

Hard work pays off for those who work at home

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Victor Godinez

Working from home may sound like a dream job to a lot of people.

But home-based business owners say that although they do have a lot more freedom, they also have to avoid pitfalls that small business owners with regular stores or offices often don't have to worry about.

Home-based businesses generate \$102 billion in revenue in the U.S. every year, according to the Small Business Administration.

Howard Brockington is responsible for a little piece of that.

The Lewisville resident is a professional eBay seller.

He scouts for local customers – both business and residential – who have old or unused items they want to get rid of and auctions off the items on eBay for a commission.

Instead of having a storefront with monthly rent and other expenses, like other eBay consignment franchises, Mr. Brockington works out of his garage through California firm FoundValue.

Mr. Brockington said that while he hopes to eventually quit his current job at Electronic Data Systems Corp. and work full-time from home, it's not an easy transition for many people.

"You have to stay motivated with it and face the fact that you're not going to win every person over with this," he said.

Mr. Brockington, who has been an eBay seller for about a year and a half, noted that having a professional look is critical to potential customers who may be nervous about entrusting their possessions to a home-based worker.

"When you give somebody a business card and you have your shirts that say FoundValue and professional looking marketing materials and you can point them to a Web site, that's what starts to develop the trust," he said.

Colletta Dailey, who also sells goods on eBay through FoundValue, said that although she enjoys working out of her home in McKinney, many good



KYE R. LEE/DMN
Howard Brockington (right) and his brother-in-law Fredrick Lewis pack a baby stroller for shipping to an eBay buyer.

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salespeople don't do well in isolation.

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"Some people thrive on competition and being around others, and that probably won't be the best thing for you to do if you enjoy" measuring yourself against your co-workers, she said.

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Instead, internal motivation is key for at-home workers.

"There are a lot of opportunities for procrastination and putting things off when you work for yourself," Ms. Dailey said.

But there are also rewards.

"What success is to me is being able to work when I want to work, to determine what I make based not on what somebody else says or 40-hour weeks, but what I'm willing to put into a business," Ms. Dailey said. "To me, that is complete freedom and not having to be somewhere eight hours a day."

Selling a business

Small business owners who want to sell their firms need to know what they're getting into.

Several free resources are currently available that provide information about what to expect.

The Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, which is devoted to encouraging entrepreneurship nationwide, posted online this month a series of articles and tutorials on what business owners need to know about selling their firms.

After reading the site and giving it his thumbs up, Jeff Cornwall, director of the Belmont University Center for Entrepreneurship, posted some of his own thoughts on the subject on his blog.

And finally, the Business for Sale Online Academy, a nonprofit institution, will be holding a free online workshop on July 19 from 8 p.m. to 9 p.m. titled "How to Sell & Value a Small Business – For Owners of Small Businesses."

So if you're a small business owner, why bother with all this education and training?

Well, according to the Academy, 70 percent of all small and mid-sized businesses that are put on the market end up unsold.

So a little research won't kill you.

E-mail smallbiz@dallasnews.com

Online at:

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