



Home Office *Weekly*

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[Click here for your FREE subscription to Home Office Weekly](#) **Home Office Weekly Profile: Mark Sincevich / Speaker & Photographer**

Free weekly advice on how to happily & successfully live and work under the same roof...tips on business success, organizing your office space, time management & more!



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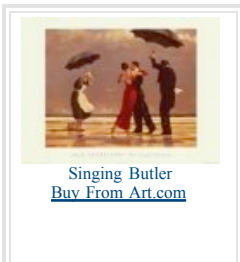
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Year started home business: 2001

Hours per week you work: 35-50 (depends if I take a half-day during the week to hang out with my son or if I am traveling for business)

Happy at home index: (1 – miserable / 10 – nirvana). It's a 9!

(The only challenge is getting too isolated.)

Success at home index: (1-starving / 10-fabulously wealthy) I would say 6 at this point. It's moving up about a half point each year. It takes consistency to build one's own business.

What kind of business do you have at home?

Professional speaking and photography (I work with people and organizations to increase their communication power through a unique photography angle). I do this through my creative keynotes that focus on work/life balance, creativity and leadership and my powerful presentation skills programs for executives. The results of my programs help my customers gain a fresh perspective, generate new ideas, sharpen the focus, and create more business

What did you do before you started a home business?

I spent 13 years in computer sales and marketing and before that 4 1/2 years in public accounting. When the crash happened in 2000, I knew I wanted to work on my own dreams instead of somebody else's.

Why did you start a home business, and why this particular business?

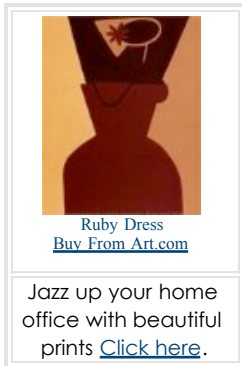
First let me say I have kept a journal for over 18 years. I put down my thoughts and feelings along the way when I would travel in the computer field. I remember being at the University Coffee Cafe in Palo Alto, CA. I wrote that I was in the right place, doing the right thing then (writing), but the impetus for getting out to California was all wrong. I wanted to impact individuals and organizations in a positive way. It's very hard to do that by selling bigger and better computers. I used to justify selling computers by saying to myself: "This would give my customers more free time." I began to ask, more free time to do *what*...answer more e-mail?



The crash of 2000 in the market and 9/11 were both wake up calls to challenge me. I had to ask myself if I was on the right path in my life. The great thing about keeping all of my journals was I could look back and find common themes...I found that I liked starting my own business. I also went most places with a journal and a camera and then loved to share my stories with others in larger groups. Also, I wanted to be based at home because commuting is an enormous waste of time and resources. Therefore I picked a business where I could combine speaking, writing and photography.

What was your biggest challenge in starting your home business?

Figuring out the **one thing** that I was best at and packaging this value to potential customers. I have realized this is an ongoing process. Currently the "one thing" for me is powerful presentation skills for executives. They very much like the unique photography angle that I use and sometimes this results in spin off business such as a keynote at a future event.



What has been your biggest challenge staying in business?

Finding repeat customers who hire me for larger contracts. For example, the challenge for the speaking business is this exact thing. If a company hires me directly for a keynote or breakout session at a conference this year, they usually want to hire somebody different next year. I have realized that it's much better to figure out a way to get repeat business so I can develop deeper relationships with a core group of customers. I'm moving in this direction. Bottom line: It takes an enormous amount of time, energy, money and creativity to get a new customer. This effort would be much better put to use getting to know a few customers better.

What do you love about working from home?

The flexibility, the five-foot commute, the opportunity to see my son when he comes home from school most days. The ability to have lunch with my wife. I feel much more connected to my family and to my community. This is primarily due to not wasting time commuting. Also, when I work, I am very productive and focused. This results in putting the right efforts in the right areas.

What do you hate about it?

The biggest drawback is definitely the isolation. Yes, I am a member of a few associations and groups. However, sometimes the lack of change coupled with the gray winter weather in Washington, DC makes me feel very down. This gets me to make the effort to schedule lunches with friends or to work in coffee shops in the area. I find when I get "out" I feel much more connected. It's just a big effort to get "out" sometimes.

How do you inspire or motivate yourself everyday?

I start each day full of possibility! I ask myself what I can do today that will impact my business in a positive way. Also, I ask myself how I can help others at the same time. This motivates me to action. Sometimes this means I write an article, other times it means I volunteer to speak or it means I have to get up at the crack of dawn and take some great photographs.

How do you separate home life from your work life?

I am very big on this fact. Here are my tips for this ...

- (1) I have a separate home office for working.
- (2) I have a separate phone line and fax line.
- (3) I answer my phone only during business hours...roughly 9 am to 6 pm.
- (4) I don't check e-mail during non-work hours.
- (5) If I need to use the Internet for something personal, I take my laptop out of the office and do this in a non-work area.
- (6) Also, I divide my day into two 4-hour chunks on a regular basis. This helps me to get something personal into the middle of the day too.
- (7) Weekends are only for personal time.

Where is your office in your home?

It's on the second floor in the corner with two big windows allowing plenty of light. This is important even when the weather isn't very good outside. It is also directly across from the master bedroom (hence the five feet).



What is your daily routine?

Wake up at about 7am, listen to NPR for about 30 minutes. Both my wife and I get ready at the same time. One of us makes breakfast while the other one gets our son up and ready for pre-school. I have breakfast with my family every day and usually start work between 8:45 - 9:30 am. I work from about 9:30 - 1:30 pm in the first chunk of time in the day. I take about an hour for lunch or to do something personal and then work from about 2:30 - 6 pm. Sometimes, I take a nap in the afternoon around 4 pm. This gives me renewed energy and creativity.

What is your biggest (or proudest) achievement so far?

I think it's two things. First I just finished my third book, "*Snap: The Ultimate Guide to Digital Photography for the Consumer*." It was 228 pages and 18 months of work. Second, going into 2007, I have five months of business forecasted. This hasn't happened in the past and I attribute this to being very focused on leading with my **ONE-Thing** and having a MAP (marketing attack plan).

What are you working on right now to grow your business?

The main thing here is to use a fishing analogy. I am working on fishing (marketing my speaking business) in a river full of hungry fish (prospects). I have been implementing my MAP for the last 4 months and this is starting to pay dividends going forward. My MAP includes such things as a monthly e-mail newsletter (The Leadership Lens), monthly direct mail, periodic Webinars, association meetings, donating my speaking on a monthly basis, and targeting those organizations who share common values with what I do.

What advice can you give about starting a home business?

Try working for another organization first (as in being the remote office at home). I did this for over four years. This helped me to developed very disciplined habits about working from home and not getting distracted (i.e. TV, personal phone calls, etc).

If you had to do it all over again, what would you do (or not do)?

Great question ... I would definitely be doing what I am doing now (working with individuals and organizations to increase their communication power -- in other words combining my speaking, writing and photography). I would have liked to have started earlier (i.e. less time working in the computer field), but this is how it goes. It just means I wasn't ready to launch my own business. I will say that I wish I would have saved more money along the way (both when in the computer field and when I started working in my own business). I now operate under a very strict budget, but before this, it was very fluid. I would put large ticket items on a credit card. I make do with less unless there is a strong business reason to purchase something.

What do you do for fun when you're not working?

I love to travel with my family. I like hiking, biking, and being outdoors. I like trying new restaurants that have high quality food. I go to the gym regularly. I practice Yoga on a regular basis and very much like to read. I probably read three to four books a month. Sometimes the books are related to work and other times they are novels and unrelated. Also, I love spending time with my son and wife. It's often the simple things (i.e. riding the trolley and getting a haircut with my son) that mean the most.

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