Setting Up A Word Processing Business In Your Home

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Prepare final documents from typed, hand-written or taped
drafts, such as student term papers, business letters,
legal briefs, manuscripts, resume's and institution reports.

Much of the work in the pure business of finalizing documents
can be accomplished on a typewriter, especially a good one
(with changeable type, error removal and/or a memory.

A typewriter, however, really limits the amount and variety of
jobs that can be performed, so it is STRONGLY recommended that
anyone contemplating this type of business skip the typewriter
stage and go directly to a word processor.

A word processing system can be purchased for little more than
a modem, self typewriter with a memory -- but it does a thousand
times more! If you want to start with a typewriter, we suggest
you use the one you have or get a used one (an old IBm for
example) - and not invest any more than absolutely necessary in
it.

Because if your business is to grow, you will sooner or later
change to a word processor. Although the rest of this material
is directed to word processing, the same principles apply to
typing - only it's a lot more work on a typewriter.

The basic requirements for a word processing business are a
computer with a word processing program, a letter quality printer
and a dedicated working area.

The computer should be IBM compatible -- the particular brand is
not important, so long as it is 100% IBM compatible and you can
get a decent service and assistance locally.

The word processing program can be very simple one, but we
recommend an up-to-date version or a well known, industry
compatible program such as WordPerfect or WordStar.

Your printer can be a daisy wheel if you do not need graphics
(illustrations) or much type or style variety. It can be a 24
pin dot matrix for high quality printing AND graphics. An
inexpensive 9 pin dot matrix will suffice for minor jobs, but
not for major contract work, where "letter quality" is desired.

The top of the line printer, a laser jet would be nice -- but
they are quite expensive.

Your working area is very important, especially if there are
any type of interruptions (children head this list). You need

a place that is dedicated to your business -- where nothing else takes place except business.

Ideally, it should be a separate rom (soundproof?), with a locking door and an outside entrance, which will allow clients to enter your office without going through the house on the way to your office.

Word processors normally earn from $1 to $3 per double spaced standard sized page or $10 to $20 per hour, depending on the location (part of the country, city size), job complexity, typing speed and local demand.

Note that this business was conducted with typewriters a few years ago, but the most expensive typewriters cannot compare with even low priced word processors of today. With a word processor, you type the data, check it on the screen, then file (save) it on a disk (forget about cassettes!).

Whenever you want to see (or edit) the text, you simply recall (load) it back onto the screen, review or revise it, and re-save the revised version back on the same disk.

Or, press a couple of buttons and print it -- in a choice of print styles, margin settings and spacing.

At any time, a printed version (draft or final) can be obtained without affecting the stored version. If your margins are set at 1" and you suddenly realize they should be 1/2", you pull your hair out if you are typing.. But on a word processor, you simply press a button, re-set the margins (a second or two) and the entire document can be repositioned in a flash and reprinted with the new settings by pressing another button.

Major word processors include many features that would make a typist's head "swim": automatic word separation (hyphenation) at the ends of lines, spelling correctors (correct a word a second), the ability to inset illustrations and print in columns (from "normal" input).

For those who might be "petrified" of the word "computer," let us just say that it should take an ordinary high school graduate no more than one week to learn to prepare this report on an IBM compatible computer with WordPerfect or WordStar.

A good typist should be able to produce a professional looking business letter in a few hours. There are a lot of new terms, buttons, etc., but you only need to learn a few of them to get by -- and learn more steps and techniques as you need to!

Many professionals never use more than just some of the average word processing program can do. It is like learning to ride a

motorcycle or cook a gourmet meal -- how "impossible" these
seem to those who don't know how (yet).

But, of course, you don't start with a powerful motorcycle
or pheasant under glass -- you start on a two-wheeler bike
with training wheels or Kraft dinner, both of which may take
a little practice. And, you can learn them both, one step
at a time!

The reason your computer must be IBM compatible is twofold:

First, your program should be standard so you can produce
the standard products, and second because the things you
prepare and "save" on disk can be processed by other
computers.

If you use a (cheaper and) smaller, lesser known program, it
won't do some things that "standard" programs do.

For example, the major programs have 100,000 word spell
correctors, while some of the smaller ones have 40,000
or so.

When your prospective client asks what computer you use,
he/she will recognize IBM compatible as the current word
standard; when you tell them you use WordStar or Word-
Perfect, they will know you have the "very latest" and
can do their work professionally.

Most computer programs also have version numbers, which
indicate how new or old that particular program is. Once
you have a word processing program, however, updates are
fairly inexpensive.

With a standard, professional word processing program, you
can not only prepare final documents, you can prepare
manuscripts for publication.

If you give your client a disk with his final draft, he
can forward that to a publisher who will run THE SAME
DISK on his computer to typeset the entire manuscript.
Or, the disk can be run by a "Desktop printer" to produce
a magazine, complete with photographs.

And, that's not all: with an added device (called a MODEM)
costing $100 or so, you can send the contents of that disk
over the telephone to the publisher in just a few seconds!

Needless to say, if you used a non-standard system or
program , your options would be severely limited. The
effort to learn a standard or non-standard program is
about the same, so don't waste your time learning

something that is not considered industry standard!

The best advice you will get about your first computer
is to JOIN A USER'S CLUB! Some people join before they
get a computer -- so they can take advantage of advice
they might receive from other members.

In most user clubs you will find "experts galore" who
will be happy to advise and assist you in every way.

You will learn which programs are considered best-- and why:
the pro's and con's of different kinds and brands of
equipment, as well as where many of the members buy their
supplies.

Most user clubs have instruction classes or meetings for
beginners, for specialist, and for groups with certain
interests -- word processing being one of the major
interests.

Accuracy and neatness are critical in a typing/word
processing service. There should be no discernible
strikeovers or erasures, and every page must adhere to
the prescribed format.

Accuracy can be a serious problem with a typewriter because
you can see only a few (if any) words before they are
printed on paper.

If you miss something, the whole page may have to be re-
typed. Even a simple word processing program will allow
you to correct mistakes at any time. There are also client
changes and "revisions" -- those things they never think
of until they see your "finished" version!

With your word processor, you simply enter the changes on
the screen, re-save the new version over the old, and
PRESTO, the document is revised. You can print it then, or
whenever you choose.

The entire document is stored on a disk that costs from
20 cents to about a dollar and a standard (360K) disk
will hold some 100 pages! When that job is finished, the
disk can be erased and used again -- just like a tape.

Used personal computers (PC's) start at about $300 -- or
about the same as a good standard typewriter. Or, you can
rent one for about $50 per month until you decide, what
you want. You pay a good deal more this way, but you can
get by for low, monthly payments until you can buy one.

Another way is to shop around for a Master Charge or Visa

card that doesn't charge 20% interest. Banks in Arkansas
charge about 12%, and there are bound to be banks or other
lending institutions that charge under 15%.

Find one of these, get your card, and you can "pay cash"
for a complete set up. There is a lot of competition in
the computer sales business, so shop around.

You will need ta least an XT (8088) compatible system, but
an AT (80286) with a hard disk is recommended. The hard
disk will allow you to store several major programs in your
computer and not have to "load" your word processing system
each time you turn on the computer.

Also, try to get a 1.2 MB floppy disk drive -- these cost
only about $20 more than the 360K, but they will allow you
to use 1.2MB (1200)K or 360 disks interchangeably.

Most major newspapers have advertisement sections for
COMPUTERS AND SOFTWARE. The reason computers are being sold
usually because they are outdated, not because they are
worn out.

Companies and individuals that operate a computer for a
year or so frequently discover how much more they could
accomplish with a new model, so they sell the "old one" --
which may be just what you need!

Once you have acquired and learned to operate your PC,
the services you offer will be bound only by the equipment
limitations and programs you have.

For example, if your word processor includes mailing lists
(most do), you can easily compile and print mailing lists
or gummed labels at your leisure.

If not, there are plenty of good mail list programs
available,many at no cost (public domain) or low
cost (shareware).

When you join a user's club, you will get catalogs for
these types of programs automatically, or you can get
copies at the club meetings.

One thing that scares many of us about computers is "all
that programming." A computer operator is NOT a programmer
-- or an engineer. You don't have to speak Chinese (or
even use chopsticks) to enjoy Chinese food, and you don't
have to know programming to use a computer!

if you typing needs help, get a typing program and
brush up -- you will learn 3 or 4 times as fast as the

"old fashioned" way.

It is not unusual to learn to type on a computer -- skills
can be mastered amazingly fast because they are taught by
more than one method (practice, on-the-spot tests and games).

There are programs for almost everything:taxes, forms,
games, bookkeeping, wills -- even crossword puzzle generation.

As your business grows, you can increase your capability by
adding another terminal (monitor and keyboard), that can be
connected to your computer's "brain" and/or the same printer.

Be sure to get compatible equipment, so programs you have
will work on both, and the machines don't " argue."

When you have the equipment and have learned to operate it,
you are ready to advertise and contact prospective clients.

A good starting place is to send a letter (your service!)
or a brochure to each member of the Chamber of Commerce and
other businesses in the phone book.

Use quality business cards and letterhead (your image is
theirs) to help convey the impression of your quality work.

If you are near a college, place ads where students will
see theme (for theme papers).

Don't forget to send brochures to lawyers and local
stationery stores (they might recommend you). It would
be especially helpful to become a member of the Chamber
of Commerce and to be "visible" in community activities.

Take part in local charity auctions, for example, by
offering a free (or discounted) word processing service.

Your place of business should be well planned and
professional looking. Clients who are surrounded by
children in your living room sometimes feel they can
get cheaper rates from a "housewife" situation.

You do not get paid for long conservations with clients,
so keep them as straightforward and free from distractions
as possible. As mentioned above, the best solution is to
have a dedicated room with an outside entrance for clients.

Professional writers who work from their homes not only
have separate working areas, but do not allow interruptions
during certain hours, when they are "at work."

It is best to have someone look after little children during

normal business hours, so you can concentrate on the
business. Computer forms, letterhead and business cards are
available from NEBS (see Sources); Sam's Club (Wal-Mart
affiliate) has boxes of 3500 sheets of computer paper for
just under $20.

Note that WRITER'S DIGEST has over 100 advertisements form
manuscript preparation nationwide -- many states have only
one service advertised.

BUSINESS SOURCES

COMPUTER DIRECT 22292 N. Pepper Rd.,Barrington, IL 60010.
800/289-9473. Discount computers and computer equipment;
360K floppy disks from 19 each.

U.S. SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION, 1441 L Street NW,
Washington, DC 20416. Pays for some small business courses
in computer usage. Write for details.

C.I.L.E., Box 60369, San Diego, CA 91206-8369. Offers
(sells) information on computer services that can be sold.

ACS, 5311 Derry Ave.,Agoura Hills, CA 91301.
Closeouts on IBM compatible equipment.

PERSONAL PUBLISHING, Box 390, Itasca, IL 60143.
Magazine for desktop publishers (McIntosh oriented).

ALDUS CORP..., 411 1st Ave.,Ste 200, Seattle, WA 91804.
Sells Pagemaker programs for McIntosh systems.

THE WRITER'S DIGEST, 205 W Center St.,Marion, OH 43305.
614/383-3141. Trade magazine for professional writers
(all types); offers courses, books, useful lists of
information, etc.

HALIX INSTITUTE CENTER FOR COMPUTER EDUCATION, 1543 W
Olympic Blvd.,Suite 226, Los Angeles, CA 90015. Offers
home training for several different types of computers.
Note that this type of training is for programming and
servicing.

A.I.M.H.P. Box 60369, San Diego, CA 92106-8369. Free
list of 100 services that can be offered by computer
owners (instructional books in the $20-$25 range).

DOVER PUBLICATIONS, INC. 31 East 2nd St.,Mineola, NY
11051. Discount books, clip art, stencils, etc.

QUILL CORPORATION, 100 Schelter Rd.,Lincolnshire, IL
60917-4700, 312/634-4800. Office supplies.

NEBS, 500 Main St.,Groton, MA 04171,
800/225-6380. Office supplies.

IVEY PRINTING, Box 761, Meridan, TX 76665.
Letterhead: 400 sheets plus 200 envelopes - $18.

SWEDCO, Box 29, Mooresville, NC 28115. 3 line rubber
stamps - $3; business cards - $13 per thousand.

ZPS, Box 581, Libertyville, IL 600448-2556. Business
cards (raised print - $11.50 per K) and letterhead
stationery. Will print your copy ready logo or design,
even whole card.

WALTER DRAKE, 4119 Drake Bldg.,Colorado Springs, CO 80940.
Short run business cards, stationery, etc. Good quality,
but no choice of style or color.

MEI/MICRO CENTER, 1100 Steelwood Rd.,Columbus, OH
43212-9972. 800/634-3478. Discount typewriter and printer
ribbons, gummed labels and disks (floppies from 21, 1.2.
MB from 49 and 5,000 gummed labels from $9.95.)