what in the world to do with all the mail we get!!
- Planning for weeks ahead, planning household chores, planning for meals
- ANYTHING that works for other moms! I would like so badly to find something that works for me.
- Keeping optimal customers lists for mass mailings, emails and phone calls to retain an accurate customer base
- Time Management in keeping things in order.
- Software to keep track of orders, payments, time sheets. Software to keep track of appointments.
- Time management, good planners and how to use them right, paper organization tips.
- How can we filter thru what is junk and what is not on the net, email, etc.? I like to keep my eyes open for good potential opportunities... how do we know what to discard???
- I need simple tools things that I'd really use, instead of things that would add to the clutter in my home.
- Well, since I need more time the most, I guess I would have to say time management help.
- Quick tips are always great. I love Flylady so I enjoy hearing how you can spend a small amount of time working on a hot spot and move on to other important things,

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like kids and the computer. Time management would also be wonderful~ it's hard to balance it all!

- What to do with all my paper and spiral bound notebooks (idea books)
- Combining home, work and other areas of our lives when organizing. I would also like to hear about household management binders.

**If any of these organizational challenges jump out at you – keep reading!**

## Tame That Digital Clutter with These Internet Tools

By Lynette Chandler

[www.techbasedmarketing.com](http://www.techbasedmarketing.com)



*Lynette is our 'Secret Weapon' at Mom Masterminds. She brings her incredible experience and technical expertise to our members. We are thrilled to have her on board.*

According to Real Simple magazine, women spend an average of 55 minutes everyday searching for items. Research has also shown this trend is repeated in our businesses. Unfortunately, electronic information such as web sites and files isn't like pieces of paper on your desk. We can't see it and thus, out of sight, out of mind. Also, the past solutions for organizing digital data can't keep up with the amount of digital data we accumulate and generate today. Thankfully, there are also newer tools to help us - bless those smart programmers.

### Enter Web Clipping.

Web clipping is literally, clipping and saving snippets of digital information. What do you do when you find little Javascripts you can use, quotes, quick tips or even short research figures that would make a great article or blog post? You probably bookmarked the page or printed it out.

Well that might work... for a while. The problem with bookmarks is some pages like order thank you pages can't be saved because the link expires. Even if the pages are permanent, how successful have you been at tracking down the exact information you want from your bookmarks? Chances are, not very. That's because bookmarks by themselves do not carry the information you are looking for. For example you found a great salmon recipe. The bookmark title is "Mary's Big Site of Yummy Food Ideas". So here you are, 5 months later searching through your bookmarks for "salmon recipe" and you'll never find it. Unless you remember the site name and how many of us do? As for printing, that just generates more paper clutter.

One of my favorite web clipping tools is Google Notebook. Whenever I want to save just that little bit of information, I just highlight it and save to Google Notebook. I now have information that I can actually search through effectively. Google Notebook saves the URL to the original page so you can back track if needed. It also saves images and preserves the formatting of the web page which is nice because sometimes you want to view the snippet in its original form.

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Another nice thing about web clipping tools is you can save your own notes as well. Maybe you had an idea and want to quickly type it down before you forget, Google Notebook sits tucked away in a corner of my browser until I need it.

You're probably thinking now, how's that going to keep you organized? After all, you're just saving stuff and literally shoving bits of data into a huge, messy file. True, but the key with web clipping is not about categorization, files and folders although you can do that. It's about the ability to search your notes. And that actually is more useful than categorization and folders.

Google Notebook isn't the only tool. There are actually quite a few that do more or less the same thing. If you use FireFox, there's an extension called ScrapBook. It saves your notes to your hard drive. Another online tool is Clipmarks. This is almost like a cross between web clipping and social bookmarking because you can actually share your clips with other people.

If you prefer desktop applications on your PC, try Evernote. The free version is more than sufficient but you can also upgrade to unlock more advanced features for a small price. Are you a MAC user? Then try DEVONthink. This is a much more powerful tool. It actually stores data from other kinds of files including PDFs, audios and movies, reads RSS and a bunch of nifty features. Try it. You'll love it.

**Links For Web Clipping Tools:**

[www.google.com/notebook](http://www.google.com/notebook)

[www.evernote.com](http://www.evernote.com)

[www.amb.vis.ne.jp/mozilla/scrapbook/](http://www.amb.vis.ne.jp/mozilla/scrapbook/)

[www.devonthink.com](http://www.devonthink.com)

# Time Management Advice for Internet Marketers

By Vera Raposo

[www.VeraRaposo.com](http://www.VeraRaposo.com)



Your time is a valuable commodity. Are you spending it wisely? As an internet marketer, your time is most likely spread across a wide variety of tasks and projects. Optimizing and managing your time more wisely will lead to a more productive work day.

Ask yourself: What are my top priorities? Don't squander precious time on anything that isn't aligned with your business goals. Knowing exactly what your priorities are enables you to aim realistically towards the best possible end result.

**One terrible time-eater for WAHM internet marketers is surfing online.**

Because you work on the internet, it's all too easy to hop online to search for something, and then get wrapped up in surfing while time ticks away. Before you realize it, hours have passed and you haven't accomplished a thing. To prevent this, set a time limit on your frivolous online activities.

Procrastination is most commonly known as the worst time-thief for internet marketers. Don't wait until the last minute to meet deadlines. Plan your calendar months in advance and set weekly goals. Putting off what you know needs to be done only leads to frustration and anxiety.

**Become a project manager, instead of attempting to do everything all by yourself.**

A good leader knows how to delegate. Outsourcing repetitive, time-consuming tasks, such as checking email or compiling and sending newsletters, can save you literally hours each day.

Last but not least, set yourself up for success. Be cautious not to overbook your calendar or plan too many new projects at once. A wise internet marketer is one who is willing to do the work, but smart enough to not burn herself out!

# Time Management for Direct Sellers

By Regina Baker  
[www.Wahmcart.com](http://www.Wahmcart.com)



## *My Mom Mastermind's Testimony*

*I can't stress enough the value of being a Mom Mastermind Member. It is by far "the best place" to be for Internet Marketing learning. Being a MM Graduate is the best decision I've made in terms of growing and learning the ins and outs to IM, Joint Venturing, Affiliate Management, Time Management and Article Marketing. Thanks to Alice, Kelly and Lynette for putting together what I call the best Online Mommy University!*

Whether you are just getting started in your exciting new direct sales venture or you are a veteran, chances are there never seems to be enough time in the day to get everything done.

It's very easy to spend hours on the fun stuff – creating flyers and business cards, reviewing the catalog to gain more product knowledge and networking online. All of those tasks are very much necessary. However the key to time management is simply one word: balance.

Find a medium that works best for you – a calendar, online reminders, sticky notes or scratch paper. Then each and every day schedule definitive time frames when you will work on recruiting, customer service, team building, training, marketing and networking. Some tasks may take fifteen minutes while others may need two hours to complete.

To make this system work, you need to stick to your time frames. When the allotted time is completed, move onto the next task. While you are working online, turn off your email and instant message programs. Let me repeat that – turn off your email and IM! It is one of the biggest distractions.

In addition to scheduling direct sales activities throughout your day it is vitally important that you also schedule time for yourself, your home and your family. If you don't schedule all of these essential responsibilities, something will simply not get done. Generally if something has to get shelved until the next day, it's the crucial downtime.

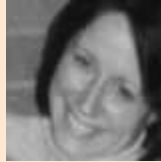
Direct selling is a wonderful business. It allows flexibility and freedom. However it takes consistent time management in order to be successful. Don't put off until tomorrow what you can do today. There is no time like the present to set your schedule and work your new time management plan!

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# Managing Paper in the Home Office

By Charissa Bear

[www.momsinc.biz](http://www.momsinc.biz)



## *My Mom Mastermind's Testimony*

*I'm so glad that I found Mom Masterminds. I like the fact that I can rely on them for trustworthy information, and help. I don't think I would have made it this far online without them.*

If a twenty-something wrote these tips for managing paper in the home office the first suggestion would more than likely be to do away with paper. I can see my son saying, "Paper? Why Paper? You don't need paper?"

Well, there are reasons to use paper, and to file it away for safekeeping, especially if you're 35 years old or more and you grew up learning from and deriving pleasure from the printed word and the study of books.

Few in the business world would argue with the need for computers, online databases, Internet, contact management programs and various software applications. We all know they can make us more efficient by keeping our materials on our computers, on electrical storage devices such as external hard drives, CDs, DVDs and flash drives.

There are reasons to have the good old fashioned printed page, though. Eye strain, back strain, wrist and finger muscle strain can all be alleviated by leaving the computer and the keyboard for 30 minutes of relaxation in an easy chair while poring over the printed word.

Managing paper in the home office is more difficult than managing electric devices because it's heavier and takes up more space.

Here are some tips for managing paper in the home office:

- \* An ongoing piece of information that updates and changes periodically should be electronic only.
- \* Writing a day planner on paper is a waste of time and space. A white board at eye level on the wall would work much better.
- \* If space is at a premium build up towards the ceiling. A narrow tall file cabinet will take up less space.
- \* Stay organized. This is perhaps the most important of the tips for managing paper in the home office. If you don't take time every day to file you won't find the important paper at your finger tips the next time you need it and you'll find yourself printing it out time and again out of frustration for having to spend time looking for it.

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\* If you have no need for it, throw it away. Go through your files on a periodic basis and weed out the old to make way for the new.

# Organizing Your Web Browser Favorites

By Angela Wills  
[www.StarVA.com](http://www.StarVA.com)



## *My Mom Mastermind's Testimony*

*Alice & Kelly, Thank you so much for Mom Masterminds! Without the networking, support, mentoring and friendships I have found with you I would still be struggling with my internet business and spending way too much money on the next money making thing.*

*Almost exactly two months ago with the encouragement of the members at Mom Masterminds I started my Virtual Assistance business. Within TWO DAYS I saw a profit. This was amazing to me because after Four Years of working hard online this was the first time that the income I made from a business was actually greater than the expenses! This proved to me that it takes more than just hard work to be successful online; I know that Mom Masterminds absolutely helped me to break out of the cycle I was caught in and to create a profitable business.*

You know how it goes. You're surfing the net and find a neat site so you click and add it to your favorites (or bookmarks as Netscape calls it). Then you find another really cool site, and another you know you'll come back to visit again. Pretty soon your favorites list is a big mess that you would rather ignore than try to manage.

Time to organize your favorites!

Of course, you likely have a bunch of sites that you do visit often and they are in your favorites where you can find them, but what about all those other links? Have you ever gone back to them?

Taking the time to organize your favorites will save you valuable time, something we all need more of! Here are some tips to get your favorites in tiptop shape.

### Step 1: Purge

Ok, so it's time to be honest with yourself and get rid of any sites that you know you'll never return to no matter how great they may be. A good guideline to go by is if you haven't visited a site in six months or more it's safe to bet that you won't be visiting it anytime soon, so get rid of it.

If you're too nervous to go ahead and start deleting away, some browsers will allow you to save your favorites to your computer to be retrieved later.

In Internet Explorer you can do this by opening your favorites and right clicking on any

folder within your favorites and then choosing copy. You then go to a folder you've created for your favorites and click 'paste' and the pages will show up in there.

In Netscape you can go to Bookmarks, then Manage Bookmarks. Then choose File and then Export and choose a folder you've already set up to put all your bookmark files in. When you click on what you've saved it will open a HTML page with links (your bookmarks) to click on.

### Step 2: Name Your Favorites

Ever noticed when you save a page in your favorites it sometimes shows up as 'home page' or some other general term? This doesn't help at all when you're looking for a site by name or by topic.

You can go ahead and rename your links so that they are something that makes sense to you. Either use the name of the site or something else that will help you recognize the site. For example, you may not remember the name of the site when looking for it so use both the description and name like this: "Autoresponder Aweber"

Rename your links as you add them to help avoid feeling overwhelmed when you've got hundreds to do.

### Step 3: Categorize

When categorizing your favorites there's no doubt you'll want the sites you visit frequently right up top. Go through your favorites and write down all the sites that you visit daily. If the total is fewer than ten you could have those sites right at the top of your favorites list. If the total is more than ten you're likely better off setting up a 'daily' folder and only have your top five or ten sites right up top. Of course they can also all be filed into the daily folder to keep it simple.

If you use the internet for more than just business you'll want to create folders for the other things you do online, such as maybe 'online scrapbooking' or 'family history research'. You'll also need to decide where they go based on order of importance.

When organizing your business favorites, don't be afraid to use lots of folders and subfolders.

Here are some common folders WAHM's might use:

#### Internet Marketing

- Webhosting
- Keyword Research
- SEO
- PPC
- Article Directories

#### Forums

- Business
- WAHM
- Moms

#### Blogs

- Business
- Friends

#### My Sites

- Site 1 name
  - email
  - ftp
  - Control panel

The most important part of getting your favorites organized is that you create a system that YOU can understand and use. If the suggestions here don't work for you then tweak them so that you have your own system of keeping your favorites where you can find them. You'll be glad you did when you're looking for a site you really need right now!

## You Have to Say No Sometime (Don't over commit!)

By Aurelia Williams

[www.reallifecoaching.net](http://www.reallifecoaching.net)



### *My Mom Mastermind's Testimony*

*Joining Mom Masterminds was the smartest business decision I've ever made. I've been at Mom Masterminds for over a year and the knowledge, tools, networking and support that I have received continues to amaze me. Within just 3 months of joining, I noticed an increase in the subscribers to my newsletters, visitors to my website and a huge increase in my affiliate income. Mom Masterminds has guided me and given me the courage to launch a new site and new podcast and within just 2 months of the new launch the site ranks on the 1<sup>st</sup> page on Google for its target market. I am so thankful to the Mom Mastermind community and its coaches!*

NO! It's amazing how such a small word can carry such a mighty punch, isn't it? Learning how to say no can be difficult, but it's worth it for many reasons. By saying no you become more productive, reduce your stress levels and are more focused on the things you choose to say yes to.

The reason many people get in a situation where they are overwhelmed with work is because they feel guilty if the thought of telling someone no even crosses their mind. By taking on too many duties, just to appease your guilty feelings, you are hurting not only yourself, but those requesting your time as well.

If you truly can't fit something into your schedule without burdening yourself beyond reason, it's ok to say no. Keep your tasks and projects at a level that is manageable for you. If you become overloaded, make certain that you let people know that. Many times, they will understand and will gladly wait until you have the time to complete their request.

Here are a few ways you can politely let others know you are not available to help them. You don't have to just tell them no and leave it at that.

- If the task is something you are interested in doing, but don't have the time to commit at that moment, tell them that it is something you are definitely interested in, but you will need to review your schedule. This gives you time to decide if you can commit to the project or if you must turn it down.
- Resist the urge to immediately say yes by telling the person that you need to look at your schedule before you can commit to them. Let them know that you want to be sure their project is getting your undivided attention.

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- You can also say something along the lines of “That sounds like a great idea; unfortunately, I don’t have time to help you with it at the moment. However, I do have time available on this date.”
- Make it very clear that you value their time so you are not comfortable taking on the project at this time. You won’t feel you’ve done your best due to the fact that your schedule is already full. Then offer them the next available time you do have open.

You can’t possibly be everything to everybody. The sooner you realize this, the less you will feel like you are being pulled in a hundred different directions. It’s time to face this fact: You have to say no sometimes.

In order to keep moving towards your ultimate goals you need to know when to say no and when to push things off your plate. It can be hard, but in the end you will be happier, gain more respect from those requesting your assistance and get more done in the long run.

# Cutting Down Wasted Internet Time

By Carrie Lauth

[www.CarrieLauth.com](http://www.CarrieLauth.com)



## *My Mom Mastermind's Testimony*

*Mom Masterminds has been the best investment I've made so far in my online business. The coaching and information have been invaluable to me, saving me hours of time every month and countless frustrations and tears! I've always said that avoiding pitfalls by leveraging someone else's experience is wise for a work at home Mom who has precious little time and money to waste. The mentoring available to me at MM has made my business what it is today.*

Every work at home Mom is interested in maximizing the time she spends on her business. With kids, house and hubby to take care of, we want to make our work time really count. Here are some tips that will help you make the most of your online hours.

### **Have a clear purpose when you go online**

Don't boot up your computer without knowing exactly what you intend to do! Have a definite purpose each and every time you get online. This prevents you from aimlessly checking email or surfing the net and spending too much time on non moneymaking activities. Know what you need to accomplish, write it down, do it, and then move on to the next activity. It helps to keep a notebook by your computer with a list of the ongoing tasks that need to be accomplished in your business.

### **Analyze your activities**

Think about the steps you engage yourself in with your business and see if those tasks are really paying off for you. A lot of work at home Moms do things like join safelists, traffic exchanges and other activities that most internet marketing experts agree are *not* the best use of your time. Ask people who are where you want to be in your business how they manage their time. Just because something is free doesn't mean you should be spending time doing it. It needs to be producing measurable results for you.

### **Think Assembly Line**

Group similar activities together. Don't check your email all day, check it once or twice a day and answer all the emails at the same time, preferably at the end of your work time. When you want to make changes to your website, list them all and wait until you need to make several changes, then do them all at once. When you sit down to write an article, write 2 or 3. Every time your brain has to "change gears"; it costs you time and effort. Lumping similar tasks together saves you time because you're in flow.

## **Utilize Technology**

Use autoresponders, mailing list management systems, blogs that allow you to schedule posts, and other resources to automate your business as much as you can. If you find yourself typing out answers to the same questions over and over again, add FAQ pages to your website or create an ecourse or downloadable report that addresses those topics, and refer your customers or down line (or whoever else might need this information) to those.

## **Identify Time Wasters**

It's a different thing for everyone. Maybe it's checking email too much, posting a lot in message forums, reading blogs or even information products. Anything that doesn't directly make you money needs to be done **AFTER** the moneymaking activities. Whatever it is for you, identify it and eliminate it if possible, or at least manage it so it doesn't take up your most productive time.

## **Use a timer**

A timer helps you get down to business and get 'er done as quickly as possible. It keeps you on track. Use a digital or kitchen timer or search for one of those nifty downloadable timers that you install on your computer. If you have a real problem with self discipline, download the free Temptation Blocker, which temporarily disables certain programs on your computer (such as your email program or RSS feed reader) that might distract you from your work.

## **Have a Routine**

Having a routine for your online activities can really help with time management. When you have a good routine, you can do things without thinking, and tasks take up less time that way.

For example, if you're an affiliate marketer, your daily routine may be something like this: 1) Add new content to site 2) Add new email to autoresponder or draft weekly newsletter 3) Write blog post and/or free reprint article. Keep your routines written down until they're memorized.

We all want to spend less time in front of the computer without hurting our income. These tips will help you accomplish that so you do more of what you really love – spending time with your family.

# Simple Home Office Bookkeeping

By Vickie Carlson

[www.WAHM-Zine.com](http://www.WAHM-Zine.com)



## *My Mom Mastermind's Testimony*

*If you're a work at home mom or want to be and are serious about building your business online, Mom Masterminds is the place to learn how to do it. From website building tutorials (Thank you, Kelly!) to search engine optimization, building an email list, making money as an affiliate and everything in between, you'll find lessons, ebooks, audio and video tutorials and real live help when you have questions or are just looking for feedback.*

*I visit the forums daily, actually several times a day; I can't seem to help myself. One reason is because I always, always learn something new. Whenever someone has a question, they just post it at the forum and the answers come flying in! But the main reason is because the women are so wonderful and encouraging.*

*When visiting the forums, it's like visiting with friends but much more than that. These friends believe in you and want to see you succeed and will do anything they can to help you along your journey.*

*Mom Masterminds has helped me to focus on what I really want to do with my business and is teaching me the skills I need to make it happen ~ I can't wait to see where I will be a year from now! I've learned more in my four short months of membership than I have in the last four or five years of spinning the wheels of trial and error marketing online.*

*Thank you, Alice! Thank you, Kelly! Thank you, Lynette! You ladies have no idea how much we members truly appreciate Mom Masterminds and all it is doing for us. I hope these few words let you know in some small way. No words can truly express how I feel being a part of a group of such talented work at home business women. I'm honored to be in the midst of all this great company!*

As a work at home mom and CEO of your home business, how you choose to keep your bookkeeping records is entirely up to you. There are several reasons for keeping accurate bookkeeping records including:

- Prepare financial statements – shows your company's liabilities, assets and equity. Also shows net profit for period. If you're looking to get a loan, you'll need this.
- Will help you determine the state of your business – downtimes, which season is best, you'll be able to see what's working and what isn't
- Will help you to prepare your taxes – you'll have records of all income, expenses and deductions in order. This make your life easier and your tax preparation will more than likely cost less because it will be a breeze for your accountant.
- Will allow you to have more control over your financial operations and information

What should you consider when deciding what method is best for you and your home

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business? Here are just a few things; you may think of more.

- How big or busy is your business?
- How many transactions will you need to keep track of?
- How much time will the bookkeeping tasks take you?
- Do you have time or will you outsource?

Keeping your financial records in order is the most important thing you will ever do for your business. The three most common methods are the ledger method, a checkbook or software.

The ledger method – preferred by most accountants. This method tracks income and expenses easily. Many use this method in addition to software.

The simple checkbook method – very popular for new small or home businesses. It's always best to keep your personal checking and business checking as two separate accounts. It is easier for tracking income and expenses for business only.

Bookkeeping software – generally requires minimal effort. It's designed to be user friendly and easy to set up. It generates reports for you. If you don't want to use software, you can create a simple spreadsheet; it will work as well.

### **Tips for Keeping Accurate Records Easily**

Here are a few very important tips for keeping your records in order:

- Daily record keeping is best
- Have a separate checking account and keep statements and check registers
- Keep accurate and detailed records and receipts for all money taken in (income) from your business i.e. the sale of your product or service, all commissions and affiliate income
- Keep accurate records and receipts for ALL business expenses when they occur
- Keep accurate and up to date records of inventory, equipment and assets
- Keep a mileage log for your car
- Keep accurate records for family employees
- Keep records for the part of your home you use for business
- Keep records for as long as they are important for any tax law. This is usually the later of: 1) 3 years from the return due date or the date filed, or 2) 2 years from the date the tax was paid. Check your local laws.

Check the local laws for your city and state. Always file your taxes on time. It is important to retain all documentation because they support the information in your books and on your tax returns.

### **Tax Advantages to Owning a Home Business**

There are some great tax benefits to having a home-based business, but you must meet IRS

criteria. You can look online at <http://www.irs.gov/> and again you'll want to check your local laws for your city and state.

Some common deductions may include:

- Advertising and Marketing - business cards, letterheads, ads in newspapers, television, radio, online ads, etc.
- Accounting, Legal and Professional fees – bookkeeping, taxes, license fees
- Bank Service Charges and Interest on your business accounts
- Annual Credit Cards Fees for your business credit cards
- Depreciation on your business equipment or furniture
- Equipment – computer, printer, fax
- Home Office Furniture - you desk, chair, filing cabinets
- Home Office Expense (if your home office is a separate room used only as your home office)
- Vehicle Expenses if your vehicle is used for your business
- Travel expenses related to your business
- A percentage of business related meals and entertainment
- Educational expenses – seminars, conferences, audio training, classes
- Magazines and Books related to your business
- A percentage of health insurance including medical and dental expenses
- Maintenance and repairs on equipment and home office
- Copying, Printing, Postage, Shipping and Office Supplies
- Internet Fees – Monthly connection fee, hosting, domain names, autoresponders
- Telephone and calling features (if only used for your business)
- A percentage of real estate taxes, mortgage interest and utilities
- Wages paid to employees – if you have them

### **How to Easily Keep Your Bookkeeping Records in Order**

It's really very simple to keep your bookkeeping records in order. You may need to pick up a few supplies but I promise the cost will be minimal and the payoff will be worth it.

1. Stacking Trays or I prefer Vertical Files – Label them **In, Out, To Pay** and **To File** – never touch any piece of paper more than once. Put it in its proper place to be dealt with.
2. Do your filing daily or at least on a weekly basis. This keeps your paper from overflowing everywhere.
3. Use file folders, large yellow envelopes, file boxes or a simple accordion file – label them the twelve months and year. (Ex. January 2006, February 2006, you get it.) Every day drop your receipts, deposit slips, bills paid, etc. into the appropriate month. I use a large yellow envelope, one for each month. Inside each month is then organized by week and clipped together. Easily kept in a file drawer until ready for tax season. My friend keeps her records in folders in a 3 ring binder and it works for her. Go with what you're comfortable with.

4. Print out your reports daily, weekly or monthly. Put them into the appropriate month's file or envelope.
5. Keep an updated list of assets and inventory.
6. Keep your payroll reports, if you have employees.)
7. Keep your ledger, checkbook or software up to date. Again, I recommend daily recordkeeping.
8. Now you're ready to bring all of your well kept and organized, up to date records to your accountant at tax time and watch him smile with joy!

A very, very simple method and a great tip I picked up from my Dad is to keep a small notebook and pen with you at all times. Now as you're going about your day running your business, you can jot down your mileage, expenses or income and then just log them at the end of the day. This is such an easy thing to do that once you get used to it, you'll wonder why you never thought to do it before.

Tip: The notebook comes in handy for any busy work at home mom to keep track of many things!

Below you'll find a brief checklist to help you keep track of your bookkeeping records. Home business bookkeeping doesn't have to be complicated. It only needs to be done properly on a consistent basis. I hope I have helped to show you how simple it really is!

### **Simple Home Office Bookkeeping Checklist**

- Income
  - Cash register tapes
  - Receipt books
  - Credit card receipts
  - Copies of customer checks – usually attached to invoice or receipt
  - Deposit slips
  - Email notices of payment received
  - Monthly reports i.e. Paypal, commissions received, any affiliate income, your shopping cart provider
- Expenses
  - Cancelled checks – usually attached to invoices or purchase orders
  - Receipts and cash register tapes
  - Credit card slips
  - Invoices and Purchase Orders
  - Copies of bills and cancelled checks or bank statements if paid via direct debit

### **Resources**

- [Microsoft Office Accounting Express 2007](#) – Easy to use free accounting software from Microsoft

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- [QuickBooks Online Edition](#) – Get the freedom and flexibility you need to manage your business accounting from anywhere — work, home or on the road
- [Home Office Deduction Calculator](#) – estimate your potential home office tax deduction

# Organizing Your Home Office Documents in a Binder

By LaTara Ham-Ying  
[www.VeganFamilyLiving.com](http://www.VeganFamilyLiving.com)



## *My Mom Mastermind's Testimony*

*I joined MM in November of 2006. At first I was not sure about this new journey I was on. Would I be accepted? Is MM a clique? Is it really worth the money? What would I really learn from this group? These and many other questions popped into my head. I bit the bullet and joined, especially after I paid attention to the success and confidence level of the other MM members I knew before signing up.*

*I went in having closed down a very unprofitable business and not really sure where I was going. After a week of going through the resources, studying techniques, and receiving awesome support, I was more comfortable in my skin. It only took me a few more days to consider where my expertise was and how I could possibly create a profitable business from it. Of course I had great coaching as I made my decision.*

*So I am entering in 2007 with a great new outlook and I will be launching my business, Vegan Family Living with the tools, resources, support, and confidence needed for success.*

For years I attempted to organize my home office with totes, file cabinets, and other organizing tools. What I found after a while was that I had to search all over the place for items I needed immediately or that I used often. Doing this gave me a big headache and I ended up forgetting where all the stuff I really needed was.

What I needed was system that worked for me. I still needed the totes and the file cabinets for storage purposes, but I also needed to be able to access a few items immediately. So I went to Staples and purchased a 3 ring 6 inch binder with sleeves, some colored dividers, large clips, post it pads, and some notebook paper for keeping notes handy.

The system is very easy to create and anyone can use it and modify it for their use.

Here is what I did:

- First I decided what needed to be in the binder (forms, tax documents, contact list, calendar, appoint sheet, articles, expense sheets, tracking sheets, etc.)
- Once I decided what I needed, I pulled out the dividers and use an erasable marking pen to write out the sections I wanted in the binder. When I purchase my dividers, I like to get the transparent colored ones with sleeves and tabs for easy access purposes.
- I put the sections in the binder and it was ready to be filled with all my necessary items.

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- I put one binder clip on each binder cover (front and back) and placed some notebook paper in the clip. This way I can take notes and file it in the necessary section later and if needed.
- The post it pads are used as memo reminders. I just write the reminder and place on the appropriate section divider so that I don't forget.

Organizing your home office documents is a fairly simple process and it is so convenient, because binders can sit on a shelf, stand up next to your computer and they open up on just about any table or lap. They can also fit comfortably in a tote or diaper bag for the road - a great perk for moms on the go. The cost of using a binder system is not expensive and you can use them to organize every area of your home office. I have a system for my business, our home needs, homeschooling, my freelance work, and even for my weight management.

Once you get started, you can really have fun with it. You can create special covers and just slip them in the binder's front cover sleeve. You can also use cute graphics for each section.

Binder organizing is efficient, creative, quick, and lot less burdensome than having to search through tons of files and totes for an item you need right away. Time management in a book...now that's a plus!

## Using a Daily Planner

By Diana Walker

[www.diana2.com](http://www.diana2.com)



### *My Mom Mastermind's Testimony*

*In May 2005, I found Mom Masterminds. It felt wonderful – other Moms earning money over the internet, and sharing how they were doing it successfully. Being in a community of other Moms and being supported by them seemed to magically help me understand things that had previously appeared extremely complicated.*

*From the beginning, Alice, Kelly and Lynette encouraged me to establish myself as the “Go to” person in my field of health and nutrition. That has been my passion for over 25 years, but I still did not realize how much I knew and how much I could share with others – and that people would actually sign up for my newsletters.*

*I learned how to create memberships lists, produce newsletters, set up autoresponders, create blogs and websites, Search Engine Optimization, and much, much more. I have received tremendous encouragement and support during my one and a half years with Mom Masterminds. This month, I am launching my very own first e-book. I give all the credit to my membership with Mom Masterminds, and all the knowledge and support I have received, which has made this possible.*

Using a daily planner to organize your business and your life is an absolute necessity. For many, using a planner comes naturally. Others find it more difficult to find a system that works for them. However, once you find something that fits your preferences you'll enjoy the freedom of being organized.

How can being organized make you free? Using a daily planner allows you to get all of the tasks, numbers, appointments and goals out of your brain and onto paper. As a mother, you are probably being pulled in ten directions at once. When you add a home business into the mix, you've doubled your duties.

Daily planners help make sense of all of the chaos and get your schedule off your mind and into your hands. After all, you can hardly relax with your husband if you are trying to remember what you need to do the following day in your business. Nor can you concentrate on your work when you are trying to keep your children's after school activities schedules straight.

If you don't already have a daily planner, you need to make getting one your top priority. Find a system that meets all of your needs. Most women prefer to have one large planner that organizes their entire life. However, if you need two to keep your business and home life separate, then by all means get two. Some people prefer dated planners, others like the freedom of writing in their own dates. There are dozens of different planners systems out there. You can find one to meet your needs.

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In addition to the calendar sections, your daily planner may have special tabbed sections for keeping track of different things in your life. These sections can vary depending on the planner.

Don't be afraid to adapt your daily planner as you work with it. You can add your own special sections as you work with the system. One section that you should add to your daily planner, if it is not there, is a "Goals" section. Writing down your goals and dreams is an important part of accomplishing them. Make your own tabbed section to write down your goals for your personal and business goals for the next month, six months and year.

Another helpful section to add is a "Master Task List." This list can be broken down into two, one for home and one for business. The purpose of a master task list is to write down all of the tasks that you need to remember but haven't yet planned.

For example, if you need to take a box of clothing to Goodwill yet haven't made the time to do so, it goes on your Master Task List. Or if you need to visit a particular forum related to your business, it goes on your list. Using a Master Task List is a great way to get all of those little tasks off of your mind. Each week when you are planning your activities, scan through your Master Task List to see if there's anything that you can do in the coming week. This will help free your mind and allow you to focus on what is in front of you, instead of what you need to do on a future date.

# Using a White Board to Manage Projects

By Michelle Waters

[www.waterswebsolutions.com](http://www.waterswebsolutions.com)



## *My Mom Mastermind's Testimony*

*More than four years ago, I started my online business providing web design and hosting services to my friends and associates at various parenting message boards. This started out as a hobby to bring in some extra money and give me something to learn about and grow with.*

*Over time though, I realized that I wanted this hobby to become a real business, a way for me to earn a living and help support my family. So I started making changes and trying to learn everything I could about internet marketing. I started reading about some of the gurus, but quickly realized I had no idea how to tell the hype from the real deal. I tried hiring a business coach, but the fees were outrageous and the advice would have resulted in me completely turning my back on the WAHM world. I was beginning to think that perhaps running my own business wasn't a good idea.*

*But then I found Mom Masterminds. The very day I joined and started looking around at the resources available, I realized I'd found a goldmine. I think I learned more in one day of research at Mom Masterminds than I had in six months of just running my business and hoping for the best, more than I learned in one month of coaching and more than I learned in a few months of wandering around Google, looking for information. Mom Masterminds has given me the tools and knowledge that I need to consistently grow my business while continuing to help WAHM friends. As far as I'm concerned, Mom Masterminds is the first and last source of internet marketing information any WAHM needs.*

Perhaps the most visible use of a whiteboard in today's culture is the weekly diagnostic whiteboard session featured on the hit TV series *House*. The ill-tempered, yet brilliant, doctor scribbles a list of patient symptoms, crosses some out, circles others and eventually arrives at a diagnosis in 60-minutes of air time.

Sounds pretty nifty -- but what does that have to do with a work at home mom who's juggling a kid or two (or three!), an online business and a significant other?

Well, not a whole lot -- other than the fact that watching *House* is a good excuse for getting off the computer, and using a whiteboard is a good way to visualize a project.

### Keeping track of deadlines

Let's say you're working on creating an information product featuring two audios, transcripts, a couple of videos and some checklists. Write each element on the whiteboard, in the order you think it needs to be completed and then give it a deadline. When the element of that project has been completed, cross it off.

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Of course, the nice thing about a whiteboard is its erase-ability. If you have to push back a deadline, you just erase and write the new one in. And if you leave yourself enough space, you can add new elements to the project between the old ones. You never know when an impromptu brainstorming session will lead to new project elements.

### Brainstorming

Speaking of brainstorming, a whiteboard is a perfect sounding board for coming up with and discarding ideas. It's almost better than having a person listen. I mean, how many people do you know would let you write your ideas all over them?

Anyway, maybe you're thinking of a new way to market your products. Perhaps you're selling cloth diapers and you want to try to reach the non-cloth diapering parents in your area. You've got several ideas bouncing around in your head, but no idea which one you should start with, which ones you should toss, or if the whole idea is just nuts on its face.

Pull out your trusty whiteboard and start tossing your ideas onto it. Get everything out, put it in a list, or write it in different areas, draw circles around ideas or divide them up with lines – whatever works with the way you think.

Now you can start thinking about each one, without worrying about forgetting the others. Cross off what won't work, add your reasons why, whatever you need to do. When you're done, you'll have that one idea that you can work with.

### Visualizing the parts as a whole

Sometimes that one idea ends up being a cornerstone of your business. Maybe it's a podcast, an affiliate program or a weblog. Just for an example, sometimes it's hard for me to see how my weblog is going to help me grow my ecommerce business. So, I just take a look at my whiteboard, where I have my main business listed in a circle in the center. Then I my satellite businesses and projects are listed in smaller circles around the main one, and lines are drawn from the supporting circles back to the main. Once I'm done, I have an organic chart of exactly how all of my projects end up supporting my main business. Neato!

A side note: My friend and business coach Kelly McCausey started me on this journey of charting my business as a whole. Only her approach was to draw several columns and rows and show the relationships in a very linear fashion. Unfortunately, I just couldn't see the relationships in that approach. But the circles and lines that I drew make perfect sense to me. When I told Kelly about my approach, she said that her mind works just the opposite.

So, whether you prefer a linear chart or circles and curvy lines, drawing out who the parts of your business create the whole can help you stay focused. If something doesn't fit on the chart, don't waste your time on it.

### Downsides?

Is there any downside to using whiteboards? Well, yes. If you have young, curious kids who like to erase things... you can see where I'm going with this. You may be better off using a whiteboard for temporary brainstorming, and then make any permanent charts on an easel notepad. Or just hand the whiteboard up really high and keep your office locked. Good luck with that!

# Help for the Organizationally Challenged

By Leslie Truex

[www.workathomesuccess.com](http://www.workathomesuccess.com)



## *My Mom Mastermind's Testimony*

*Initially I passed on joining MomMasterminds because after 8 years of working online, I wasn't sure what I could get out of it. But a year later, for some reason, I decided to take a look and joined under the free trial. What I discovered was a group of women with diverse backgrounds and experiences all of whom have great information and resources to share, even to someone like me who thought she'd seen it all online. Since joining I have added teleseminars to my site, decided to run an expo and have some ideas for another site that has been neglected. But probably more significant is that my traffic and income has gone up and I feel like I have a terrific resource for bouncing off ideas and getting feedback. If you are serious about wanting to be a work-at-home mom, then you owe it to yourself to join. You'll get fabulous resources to help you identify what you can do to make money from home, and tons of support to get started.*

Can you see the top of your desk? Are your papers filed away for easy retrieval and storage? Do you always sit down to your desk knowing exactly what needs to be done? If so, this article is not for you. This article is for people like me. I'm Leslie and I'm organizationally challenged.

I have read every organization and time management book from Kathy Peel, Laurie Stack and Julie Morgenstern. I have spent a fortune on bins, folders, clips and notebooks just as the guru's recommend. But, disorganization reigns.

One reason the books haven't helped me is that they don't take into consideration how I process and handle information, and work. I don't manage or access information in the way most organizers set things up. I suspect this is the same for others who are organizationally challenged.

In Liz Franklin's *How to Get Organized without Resorting to Arson*, which I recommend, she talks about organizing styles; visual, spatial or chronological. Knowing your organizational style can go a long way to helping you develop systems that will fit within your organizational type. A visual person will need systems with visual cues while a spatial person will need to keep everything within reach, and a chronological person will need systems that keep things in order.

For example, I'm a visual person, if I can't see it, I can't find it and I won't work on it. Of course, keeping everything out on my desk doesn't help because if it's buried I don't see it either. The solution for me was to develop my own system, which includes having a list of all my tasks right in front of me, but the papers associated with those tasks are stored in project

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folders on my desk. I can see from my list what I need to do, and then I grab the appropriate folder to do the work.

Managing paper is another huge challenge for the disorganized. Gurus suggest the touch-it-once rule, but the organizationally challenged person has difficulty because she can't figure out where to put it. So she sets it aside to deal with later and ends up with several large piles of paper on her desk and around the office.

The trick is to figure out how to manage paper based on how you currently handle it not how the gurus suggest. For example, I have the hanging folders in my file cabinet labeled and organized just as the organizational gurus tell me I should, but they remain empty. Instead, all my filing was thrown into a box under my desk even though my filing cabinet is right next to my desk (spatial organization).

Since I know I'm going to throw papers that need to be filed under my desk, I put inbox bins each labeled with the specific type of paper such as taxes, receipts, bank, etc, under my desk. I can still throw papers under my desk, but at least they're semi-sorted so when I do take time to file them (usually on April 1<sup>st</sup> ... no foolin'), it's not a daunting task.

So how do you go about designing your own system of organization? Take a day and pay attention to how you manage paper, your schedule, your projects, and your time. Are you a piler? Is there one huge pile or several sorted mini piles? Do you like to be able to have everything in your reach? Do you need to be able to see everything because if it's out of sight it's out of mind? Are you a list person? Do things need to be ordered just so? Do you prefer paper to computerized time management?

Next, make note of things that hinder your work such as you couldn't find something or it's too much work to get to something. Brainstorm ways to fix the problems and think about how you would implement your ideas and assess if they would really work. Office tools such as bins and software are really cool, but they'll cost you time and money if you don't use them. So really think through your solutions before investing in equipment.

Finally, begin to try your new ideas one at a time. When you find something that works, take note and make it a habit.

Developing your own systems that fit with your work style will likely be a long process of trial and error. I have many systems that I have tried, tweaked and even dumped. Even now, I feel my organizational systems are still evolving, as I get overly frustrated with how things are working, or not working as the case may be. The trick is to keep working on it, trying new things until you find ways that fit with your work style.

## Decorative Storage Solutions for the Office

By Adriana Copaceanu

[www.abcgiftsandbaskets.com](http://www.abcgiftsandbaskets.com)



### *My Mom Mastermind's Testimony*

*MM is been such a great help for me this past year! I could go on and on about it, but I want to specifically think you for initiating the "Back to School Challenge". Here is an excerpt from my goal for that challenge: "My Challenge Project Is: move this site to WP and schedule 2 months worth of posts (I need to find or create the content for these posts) My Goal In Doing This Is To: try and bring this site back in the search engines (it used to be #6 in G for "gift baskets"), and give it a last push before the holidays. Of course, I plan to continue posting regularly, but this is a start."*

*Since the challenge ended, that site has been ranking well for several key phrases in MSN, and my daily visitors went from an average of 239/day in September to an average of 376/day this month: that's an increase of more than 50%.*

Working from home is a wonderful experience regardless of the type of business you are in. But how do you keep your office organized, nicely decorated, and blending nicely into the rest of the home décor?

If you have a room dedicated as your office, things will be a little easier? You can give the room its own personality by adding window treatments and accessories, creating a theme, and following through with that. Store industry magazines in decorative boxes, pencils in glass jars or metal containers decorated to suit your office.

But what if you don't have the luxury of a separate room for your office? What if your office is part of your family room, or even your bedroom? Here are a few ways you can incorporate your office in your room décor, while staying organized:

- Assign a couple of your dresser's drawers to your business, and use them instead of a file cabinet: this way it all fits in with your room décor.
- Build a couple of shelves above your working area (or close to it), decorate it by either painting, or lining it with pretty paper, and use it to organize your business books, software discs, and even floppy discs.
- To keep your desk organized, find some baskets and assign different baskets for different items. For example, have a basket with things that need your attention on a daily basis. Have another one for magazines, newsletters, industry news, etc. that

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you'd like to read, but need to find the right time. Another basket could house the nick-knacks, like pencils, erasers, liquid glue, white-out, etc.

- For items you only need occasionally, get some simple boxes from any department store, and stack them up nicely under your desk. If that's not possible, stack them up in a corner, cover them with a pretty fabric, and place a small decorative lamp, or a candle arrangement on top.
- Also, find a folding screen that matches your room's decorations, and use it to hide messy areas when the need arises.

Now, take some time to go through your office and see which of these ideas you can use. And of course, let your imagination run wild and come up with a few ideas of your own.

# To-Do Lists for Work-At-Home-Moms

By Sarah Zeldman

[www.solutionsforbusymoms.com](http://www.solutionsforbusymoms.com)



There is nothing more mentally draining than a LONG To-do list! Therefore, one of the first things that I often teach my coaching clients is how to make an effective and manageable To-Do List. Most WAHMs will keep at least two separate to-do lists, one for their family life and one for their business -- but they'll throw EVERYTHING they can think of on those lists until they are so scary that they avoid doing anything!

Instead of dumping everything onto one or two lists, I like to teach my clients a part of David Allen's System from *Getting It All Done*. David draws an all-important distinction for Work-At-Home-Moms to learn – the difference between a project and a next action.

A Project is any desired outcome that requires more than one action step. You can't do a project – you can only do an action related to a project.

A Next Action is the absolute next physical thing to do to complete a project.

You see, moms get overwhelmed when they look at a to-do list that has next actions and projects jumbled together on it. It means that each time they go through the list they have to think about each entry and what the next action might be instead of being able to take action right away. It becomes mentally draining and they can eventually become numb to list.

Your to-do list should ONLY contain next actions – the VERY NEXT physical thing to do on each project. You can keep track of your projects on a separate list. For example, your home/family to-do list might say something like “Repaint the banister.” Unless you've got everything ready for painting, repainting the banister is probably a project -- not a next action. It should go on your projects list. What goes on your “next action” or “to-do” list is the very next step like “buy the paint” or even “call Bob to find out the name of the beautiful paint he used on his banister.”

When moms have a bunch of projects and next actions weighing them down, whether work or family related, I urge them to do a “brain dump” (brainstorming session) and write down every single project and next action that comes into their head. This process can take anywhere from a few minutes to a few days. Next I ask them to sort their list into projects and next actions. Then I have them sort their projects into categories related to their roles like “Family Projects” “Work Projects” “Community Work Projects” “Projects for (Grown Up) Fun” “Home Improvement Projects.” Some projects will be Important and/or Urgent to accomplish in the short-term and some will be long-term projects or projects for personal

satisfaction with no specific due date. Seeing them all laid out in categories can bring an immediate sense of relief because of the clarity it provides. Now you can see all of your projects clearly and more easily decide your priorities for the day, week, month and year.

Next I often recommend that clients create a “Master Next Action List.” This step is optional, but many find it helpful. You'll probably want to do one for your business and one for your family/home life. Simply write the project titles on a page and leave lots of space beneath each. Use as many pages as you need. Then brainstorm each action step that it will take to complete the project – no matter how many steps it will take. Write them all down!

Now, it's time to create your “to-do” list, which should consist of ONLY next actions. Remember, next actions are the very next physical step you need to do to complete a project. If you know the projects that you want to work on right away, you can simply create a “to-do” list by writing down the next action step on each of those projects.

The final step is to group each “next action” in to mini lists, usually based on your priorities, your energy level, where you will be during the day and what resources will be available at the time. For example, my list is often sorted into categories like:

- Do in the morning before the kids wake up – This is the best time for me do to “brainwork” like writing
- Do At My Desk – paperwork for my business or family
- Things to do at the computer – For example, I'll often jot down a key word to research for an idea that I had and want to “google.”
- Calls to make - If I'm at the phone, I like to do all of my phone calls in one shot so I list them all together
- Errands to run - I try to list them in the order that I would run them to minimize travel time.

Now all of this sounds like a lot of work. Initially, it may be, but after a while it becomes a habit and my clients just start naturally organizing their to-do lists this way. In other words, they learn the difference between a project and a next action, so their to-do list only consists of next actions. If they ever feel overwhelmed by all of the projects running around and around in their minds, they can simply map them out again as I have described. It can really save a busy mom's sanity to look at her to-do list and know the very next action she needs to take and the best time and place to do them!

# Time Management Advice for Service Providers

By Darina Loakman  
[www.IamaWAHM.com](http://www.IamaWAHM.com)



As an independent service provider do you try to do everything yourself? Would you like to get more out of each day? Would you like to add more billable hours to your day rather than flitting from task to task and problem to problem?

Apart from the obvious benefits such as getting more productive work done, effective time management can also have hidden health benefits. By managing your time competently you can reduce stress levels and increase your well being.

Here are 5 easy to implement ideas to get you started.

Plan your week.

Planning can help you feel more in control. Try and take some time on a Friday evening before you finish for the day to plan for the following week. On a daily basis include all appointments and phone calls to be made as well as important tasks and goals for the day. Many people suggest doing this on a Sunday evening, however if you take 10 minutes and get it done on Friday when you're still in work mode, you can have a much more relaxing weekend and be ready to get working on Monday morning.

Outsource where possible.

We've all been guilty of thinking "no-one can do it like me" but as a service provider trying to do everything yourself, you run the risk not only of burn-out but of compromising the quality of your work. Try and make a list of all the tasks and jobs you do on a daily, weekly, monthly and ad-hoc basis. Go through each one and ask yourself if it's absolutely essential for you to do it personally. If the answer is no, then get rid of it. Using virtual assistants is a great way to effectively outsource and you will often find a virtual assistant with specific experience of your industry.

3. Learn to say no.

Learn to say no to non-essential tasks and jobs. Saying No can be difficult. Whether it's not wanting to let people down or feeling guilty about turning down work, we all need to

learn how and when to say No. Learning to say No at the right time can be one of the most important lessons in time management

#### 4. Automate

Automate, automate, automate. In this technological age of ours, there is no excuse not to automate as much as possible of your business. Newsletters, customer service, marketing, training can all be automated in some form and in return save you precious time and money.

#### 5. Find the time-stealers.

It's been estimated that many people waste up to 2 hours a day, not only doing non-essential tasks, but actually doing nothing at all! Looking for lost files, rescheduling missed appointments, day dreaming etc... Keep a diary for at least a week of your daily activities (all of them) and find out what your time-stealers are. Once you discover them you can deal with them and use your time much more effectively.

Don't try and do all of them at once, you may find yourself failing on at least a couple of things, end up getting discouraged and giving up! Just take one at a time, make a small difference, and then try another. Before you know it you'll be working smarter not harder, you'll be in control of your life and your business, with benefits all round. Good Luck

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