

## Are You Working Alone?

Remember co-workers? Those annoying people who you're forced to share an office with -- some of them friends, but most of them insufferable. If you're anything like me, one of reasons for starting a home business was to get away from these people. And yet, when you do work at home all day, every day, you might find that you start to miss that kind of companionship, and feel more than a little lonely.

All Alone...

Picture the scene. You get up for another day of work. Your husband or wife has already left, since they must get up earlier to commute to their job. Your children are at school. All the neighbors are at work. Your house feels deserted, and your neighborhood feels like a ghost town.

It's all too easy to become enormously demotivated in this situation, and to begin to feel like your work is pointless. Worse, when you get stuck or something bad happens, you have no-one to turn to -- at work, you were all in it together, but now it's just you, out on your own.

Even if you don't feel like it's affecting you, the lack of human interaction could be causing you quite a few problems. Ask yourself honestly if you've been more irritable than usual recently, found yourself lacking in energy, or felt upset or sad without being able to figure out the reason why. If you have, then it could be related to home-worker loneliness.

The Power of the Web.

Since you've presumably got a computer and Internet access on your office computer, you might find it worthwhile to get on a search engine and find a few forums for your industry, especially ones dedicated to people who run home businesses. You might think what you do is too obscure, but it's a big web out there.

Finding friends on web forums can be good for replacing the lost interaction with co-workers. More than that, it can offer you a good outlet for your frustrations and problems -- many of the people you're talking to will have been through the same thing themselves, and will be more than happy to sympathize with you and offer advice.

There's only one thing to be careful of, though: don't let chatting about everything and nothing on the web interrupt your work. Give yourself a certain amount of time each day to talk to your newfound 'colleagues', and don't go over it. You don't want to be sitting there pressing 'Refresh' on a long discussion when you should be getting some work done, do you?

Get to Know Your Clients.

Here's a good way to turn your loneliness into an advantage: make your clients your friends! The customers that will be the most loyal to you are the ones that trust you and know you, and going to meet with them sometimes as a friend can be rewarding on both a personal and a business level.

### Associations, Groups and Societies.

If you look, you might be surprised at how many things there are out there that you could join. Perhaps your area has a Homeworkers' Society, or an association for your industry that holds regular meetings? Go along, and you could find some new friends, as well as some good business contacts. Two or three groups should be enough.

### Go to a Coffee Place Sometimes.

You've seen those people who seem to be doing work in Starbucks, right? Well, they've figured out something valuable -- being at home alone all day sends you crazy, and it's nice to get away sometimes and have some coffee while you work. Over time, you'll even become a regular, and people there will start getting to know you.

### Use Your Breaks to Contact People.

Most people have a list a mile long of friends and family that they've been meaning to get in touch with for ages, but never seem to have the chance. A great thing to do can be to make a big list of all these people, and then phone or email one of them each week, in one of your breaks. Not only does this fight loneliness, but it's also a plain fun and nice thing to do.