

Homeworking

A new report shows that an increasing number of people in the UK are working at home. Is this becoming the best way to beat the economic blues?

1 Match the verbs in Box 1 with the words in Box 2 to create some useful collocations.

start up reduce run boost find develop

customers a company turnover costs new products

2 Study the extract from a new report on the growth of home businesses in the UK and guess the correct figures. Scan paragraph one of the article to check your answers.

REPORT: HOME BUSINESSES in the UK

- (1) Over the last year, the number of home businesses has risen by: (a) 6% (b) 16% (c) 26 %
 (2) Number of home businesses in the UK: (a) 1.5m. (b) 2 m. (c) 2.5 m.

(Figures : Enterprise Nation / BT)

Have you ever thought about running your own company from home? One effect of the credit crunch is that more and more people in the UK are deciding that they want to be their own boss and are starting up a home-based business.

According to a new report by Enterprise Nation and British Telecom, over the last year, the number of businesses being run from home has risen by 16 per cent. There are now more than 2.5 million such businesses. In fact, more than half (53 per cent) of the 4.7 million small and medium-sized enterprises in the UK are now run from people's back bedrooms.

Homeworkers are, it seems, highly positive. 72 per cent plan to win new customers over the next six months; around two thirds (66 per cent) plan to boost their turnover; and more than half (58 per cent) are developing new products and services. However a major question in the current economic climate is: how do you make a success when it is so hard to get a loan? It is no surprise that the use of technology is a

critical factor. A website and a fast connection are vital in keeping costs low and maximising productivity. With a quality website, a home business can seem bigger than it actual is, and compete on a global scale.

There is also a growth in what is known as the 5pm-9am economy - the 'spare time' company. Doing something to make money in the evening and at weekends is a low-risk way to start a business. One enterprising worker for instance began making and selling handbags in her free time. She lost her job but was able to make her spare-time venture into a successful business. The increase in home businesses, some argue, means a more dynamic economy and less traffic on the roads. Others say it means no switching off after work, and leads to people working all the time without breaks and losing the benefits of a regular job, such as holiday pay and working with colleagues. Still, amid all the depression about the poor economic conditions, most homeworkers are optimistic.

3 Read the whole article. What pros and cons of working at home are mentioned?

4 Decide if the following words in the article are nouns (N), verbs (V) or both (B).

credit	win	enterprise	customers	turnover	develop
report	product	service	start up	growth	compete
risk	benefit	colleague	break	connection	increase

5 Discuss the following points in small groups. Then, report back your ideas to the rest of the class.

- (a) Would you like to run a business from home? Why / why not?
 (b) Decide on an idea - product or service - for a home business. Consider costs, marketing, turnover and profit. Report your idea to the class and find out if the other students think your idea will be a success.