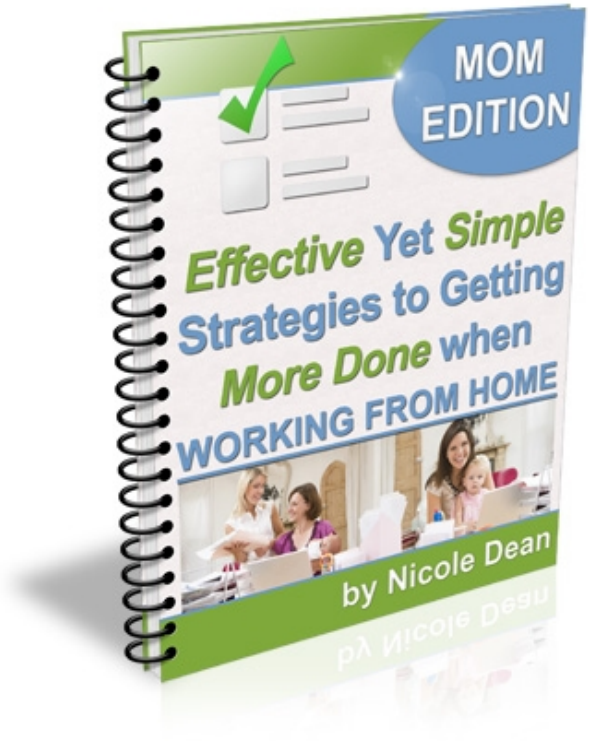


Effective Yet Simple Strategies to Getting More Done when Working From Home



by Nicole Dean

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About the Author



Nicole Dean is serious about helping women to access businesses opportunities that can generate the kind of income families need to support household budgets or to replace lost incomes due to a tough economy.

That experience and perspective was the inspiration behind Nicole's decision to create ShowMomTheMoney.com. Each year this website attracts over half a million visitors seeking answers and support on everything from starting a business to frugal living.

Nicole's popularity is rooted in the fact that so many can women relate to her journey and her practical, razor sharp knowledge about what it takes to build a real, sustainable business from home.

"When I started working at home several years ago I was pleased that I could pay things like the cable bill. Eventually I was able to pay the mortgage. When recent economic changes hit our household I was pleased that the income from my home business had grown so significantly that I could cover all the bills myself," explains Nicole.

That's the kind of "real life experience" and honesty that clients and subscribers to ShowMomTheMoney.com appreciate.

Nicole juggles a lot of things, but she does it all without owning a Blackberry or giving out her cell phone number. The reason she works from home is to have the freedom when and where she wishes to work.

She enjoys work very much, but lives to spend time with her much-adored husband, her two silly children – and also her two slightly neurotic puppies, Eddy (short for Edison) & Einstein.

Introduction



Hi. I am currently sitting out by the pool, having a glass of wine, watching the kids swim and am thinking about my journey from a struggling “work all the time for very little money” mom to today when I’m earning more money than I ever could at a job in this recession-struck town.

A few major things have changed over the years. Surprisingly, it wasn’t my increased knowledge of internet marketing or studying more about blogging that gave me greater profits and freedom. That hasn’t been the hard part.

So what changed? My productivity, confidence and focus did. I learned these things.

I learned what makes money and what doesn’t.

As much as I love hanging out on forums and chatting it up on Instant Messenger and Twitter with my friends... I have to put my time where my money is, which is in solid lasting business tactics like [article marketing](#) and [list-building](#).

I learned to take action.

I love buying ebooks and getting my hands on every opportunity to learn, whether it’s a \$10 ebook or a \$3000 coaching program, BUT learning isn’t doing. It’s important to understand that you’ll never know everything there is to know and you’ll always look back upon work you did years ago and see room for improvement.

Just do something – even if it’s not perfect. You can always revise later.

I learned to shut off the noise.

Oftentimes the biggest obstacle for a WAHM is paralysis by analysis. That is a fancy way of saying “HELP! I’m totally overwhelmed by everything flying at me!”

- Unsubscribe from most of your mailings. Choose one or two mentors to follow, not 50 of them.
- Regularly disconnect from the internet and just tackle your to do list without the distractions (and temptations) that are available.
- If you love Twitter, schedule time to play. However, do the things that make money first – whether it’s calling clients, getting your billable hours in first, sending a mailing to your list, or building your passive income.

I learned to ask for help.

And, when I say “ask for help” I don’t mean going to free forums and message boards. I go to people who have achieved success and are doing what I want to be doing. I learn from them. I no longer take advice from people unless they’ve proven their credibility to me.

I have one main mentor – **Jimmy D. Brown**. If you don’t know him yet, head over to his blog and read everything you can get your hands on. It’s SOLID information and I guarantee that you won’t ever look at your online business the same.

If you would like to Mastermind with successful work at home moms, you’ll want to check out **Mom Masterminds**. That’s where I got most of my early feedback. I recommend it 100% for any mom who needs to learn and wants support along the way from women who are SERIOUS about making money, but are also supportive and helpful along the way.

I learned to value my time.

I love giving of myself – usually to a fault. I had to realize that any time that I gave away meant time away from my children, my husband, my hobbies, my mother, and my life. Therefore, every request of my time has to be weighed against those things. That has given me the clarity that I’ve needed to ensure that requests of my time benefited me in multiple ways.

Would you like an example?

I have Virtual Assistants who answer my email. We receive multiple requests from my readers daily.

- I get emails asking me questions. (ie. Free personal coaching.)
- They ask me to send mailings to my lists even though neither I nor my list members would benefit in any way. (ie. Free advertising.)
- They ask me to recommend Virtual Assistants, Ghostwriters, and Affiliate Managers. (ie. Free outsource matching.)

Now I don’t blame them for asking one bit. And, I honestly love helping people.

However, as my lists grew and my business grew, the number of requests grew. Once I realized just how much time I was investing in these free requests, while I was turning down big-time paid work – I got smart real quick.

I learned how to become an expert in content repurposing and efficiency in my business. And, I learned how to say “no”.

Are you doing the same thing that I was?

The timing of this post is very ironic. I just watched “**Yes Man**” a movie with Jim Carrey last night. In the movie, he takes on a personal challenge to say “Yes” to everything asked of him, whether a homeless man asked for a ride or a drunk guy in a bar asked him to fight. Yes, it’s a bizarre movie. And, yes, it’s bizarre that I’m asking you to do the exact opposite here today.

Learn to say “no” to time wasters.

Learn to say “yes” to your life.

Here is your homework. I want you to take action to better protect (value) your time.

Cut down the “Chatter”.

If you have Instant Messenger, Skype, or Google Chat open, set your status as “away”, “busy”, or even “invisible”. If there’s an emergency, people will find you. If there isn’t an emergency, you’ll have focus for the time that you need it to get things done.

Turn off email notifications.

If you get a little flash, beep, or any type of interruption whenever a new email comes in, turn that off. Every single time that your eye gets drawn to the flash it distracts you and causes you to lose your train of thought. Even if it’s a split second, it adds up and cuts into your productivity.

Speaking of email, unsubscribe from most of your email notification lists.

Choose just a few that you really enjoy reading and dump the rest. If that’s a scary thought, then set up a new email account and resubscribe with the new email address. Plan to check it once each week. You may find that the new email account never gets opened.

Use your Caller ID.

Turn off the ringer on the phone while you’re working so you can focus without interruptions. However, if the kids are at school or camp, then obviously you can’t do this because you need to be available for emergencies. If that’s the case, set the phone by your desk so you don’t have to get up and run to answer it.

Check caller ID and ignore everyone that you can. Call them back later when you're sitting out by the pool or you're at the park with the kids — on your schedule. You wouldn't call them at work to chat — don't let them do it to you.

Set Work Hours.

If you have a client who is calling you at home, give him or her certain hours when you're available. Do not allow that person to interrupt your family life.

Don't Twitter your Time Away.

For the love of Pete, avoid Twirl, Tweet Deck, and any other Twitter applications that flash and beep and keep Twitter in front of your face all day long. Log in to Twitter, check your "@ replies" and answer them. Play for a bit and then log back out.

I know, you're thinking that those distractions are nothing compared with having the kids at home. We'll get to that. Right now, I'm concerned with getting you thinking about every moment of the day that you're sitting in front of your computer and really making that as productive as possible. Also, I want to make sure that we ALL (myself included) protect our time.

I'll close out this section with my favorite quote:

The Days are Long but the Years are Short.

My son is in middle school and I wasted too many hours sitting on my butt in front of my computer before I learned the lessons above. I beg you to value your time with your children, your husband and your mother/sister/father/grandparents. Value your OWN time, too. Take care of yourself. Take a walk. Take time to cook and eat healthy meals. Those things are critically more important than most tasks we do during the day in front of our computers and call "work".

Say "no" to time wasters. Say "yes" to your life.

Count Down Your Time Online

I know that, when you are working from home and you have kids at home, you're constantly conflicted. On one hand, you feel like you're never able to get onto the computer to work. On the other hand, you feel like you're on the computer all the time.

Some days, I would just sit and cry from frustration. I'd feel like I was letting everyone down in my life. I was letting down my kids for being crabby and not spending enough time with them. Letting down my husband for not making enough money and for not spending enough time with him. And, I was letting myself down for not making enough money, not being a good enough wife and mother, and not taking the time I needed to exercise. Bleck.

So, I can certainly relate. We ALL face that feeling at some time or another.

One of the items that saved my sanity was a simple \$7 tool. It has been invaluable in my business and has made me more money than any other investment.

Would you like to know what it is?

A simple Kitchen Timer.

For instance, right now, I've given myself 15 minutes to write as much as I can during that time. When the timer goes off, I will take a break and check on things around the house.

Now, you may say "Sure, Nicole. Your kids are 7 and 12. They're older and can be left unsupervised."

True. It's true. However, the timer is as much for me as it is for them. Here are a few reasons.

It provides an Urgency.

I don't know about you, but I can dilly-dally on my computer all day long. I can take my time... write a bit and then think... and then write some more. Doo dee doo. You know the feeling? Well, when I know the timer is counting down and I've got to leave my desk no matter what I'm doing, when it starts beeping, all of a sudden I work a heck of a lot faster.

It keeps me Accountable.

I can't wander off from writing this report. If I did and the timer went off, I'd be busted. I have to stay on track because I have allotted this time for this report and I don't want it to take 3 hours. I want it to take 15 minutes tops.

When I was in High School and College, I noticed that I'd always finish a project the night before it was due. It wouldn't matter if the teacher gave me 3 days, 3 weeks, or 3 months to do it. I'd always finish the night before. And, not too long ago, I realized that I was the same way in my business. If I give myself 3 hours to write this section of the report... that's exactly how long it will take me. If I give myself 15 minutes... that's exactly how long it'll take me.

Now that's not to say that I'll do shoddy work. This is just a tool. Nothing more. If I get done with my typing after the timer beeps and this is junk, then I'll have to take another stab at it. The point is that I'll be much further ahead in 15 minutes with a timer clicking down than I would just sitting down and thinking "ok, time to write a blog post". It forces me to focus for 15 minutes.

It's about me valuing my own time as much as others valuing it, too.

And, my kids and my hubby love the timer, too.

It's tangible.

They see an actual number rather than hearing me say "I just need a few more minutes" – and then coming out an hour later. In fact, I keep several timers in the house. When the kids were younger, they'd keep one to count me down, too. I would keep one by my desk and they'd take one with them to their rooms. They could watch the timer count down while they colored or played, knowing that I'd be all theirs when it got to zero.

It teaches them time management.

They are learning time management, too. When my daughter was five, I asked her to clean her room. She said "Can I please use a timer?" She understood already at that age.

My 12 year old homeschools with me. He uses a timer a lot. It saves both of us from frustration.

They feel important.

My kids ask me to set a timer if I'm not using one, even when hubby is home and is watching them. They'll come into my office and say "We want to go swimming. Please set a timer and then watch us?"

I'll set it for a certain number of minutes, work my bottom off, and then head outside to watch them in the pool.

If you don't have a timer – or the kids ran off with yours, here's an online version that I use.

<http://www.online-stopwatch.com/eggtimer-countdown/full-screen/>

There are many others. Some you can choose the sound that plays when time is up. I just like the look of this one and the ringer isn't obnoxious so it works.

Jimmy D. Brown – remember him? I mentioned him yesterday as being my mentor. Well, he recommends scheduling your day with exactly 45 minutes of focused time, alternating with 15 minutes of rest and going through that cycle 3 times per day. Yes, he's built a huge business working only 3 hours per day max.

In fact, if you have \$15 to spend, I highly recommend this course that he's put together all about working from home. It's one of my favorite reports that he's written and I've read them all.

It's called **Homepreneur Habits: How To Run A Successful Home Business**

If you're enjoying these tips, you'll love his guide. He doesn't share any tips about working with kids underfoot, but he feels as I do that any time that is spent in front of your computer should be productive so that you have time left in the day to live your life as it was meant to be lived – taking care of yourself and spending time with those that you love.

A Daily Action List

I'd like to talk about something that's huge as far as being a Work at Home Entrepreneur.

Actually planning your workday before you sit at the computer. (*gasp*)

This is, again, where Jimmy D. Brown's report: [Homepreneur Habits: How To Run A Successful Home Business](#) is such a valuable resource. He shares his daily schedule, including what he does every day of the week to run a hugely profitable business in only 3 hours per day.

Let me back up a bit here before I get too far ahead of myself.

Why a "To Do" or "Action" List is Important.

Let's take a peek into the work day of two twins: Silly and Sally.

Silly's Day: Silly gets up, grabs a cup of coffee and sits down at her desk. She thinks "Hmm... I wonder what I should work on today?" and then wanders off to check email and twitter while she continues to decide what to work on. Several hours later, it's time for her to get off the computer and she thinks "I didn't get anything productive done! There's never enough time in the day. I just don't understand. I was busy all day!"

Sally's Day: Sally gets up, grabs a cup of coffee and sits down at her desk. She picks up her action list of 6 items that she wants to get done for the day, and determines which one to tackle first. She then spends some focused time and finishes 5 of the items on her list. After that she decides that she's almost out of time for the day, so she quickly checks email and Twitter. Then, she makes her list for the next day, making sure to transfer the item that didn't get done to the new list.

Which one of those days looks more productive to you? It doesn't take an efficiency expert to see that Sally is much more productive and gets more done (and probably makes a heck of a lot more money than Silly does.)

Both Sally and Silly are moms, so they're interrupted more than a few times in the scenario above, but when all things are even – Sally is the winner by a long shot.

So are you Sally? Or are you Silly?

Now, I could talk forever about this topic, but I'm trying to stay very focused on what works the best, so I'll try to keep it short.

Do it at Night.

A tip that I learned awhile ago is to make your to-do list at the end of your work day.

So, at the end of today, I will make my to-do list for tomorrow.

Why is this such an important tip? Well, just think of the alternative.

Did you notice that Sally sat down and was immediately able to jump into her action list? Not Silly. She had to sit and try to remember where she left off the day before. That's not exactly the way to start off a productive day, is it?

Keep it Simple. Keep it Short.

I'm easily overwhelmed, so I like to write my action list for the day on a standard index card and limit it to 6 money-making tasks that I believe I can get done that day. I do not list everything that I need to do on that list or I'd just look at it and freeze and wander off to Twitter or grab someone on Instant Messenger to chat and stay "busy" but not "productive".

I've tried numerous systems, including mind mapping, expensive day planning systems, and complicated computer programs. And, yes, I do use a larger system for planning my overall business.

HOWEVER... for the daily "to do" list tasks, I have found that simplicity is the one trick that works best for me. So, I run back to the simplicity of my wonderful index cards and my list of 6 items on it every time, simply because it works.

By keeping my list of 6 tasks in front of me and having it ready for me in the morning, I find that I accomplish two things:

I get more accomplished in my day. This is pretty self-explanatory.

I know when I'm done. If you don't have a daily action list, how will you ever know when to leave your computer? There will always be more to do... Without my action list, I could grow roots to my swivel chair within a week's time.

Finding your Way Back.

A daily action list also serves a busy home entrepreneur in one other way. When I get interrupted (and I do, often), I can very easily find my way back to productivity with one glance. Which of the six things was I working on? If I wasn't any of them... well, then I was off track to begin with and I just busted myself.

When I didn't have my daily list, I would have two major problems for a work at home entrepreneur. I'd be unproductive. And, I'd be unproductive for a really long time, since I didn't know when I was done for the day. I know it sounds silly, but it's practically an epidemic of colossal proportions when talking with online entrepreneurs.

The Moral of the Story? Don't be Silly! Get your Work Done.

Your challenge for this section is to buy some index cards and keep them by your desk. Every day before you call it "quitting time" make your list of 6 items to do the next day. Start your day with that list. See how much more work you get done and you can thank me later.

Again, if you have \$15 to invest for a whole lot of productivity,
I highly recommend: Jimmy D. Brown's report:

"Homepreneur Habits: How To Run A Successful Home Business."

To Do List for the Kids

In this section, I'd like to talk about giving the kids their own jobs to help you better focus. My kids are 7 and 12, but, I've been working from home since 2001, so I've been home with little ones long enough to share battle stories. But, let's make sure to clear up a few things before I begin. I surely don't want to sound like I know it all. Anyone who has been to my house knows that I do not have it all under control. Not even close.

I'm figuring it out with you, so I'll just share what works best for me. Every parent knows there's no such thing as a "one size fits all" solution when you're talking about kids, so read my suggestions and adjust for your family from there.

Set Expectations and Communicate Them Clearly.

I am a creative, go-with-the-flow kind of gal. That's one of my best assets, but I believe it's also a huge hindrance when working from home, compared with someone more structured than I am. Structure and routine is not something that comes easy to me. Therefore, I found that I have the best results when my expectations for my kids are put in a written list. My kids have daily to do lists that must be performed in order to keep Mommy happy. And, since Mommy's business pays the bills, it better get done... or else.

Now I sound like a total meanie, but the lists are basic stuff, which, unfortunately won't get done unless I either have it on a list where it has to be crossed off – or I cross my arms and stand in front of each of my children until it's done. I choose the list.

Specific Tasks are Essential. (aka. "I can't read your mind!")

I try my best to set my kids up to succeed. I find that kids do much better with specifics rather than blanket statements. I have found in my parenting over the years, with my own kids, neighbor kids, and in being a Boy Scout and also Girl Scout Leader that kids respond much better when given a specific task rather than a general one.

For instance, when my son was about 5 years old, I'd come into his room and he'd be surrounded on the floor with Legos. I'd say "Please pick up your Legos" and he would promptly burst into tears crying "there's too many!" I found that, by asking differently, I'd get a much better response. So, instead I'd say "Please pick up all of the green legos." or I'd say "Please pick up 50 legos". Either of those would get him moving. It still works.

I say this because you have to break down tasks to their very basics for certain children.

Example: Here's my daughter's daily to do list. She's 7. ([Click here](#) to view it as a .pdf file.)

She is required to complete everything on the list before friends can come over and before she can use any form of technology. That means, no TV, DS, computer, etc, until the list is done.

Benefits for Me.

What does this all have to do with productivity? If my kids are doing their jobs, then I'm free to be focused and do mine. Otherwise, when I'm battling and micromanaging my family, I work too many hours, am miserable and spend less quality time with them. Of course, listing "Kiss Mommy" on the list isn't such a bad thing for me, either. ;)

Drawbacks for Me.

I have to make sure that it gets done and stick by my rules, even when the TV would be such a nice babysitter. However, I'm a mom first, so... the list has to be done before the TV goes on in my house.

Can this Work for a 2-Year Old?

Certainly. In fact, I highly recommend it. Of course, you'd need to use pictures instead of words until your child can read and you'd probably want to laminate the list. But, outlining the morning and evening routine for your toddler, including brushing teeth, picking up toys, and kissing mommy is a great way to give your child pride, confidence, and set him/her up to succeed.



Reminder: Check out Jimmy D. Brown's report:

"Homepreneur Habits: How To Run A Successful Home Business"

If you want to learn how to work less and profit more.

Use the Right Tool for the Job

Today I'll share one of the biggest mistakes you can make as an online entrepreneur.

Doing everything the SLOW way.

Let me give you an example from day to day life.

Do you scrub all of your clothes in a stream on a washboard and then carry them back home in a basket and hang them out to dry on the clothesline?

Now, while I am a big fan of the clothesline part, since I love the smell of fresh clothes dried in the sun... I would certainly not drag my laundry down to a stream and scrub it by hand if I didn't have to.

Why not? Because I use the right tool for the job. A washing machine and a dryer. We all use the right tools in our "real lives". If there's a way to make work get done faster and easier, we normally choose that option.

When my grass gets too long, I don't grab the scissors or the tweezers. I get the lawn mower. Or I hire the neighbor kid, but that's another story. I'm also a big fan of outsourcing. I even teach a course about it at [Outsource Weekly](#)

So, why in our businesses do we do everything the hard way?

I have a theory about this. I think there are three reasons why people struggle and work too hard in the first place.

1. Not following ONE mentor who has done what you want to do and is where you want to be.
2. Not having a **mastermind group** to go to where you can ask questions and get solid actionable advice.
3. Not knowing the right questions to ask in the first place.

I'm a serious techno-phobe. I also really struggle with mechanical stuff, so I'm not one of those who'll tell you to install some scripts to make your life better. (Ooh, that gave me a cold chill just saying that.) I've never installed a script. I have a hard time changing the printer ink cartridges in my laser printer. I'm a serious struggle-bunny when it comes to learning new things.

However, I'm also not stupid. I'm not going to waste my precious time every day doing things the hard way if there is a tool for the job that can save me hours each and every year by automating the process.

Which sounds the best to you?

Option 1: Spending time doing tedious stuff.

vs.

Option 2: Paying someone else to do tedious stuff.

vs.

Option 3: Having a computer do tedious stuff for free every day so that you can focus on making money and living your life.

I choose Option #3 (and I hope that's the one you picked, too!)

Here are some examples where you might be cutting the grass with scissors instead of using a lawn mower when working in your business.

Blog Spam.

If you are manually deleting your blog spam, we need to have a chat. There are plugins that will screen your comments for you. My favorite at the moment is Aksimet. It seems to be more accurate than my old favorite which was Spam Karma.

Now that's not rocket science. That's common sense, but only if you know the right questions to ask in the first place and/or have mentors who are telling you these things when you're starting out.

Twitter.

Now, before I get hate comments, no, I'm not suggesting that you take the "YOU" out of Twitter and have a computer tweeting for you. Twitter is about relationships. However, the auto DMs can be a pain in the bottom. Do you get tons of those? I used to, too. There is a free tool that will help you eliminate most of your DM's. Here's what I use: [**Tweet Later**](#)

This service will also automatically follow people when they follow you so that you no longer have to click on new people and decide whether to follow them or not. I know that it's fun to poke around and find new people, and you can still do that, but this keeps things running day in and day out so that you don't have to.

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Or you can choose to “Vet” followers using Tweetlater. That's what I do now. I used to autofollow people and I may do it again, but there was a stretch where some gross people were slipping into Twitter and I was autofollowing them, which I wasn't crazy about. So, the Vetting program is the next best thing if you'd prefer to veto people. Every morning or every few days, you can log in and TweetLater will list all of the people who have followed you in the last 24 hours. You can follow/ignore/block/spam 25 people at a time. That saves time.

There are countless examples. Nowadays a tool can be found that can pretty much do everything but go to the bathroom for you.

It's about finding a **Mastermind Group**, a Mentor, and asking questions to get the right answers.

Before I go, I'd like to invite you to learn more with me. Check out my blog and podcast at the link below.

Warmly,



[@NicoleDean on Twitter](#)

Want more from Me?

Nicole's Blog & Podcast: **[NicoleontheNet.com](#)**

Free tutorial **[WebTrafficBasics.com](#)** - great for beginners.

Other Recommended Resources

Grab the free report at **[ListPROFITSystem.com](#)** (from Jimmy D. Brown).

Web hosting for Moms at **[MomWebs.com](#)** (Get a blog installed for only \$10)

Business Mentoring, Learning, Support – from Mom to Mom: **[Mom Masterminds](#)**