

**Family Living Focus**

by  
Multi-County  
Extension Agent

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**Doing Business from your Home**

If your household is like mine, you can always use a little extra money. It seems that coats are forever wearing out and shoes are being outgrown. While the easiest solution might be to get a job (or a second job), leaving the home and working according to someone else's schedule isn't an idea that appeals to everyone. For many people, starting their own business - a home-based business - is a very attractive option.

Home-based businesses appeal to people for a variety of reasons. Many types of products and services can be provided from the home setting. Much of the equipment that was once found only in a large business setting (like the FAX and computer) is becoming part of the home scene. Today's baby boomers find themselves sandwiched between two generations, both needing attention and time, making it necessary to balance income/work and family time. Probably first on many

entrepreneurs' list however, is that setting up a home venture means fewer overhead dollars than rental/purchase of a storefront or industrial property.

If you think a home business might be for you, how should you get started? First, come up with an idea that might be a good business idea. The product or service should be something about which you know (or are willing to learn) something. Your business may be related to a hobby that you have, or, for farm families, it may involve a value-added product created from raw products already grown/produced on the farm. It may involve some new skill that you have always wanted to build, that you will learn before going into business.

Once you have come with an idea, look hard at that idea. This hard look is often called a feasibility study. You need to see if the idea is "do-able," marketable, and profitable.

A "do-able" idea is a legal one. Check with your local township, borough, or city gov-

ernment to find out whether zoning allows you to conduct your business in your home. Each municipality is different; and some existing businesses may have been "grandfathered in," which means that they existed before zoning was put in place, and are allowed to operate, contrary to an ordinance. Do not assume that land zoned for agriculture can be used for all businesses. Check it out! Find out about any special licenses or registrations needed to operate - and who issues them. For example, food product businesses must be inspected and registered by the PA Department of Agriculture.

When looking at marketability, try to find out who would be most likely to buy your product or service. The group of people who would be your best customers is called your target market. Find out how many people who will see your product or use your service fall into this group. As you learn about your target market, try to find out how many competitors you have. In his book, "Sell What You Sow," Eric Gibson says that it is just as important that a newly-developed product be different from other products already on the market, as it is that the entrepreneur choose something they enjoy producing. At this stage, you need to decide if the market can bear another maker of stuffed bunnies....

Finally, make sure that you will be able to make a profit with this idea. By definition, busi-

nesses are money-making ventures. Some businesses require that you purchase equipment and materials to get things going, so that it is impossible to make a profit in the first six months, year, or two years. However, you must be able to see the light at the end of the tunnel, a time when you will make money, after all the expenses are paid, for an idea to be a good business idea.

If you find you have a good business idea, remember that being a home-based business person doesn't mean that you have to go it alone. There are many sources of help. Cooperative Extension, local college business departments, and the Small Business Administra-

tion's Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE) all provide free information. Throughout the year, Cooperative Extension will be offering Food for Profit classes for people who want to set up food businesses. In March, the Lebanon Valley Chamber of Commerce will have their first annual Home-Based Business Conference for current and future home-based entrepreneurs.

Taking time to gather information, will be the first big step so that you can, on your own time, in your own home, take a good business idea and make it into a source of extra income and personal satisfaction. It all starts with a question: "Is a home-based business for you?"

**Town Without Milk**

SYRACUSE, N. Y. — Black coffee, dry cereal, a sad cop holding a box of doughnuts, and unhappy children sitting around a birthday cake-what do all these images have in common? No Milk. This is the fate of the residents of Drysville, the town without milk and the mythical home to the new series of "got milk?" commercials making their debut this month.

Cleverly produced, these commercials have to be seen several times before the viewer will pick up on all the milk deprivation innuendoes. For instance, in one spot titled "Drysville Cafe," a radio playing in the background announces that the local donut company has filed Chapter 11. In another spot titled "Ballad," a school boy slips money to another boy who opens his locker to reveal a centerfold picture of a gallon of milk.

Although the current "got Milk?" campaign has a national awareness rating of 80%, the creators of the campaign felt it was time for a change. According

to Michele Martins, advertising director for the American Dairy Association to Michele Martens, advertising director for the American Dairy Association and Dairy Council, Inc., "Consumers are so familiar with the campaign, they can usually guess the ending. The point of advertising is to keep the message fresh; the new ads do that, but with a twist."

Created by San Francisco-based Goodby Silverstein & Partners, the new ads were shot in black and white and evoke the kitschy feel of the 1950s. The milk deprivation theme continues—only this time an entire town is without milk. In "Patrol Car," a group of teen-age boys get caught joy-riding across the county line to get milk. "All right boys, drop your straws," the sheriff blears over a megaphone. The sheriff explains to viewers how he and his men found several empties on the floor along with some chocolate syrup, "I guess they got tired of drinking it straight."

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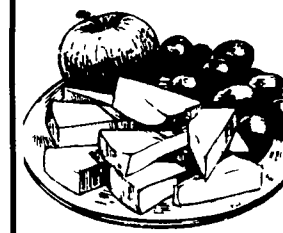
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