

Are you ready to quit your day job and work from home?

7 questions to ask
yourself, before you take
the plunge.

Nick Usborne

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B y N i c k U s b o r n e

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Introduction

I have worked from home for about 25 of the 30 years since I started work.

My five years of employment with companies were always instructive, but never, ultimately, satisfying.

After all this time I have come to accept that working within a company as an employee just doesn't suit me.

I like to be master of my own successes, and disasters. I certainly don't want some "boss" to be the cause of a sudden downturn in my fortunes.

Ultimately, I am a huge advocate of working from home.

I think a lot of people like the idea of taking control of their own future, even if it means working harder. And sometimes it does.

Best of all, you can never be demoted, "downsized" or otherwise suffer a sudden and drastic loss of income at the whim of someone else.

Also, you can make just as much money working from home. Or more.

I would encourage almost anyone to explore the option of working from home.

That said, I also recognize that not everyone reaches their dreams after quitting their job. Many start out with enormous optimism and then find themselves in severe financial difficulties.

What I want to achieve with this short guide is a balance – to encourage you to explore all the benefits of working from home, but also to help you keep your eyes wide open.

The purpose of the 7 questions I ask is simply to make sure you have done your homework, and that your decision to work from a home office becomes a dream come true, and not a nightmare.

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Question #1:

Why do you want to quit your job?

I'm assuming you have a job right now, and are thinking of quitting and starting over with your own business from home.

There's nothing wrong with that. It can be a great idea.

Buy WHY do you want to quit your job right now?

The answer to this question can have quite an impact on how you move forward with your plan.

Here are some typical reasons:

- I just can't stand working for my employer any more
- I have a plan, and some clients lined up
- I have been moonlighting, and know I can get more work
- I purchased a "make money online" book and am optimistic

As you can see, these reasons fall into a couple of groups.

The first group, the second and third reasons, sounds like the basis of a well planned move from being employed to working from home.

If this is where you are right now, congratulations.

The second group, the first and fourth reason, should make you nervous.

Working from home simply because you hate your job is not a sound basis on which to build your home business. It's just not that easy.

When you work from home you have to create a real business, even if it is only a one-person business.

This means you must have a sound business idea, with prospective clients or customers who will buy your services or products.

Even if you hate your job, don't quit right away. At least, not unless you can find another paid job somewhere else.

The point being that you need to have a plan, in advance of your move. You need to know that you can get business, and make money.

Simply to hope and to guess is a recipe for disaster.

Now on to reason number four.

Right now there are literally hundreds, if not thousands of people peddling "work from home miracles" on the web. I hope you treat these with caution.

When someone says, "I make \$50,000 a month online, and you can too", it's a lie.

"If I can do it, so can you" is probably the biggest lie people tell online.

Someone else's past success is NOT a guarantee of your own future success.

Before you hand in your resignation, be sure you have a good chance of success with your new venture.

There are hundreds of different ways to make a living at home. But almost without exception, the best kind of business to start will be related to your own professional experience.

In other words, if you have been employed as a writer, become a home-based freelance writer.

If you have training as an accountant, offer accounting services from your home office.

If you have been employed by a landscaping company, start your own landscaping business.

And so on.

Tapping into your past professional experience will give you an edge. It will also ensure you have the basic skills, knowledge and professional contacts to make a go of your own venture.

That said, many people who work from home decided to take the opportunity to try something completely different, a total change in career.

Maybe they didn't enjoy the job they had as an employee. Or maybe their new venture is something they had always dreamed of doing.

So don't let me dissuade you from trying something different. It's simply that using your past professional experience can smooth the way, and make the transition to working from home a whole lot easier.

Question #2:

Is your plan built on blind enthusiasm, or on a proven business opportunity?

Even if you have a professional background in the area you are planning for your business, are you just assuming that you can run the same kind of business yourself?

Have you thought it through carefully?

Enthusiasm is a wonderful thing. In fact, many of the most enthusiastic workers are those who work from home. The best position you can ever be in is to work at something that doesn't feel like work at all...because you enjoy it so much.

But blind enthusiasm can be a dream killer.

Make sure your optimism and drive are founded on a sound business basis.

If, for instance, you are planning to work as an accountant or bookkeeper at home, you need to ask yourself some important questions.

- Are there enough potential clients out there?
- Do you have a marketing plan?
- Can you reach your prospects?
- With existing competition, is there enough space in the market for you as well?
- Can you charge enough to actually make a living?

These are basic questions, but they separate those people who follow blind enthusiasm from those who start their home business with their eyes wide open.

As I said, enthusiasm is an excellent quality, and there may be days or weeks when only your enthusiasm will keep your head above water.

But as with any entrepreneurial activity, there are two columns on which you need to stand.

The first column comprises your enthusiasm, character, creativity and will to succeed.

The second column is made up of basic business, marketing and administrative skills.

You need to know how to run your business. You need the marketing skills necessary to find new work. You need the interpersonal skills required to work well with new and prospective clients.

And first and foremost, you need to take an objective look at what you propose, and decide on whether there is a sound business opportunity there or not.

If the opportunity truly exists, your enthusiasm will simply accelerate your success.

But if there is no real opportunity, all the enthusiasm in the world won't help you make a living.

Question #3:

Do you know how long it will be before you make enough money to live on?

This is always a tough question. Whenever you take the plunge, quit your job and start working from home...there is this terrible period during which you are working like crazy, but the money coming in isn't equal to what you were earning before.

There are a few ways to mitigate this.

1. If you secure a substantial project in advance of leaving your job.
2. If you have put aside some money in advance, knowing that the first few months of your new business may be a little lean.
3. If you have been "moonlighting" and slowly building your home business before quitting your job.

Let's take a look at these three circumstances, one by one.

Securing new work before you quit your job...

The best case scenario is when you leave your job under friendly circumstances and actually forge an agreement to continue doing some work for your former employer on a contract basis.

This happens more often than you might think, and can work out very well for both parties.

You get a contract that will at least go some way towards filling the financial void. And your employer gets some

continuity and breathing space by knowing that you'll still be handling some of your tasks.

This may work out as a temporary arrangement, while they find your replacement. Or, as is becoming increasingly common, and depending on the nature of your work right now, they may find that continuing to outsource work to you makes more sense than replacing you in the office.

Even if you don't get any work from your old employer, you may still be able to use some of your own time to talk with prospective clients and secure some work – in advance of your leaving date.

Just be careful you don't contravene any of the terms of your employment contract with your employer. For instance, many contracts will specifically bar you from approaching any of the company's existing clients, or even former clients.

Be cautious. The last thing you want is to start your new business with a law suit on your hands.

Put aside some money in advance

If you can, and if you have been planning the move to working at home, it makes sense to put aside the equivalent of about three months of salary in a savings account.

This will remove a lot of the stress from your new life as you go through the process of building your new business, securing new clients, completing projects and issuing invoices.

Keep in mind that for many kinds of home business, particularly if you are providing a service of some kind, there may be a gap of thirty days or more between the time you issue an invoice and the day you receive the check.

By putting money aside you will be able to maintain your cash flow even during the early weeks and months when very little new money is coming in.

Start your home business in advance of quitting your job

This is perhaps the smartest approach to take.

Turn off the TV and use the time in the evenings and weekends to start building your new business.

You can do all the research for your new business idea. You can buy whatever equipment and home office furniture you need, while you still have a pay check coming in.

Best of all, you can test the waters, and see how well things go. A few small successes can bring in some income and give you the confidence you need to focus on your new venture full time.

If things don't go well, it may be that you need to give it more time, or perhaps make a few changes in one or two areas of your original plan.

However, if things start to go well from the outset, you will find yourself in the perfect position. You can keep building your part-time business until you are confident enough and have enough cash flow to quit your job without any difficulty.

Question #4:

Do you have the right kind of personality to work alone, from home?

The good news is that if you feel enthusiastic about working from home, you probably have the personality and attributes to make it work.

But working from home, alone, is not for everyone.

Working from home means doing everything yourself. You not only have to deliver your products or services, but also have to do everything else...bookkeeping, filing, buying supplies, making phone calls...even vacuuming your work area.

In other words, you have none of the support network you find in an office.

You will also be alone for most of the time. Perhaps you will have family in the house, and maybe your business will involve travel or local meetings or deliveries.

But for a lot of people working at home, particularly those in the service industry, life can get pretty solitary.

Does this suit you? Does it match your personality? Or would you soon find yourself missing the company of your colleagues?

You also need to be a self-starter...

When you work from home there will be no boss or manager telling you what to do. No task sheets will appear on your desk. There will be no phone calls to ask you to walk down the corridor to attend a meeting.

When things happen, they only happen because YOU instigated them.

You have to be your own manager and cheerleader.

Of course, you can create a virtual network of supporters or even a coach. You can speak with friends and advisors on the phone or during a lunch meeting together.

But for most of the time, you will be left to your own devices, on your own.

This means you need to be able to set a start time for your day, sit down and get things done.

Working alone like this does not suit everyone. But as I said, if you are already excited by the prospect of working from home, then you probably have the kind of character that relishes the prospect of creating your own business and future, on your own.

Question #5:

Do you have some basic marketing skills?

This is a crucial question.

I know of several people who work from home, have enormous talent in their various fields of expertise, but are frustrated by the small amount of money they make.

What is the problem?

The problem is that while they deliver a very high level of service, they do a very poor job of marketing and promoting themselves.

It isn't that the work isn't out there. It's simply that these people don't have a marketing bone in their bodies.

There is nothing wrong with that. We all have different skill sets and strengths.

But if you have no or limited marketing skills, it does make it hard to succeed with your home business.

In some sense it feels unfair. I'll see one person who is enormously talented just barely making a living. Then I'll see a less talented individual making ten times as much. The difference is that the second person has a real feel for marketing and self-promotion.

I recognize this in myself. When it comes to marketing skills I probably fall somewhere in the middle. In other words, I'm not a natural salesman. Certainly not of my own services or products.

So what can you do if you look deep inside yourself and recognize that you simply don't have what it takes to get out there and sell yourself and your new business?

One thing is to give up on the idea of working from home altogether.

But you really don't need to do that. Instead, you can either partner with a skilled marketer, or outsource that side of your business.

And if you outsource, maybe you can get creative and barter some services, so you don't need to carry the cost of paying someone else during that first few months or year.

You're a bookkeeper? Perfect. Barter some bookkeeping services for someone else's marketing services.

Marketing your home business is a large topic and will be the subject of a complete guide in this series.

But for now, just understand that it is an essential part of your business plan.

You can have the greatest idea in the world...but you won't succeed unless you can get the right message out to your prospective buyers.

Question #6:

Is your family supportive of your venture?

There are a number of issues here, and they cover both your professional and personal life.

First of all, starting your own business is always scary. Sometimes a little bit scary, sometimes big-time scary.

Over the first few months at least, it will make all the difference in the world to you if your partner and other family members support your choice to work from home, and provide an environment of encouragement and support.

It won't always be easy, for them or you. But if they are behind your venture, so much the better.

If they are vigorously opposed to it, you may want to think carefully about whether you can make really work at home.

More often than not, your partner will find the whole idea scary too. Which is why it often helps to involve him or her closely in what you are doing. Share in what your goals are, how much it will cost and what you hope to earn.

That way you can be nervous together...and be supportive of each other. Particularly during the early months.

Also, you need to make it clear when you are "at work".

One of the things about working from home is that members of your family see you as being "at home" and available, even when you are working.

If you have a separate office, you can get the message across simply by closing the door when you are working.

If you work in an open area, it can get a little tougher. Not only will you be distracted by the comings and goings of your family, but they may also be tempted to interrupt you and ask you to do or share in various chores during the course of your working day.

If this happens, you need to figure out some way to respectfully let people know when you are working , and should not be disturbed.

After all, if you were still working in a cubicle at the office, your kids wouldn't wander in and ask you get them some ice cream.

Well, you need to let them know that the same applies when you are working at home.

Quite simply, when you are truly "at work" in your home office, you need to be out of bounds and left in peace.

Of course, you also have to be reasonable yourself. And that means sticking to a time when you quit work at the end of the afternoon, at whatever time works for you and your family.

Question #7:

Do you have a space you can set aside for your home office?

People who work from home can get very creative when it comes to finding a good work space.

Some work in what was once a spare bedroom. Some work in attics and basements. Others prefer to work in an open, family area, rather than be hidden away somewhere on their own. And there is one person I know who works from a shed in his garden.

Whatever space you choose, be sure that you at least have access to a few essential tools and resources.

You'll need a computer and printer. Better still, an all-in-one printer that also scans and copies and maybe sends and receives faxes too.

You'll need a desk and a comfortable chair.

You'll need phone equipment and probably a microphone and headset for your computer.

And, of course, you'll need some kind of filing cabinet.

The list of items and supplies is quite extensive, and will be the topic of a whole separate guide in this series.

But while starting a business from home is a whole lot cheaper than renting commercial space in an office building, you will face some startup costs.

Choose your work space, make a list of what you'll really need and set a budget.

Concluding thoughts

Working from home can be a wonderful release from the limits and structures imposed by employment.

In addition, employment always leaves you at risk. You can be fired at any moment. All it takes is one small restructuring or budget review, and you're gone.

When you quit your job and work from home, you no longer face those dangers.

The only person who can let you down is you. And you won't do that, because you will always have the interest of yourself and your family in first place. While at a company, of course, their loyalty ultimately lies with their investors, not their employees.

Taking the plunge and working from home is both a scary and exhilarating position to be in.

It provides wonderful opportunities to discover new talents and your true potential. It also removes any artificial ceilings to the amount of money you can earn. You are not confined by a salary limit or pay grade. The better you do, the more you will earn.

In the face of all these benefits, all I suggest is that you take some time to go through the questions in this short guide and give them some serious attention.

Your future should be built on a clear and viable plan, not on dreams alone.

Additional resources

Websites:

Making money as a freelance writer or copywriter:
FreelanceWritingSuccess.com

Writing for the web:
ExcessVoice.com

Courses:

[Nick Osborne's Million Dollar Secrets to Online Copywriting](#)

[How to Write Your Own Money-Making Websites](#)

[Writing Kick-Ass Website Sales Copy](#)