

How To Succeed As a Stay-At-Home Mom

Contributed by Donald Lee

Stay-at-home moms are no longer just the co-stars from *Leave It To Beaver*, the *Brady Bunch*, and other television shows from a bygone era. Taking care of the kids has become the cool thing to do again for women in their 20s and 30s. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, there are at least 5.4 million stay-at-home parents in the United States alone. These are a dynamic bunch of women, and men, who see opportunities in their domestic role, especially the opportunities presented by the Internet.

Sure, many of these parents gave up exciting careers and important roles in their community to take up the time-honored tradition of rearing their children. You yourself may have put goals and dreams on the back burner when you accepted the commitment and responsibility of raising your little ones. You understand the importance of a parent being there for those firsts: the first crawl, the first step, the first "momma" and "dadda".

At the same time, though, you may feel like you have taken on too much. Not only do you have the pressures of bringing up a smart, well-behaved child. You worry about being able to make ends meet to provide everything your child needs.

If this sounds all too familiar, take a deep breath, turn off the television, and log online. No, don't think you're going to surf the Web to just pass the time. The Internet is your portal to transforming your stay-at-home life. In between the diaper changes and feedings, bedtimes and burpings, you can reach beyond the walls of your home and access the outside world as never before. The benefits are as close to limitless as the millions of sites on the Web, including:

- E-support system. Whether you're searching for other stay-at-home moms to lean on, folks with the same health ailment as yourself, or even just other Oprah fanatics, the Internet is like one big community center where you can find them.

- Friends and fun. Through e-mail, chat rooms, and instant messaging, the Internet is one of the easiest ways to keep in touch with old friends and family members, as well as to meet new acquaintances.

- Cyber community. Look for your neighborhood's Web site for information on shopping, festivals, town hall meetings, and other local interests. If you can't find your town's home on the Internet, take a leadership role in creating it with the help of your neighbors.

- Cap and gown. Many community colleges and universities offer e-courses. You never need to step foot on the campus to earn degrees in finance, English, accounting, or whatever else suit your fancy.

- Steals and deals. If you're looking for some of the biggest discounts and best selection for anything from electronics to groceries, books to automobiles, the Web is your marketplace.

- Cash flow. The Internet can work for you, as well, if you are on the other end of the cash register. The Web provides an unparalleled avenue to sell goods. It can link you to interested buyers if you're only looking to unload a few knickknacks to unclutter your home. If you have enough stuff to open a garage sale, you can do that, too, without time or space constraints. Or try your hand at a full-time online business if you get bit by the entrepreneurial bug.

The Internet can open up the outside world to you for all of these benefits, but you need the right set of keys to open the door. Your first "key" is the type of Internet access you use. You'll need to weigh your budget versus how fast you want to navigate on the Web. Cable and DSL hook ups provide zippy access but can cut into your profit margins. Dial up, on the other, can be cheap or even free, but can slow down your productivity.

Once you have your hook up established, you'll need to get your feet wet before you do heavy surfing. Find trusted sites for your activities. Look for certified schools to take courses at and secure shopping zones to purchase at. When selling or starting your own business, do your research to find the most trusted and thrifty auction and classified sites. The right classified sites can be like your neighborhood paper, except they reach millions of people around the globe. In many cases, the best classified sites will also charge no start up or transaction fees and offer safe ways to communicate and do business with clients.

Settle these basics, and you can be virtually ensured to become the a true M.O.M, a master of multitasking. In the time it takes your child to take a nap or watch an episode of *Blues Clues*, you will be able to earn 4 more credits to your finance degree, buy a new mp3 player, and sell a closet's worth of stuff.

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Donald Lee is the public relationship manager for Buysellcommunity.com. Buysellcommunity provides free classified

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