



Going home again: A great office is a key to success for new home-based workers

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(BPT) - Whoever first said, “You can’t go home again,” probably wasn’t considering the 38 million home-based businesses in the United States, or the approximately 37 million households that have active home offices. More workers are plying their trade from home, as employers recognize the value of flexibility for their work force and more employees decide to enter the ranks of American entrepreneurship.

It’s not just small business owners or lucky full-time employees who are working from home, either; the Bureau of Labor Statistics (http://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2011/ted_20110624.htm) says 24 percent of people employed outside the home work at home at least some of the time. If you’re poised to become home-based, here are some things to consider as you’re putting your home office in order:

Location is key

Without the need to fight rush-hour traffic during a twice-daily commute, you may think the location of your home office isn’t that important. Actually, it is. Where your office is located in your home can affect your productivity and even your personal life.

Choose a room that’s in your home’s heavy traffic lanes, and you could face frequent interruptions. Park your desk in the game room over the garage and you may feel isolated from the rest of the house. Try to stuff a desk in a corner of your bedroom and you’ll spend most of your life stuck in the same room – you may even feel less inclined to sleep there if you’re always working in your bedroom.

You’ll need to balance personal and professional priorities in order to decide which room in the house makes the most sense for your home office.

Good lighting sets the stage for success

The harshness of artificial lighting is a common complaint among people working in offices outside the home. A window in one’s office has long been a sign of prestige in cities across the country, and having abundant natural light in a home office is one of the many advantages of working from home.

Natural lighting has a mood-boosting impact that's been well-documented, making office workers feel happier, healthier and more productive. What's more, use of natural light can help reduce reliance on artificial lighting and trim utility bills accordingly.

If the space you've chosen for your home office is short on windows and adding them isn't practical, skylights can be a good alternative, not only for lighting but also to save valuable wall space for other uses. Adding Energy Star-qualified skylights, like those manufactured by VELUX America, can be as cost-effective as installing quality vertical windows, without creating the hassle of opening a wall. If you opt for a remote-controlled fresh air skylight, you can also use it to enhance the indoor air quality of your home office. Additionally, many of the features that make skylights appealing in other areas of the house – such as privacy in a bathroom or space conservation in a small bedroom – also make them a good choice for a home office.

Finally, skylights can be a good investment for your home-based business. Adding no-leak solar-powered fresh-air skylights and energy-efficient solar-powered blinds to your home office can qualify for a 30-percent federal tax credit on both products, including the installation costs. And from now until Aug. 15, there's also a \$200 cash rebate from VELUX on solar powered skylights. Visit www.veluxusa.com (<http://www.veluxusa.com>) or energystar.gov to learn more about energy-efficient skylights. Want to see how skylights would look in your home? A free [skylight planner app](http://www.veluxusa.com/morevelux/news/news_media/iphone_apps) (http://www.veluxusa.com/morevelux/news/news_media/iphone_apps) is available to show you, room by room, what's possible with skylights.

Furnishings create a foundation

Considering how much time you'll spend in your home office, it's important to invest in furnishings that will be functional, comfortable, inspiring and in step with your lifestyle.

If you prefer to sit while you work on a computer, the comfort of your office chair will be key. Prefer to get in a bit of healthful exercise while you work? Consider an ergonomic desk that allows you to stand while you type. Many versions of standing desks also can be lowered for use while seated.

Desks should incorporate storage and easy access to electronic components. Office chairs should be comfortable and ergonomically correct. Be sure your furniture choices not only fit your needs, but the room's, too. A huge desk may make you feel like a Wall Street CEO, but your enjoyment will evaporate if you don't have space to walk around the desk in a small office. It's important to keep office furniture appropriate to the scale of the room you'll be working in.

The number of people working from home continues to grow, according to [Census Bureau](https://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/employment_occupations/cb12-188.html) (https://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/employment_occupations/cb12-188.html) statistics. One study by a Chinese travel website found that working from home increased employee productivity by nearly 14 percent, according to the [Harvard Business Review](http://hbr.org/2014/01/to-raise-productivity-let-more-employees-work-from-home/ar/1) (<http://hbr.org/2014/01/to-raise-productivity-let-more-employees-work-from-home/ar/1>). Ensuring your home office is set up to inspire can help you achieve greater productivity and satisfaction as you work from home.