



JIM POULIN | PHOENIX BUSINESS JOURNAL

Rebecca Golden, owner of Phoenix Web design firm Website Garden, says she keeps overhead low by working from home and passes those savings on to clients.

Stigma of home-based firms disappearing as trend grows

BY MIKE SUNNUCKS
msunnucks@bizjournals.com

For Stephanie Conner, it's about independence and fewer distractions. For Alison Rapping, it's about not paying of office rent. And for Jackie Wright, it's about touting both of those things to prospective clients.

The trio are among an increasing number of small-business owners who work out of their homes.

They all say economic changes, new technologies and a more personalized approach to client services are blasting away old stereotypes, allowing home-based businesses to be taken just as seriously as larger companies with offices and conference rooms.

"My day is so efficient now," said Rebecca Golden, owner of Phoenix Web design firm Website Garden. "I literally wake up, brush my teeth and start working."



Wright

Golden said some larger clients still want service providers that have "a fancy office, many employees, departments, etc." She tries to turn around that bias by telling customers that she and her programmers and content writers have worked in office environments at larger companies before, and now they offer their talents without that overhead cost.

Wright, president of Rainmaker Communications in Chandler, said she tells potential clients up front that she works at home and can offer marketing services for less than a larger firm that pays rent in Scottsdale or central Phoenix.

"Once most businesses realize how much they are saving by working with someone who works from a home office, the stigma goes away," she said. "Big office space equals big overhead, which is always passed on to the client."

The turbulent economy has played a role in prompting more professionals to start their own businesses. Many have been laid off or decided it was time to leave a struggling business and start working for them-

selves. Tight small-business lending has meant those startups increasingly forgo the expense of an office.

Statistics for the number of home-based businesses are generally lacking. In January, the U.S. Census Bureau said its most recent national numbers are from 2005, when it tracked 11.3 million home-based workers, up from 9.5 million in 1998.

Conner started Active Voice Communications in Chandler last year after working for custom publishing and PR companies. She said wireless Internet availability at places such as Paradise Bakery and Starbucks allows her to do work outside the office and in between meetings. She said she isn't running into client bias.

"I think it's pretty common for people to acknowledge that writers can do our jobs from anywhere, and there's a productivity upside to not being surrounded by people who can be distractions in an office environment," she said

There are some challenges to home-based businesses. Christy Hubbard, an attorney with Phoenix law firm Lewis and Roca LLP, said home-based business owners need to make sure they are in accordance with city zoning codes and homeowner association rules, and they should check with their home insurance agents about the need for some kind of business coverage.

Rapping, a former non-profit executive who runs consulting firm Alison & Associates, said she tries to stay engaged with professional peers and friends via personal meetings and Twitter to keep from going "stir-crazy." After a year of working at home, she doesn't see any stigma from clients or much of a downside.

"With a cell phone, laptop and printer, there is little one can't accomplish in a home office," she said.



Rapping

GET CONNECTED

Active Voice Communications: www.theactivevoice.com
Rainmaker Communications: www.rainmakercomm.com

RELAX.

Would your company be able to survive a disaster?

Secure Enterprise-Class Backup, Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery **WITHOUT** the Enterprise-Class Cost.

Continuous Data Protection plans starting at \$350/month.
Includes 300GB secure offsite storage.

LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR BUSINESS CONTINUITY PACKAGES

Call us at: 623.738.0066 www.itLogistix.com/backup-solution

- Exchange - Citrix - Virtual Servers	- eFax - SharePoint - Great Plains	- Windows Directory Services - Exchange and DCS - Server Consolidation
www.hostingLogistix.com	www.itLogistix.com	www.iLogistix.com

Who can help you save money during this tough economy?

CPAs

Certified Public Accountants advise you on how your financial decisions affect you and your family. They can help you find ways to lower your taxes, plan for retirement, save for your children's education or start your own business. CPAs have a wide range of knowledge to help you achieve your dreams.

Don't let your business become the next victim of the struggling economy. Companies should also look to CPAs to help them survive and thrive. CPAs can give you ideas to increase revenue and find cost saving opportunities.

Go to www.ascpa.com to find a CPA for you or your company.

Arizona Society of CPAs
4801 E. Washington St. Suite 225-B
Phoenix, AZ 85034-2021
www.ascpa.com