

HOME IS WHERE THE CUSTOMER IS

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Meet Gerry Granville. According to management consultant and author Jeffrey P. Davidson, Gerry is a member of what may be one of the most-overlooked markets in America: home-based businesses.

The story: Gerry was laid off from his advertising job in February 1989. Shortly thereafter, he decided to go into business for himself as a freelance copywriter. But first, he needed to equip his home office.

Although he already owned a computer—an old Compaq portable from the early 1980s—he needed a printer. It was important to Gerry that the printer be portable, since he'd be moving it to his kitchen table every day. He also knew he wanted to buy from a major manufacturer. After visiting several stores and comparing prices, he chose one of Canon's Bubble Jet™ models because it produces near-laser-quality output, received good reviews in computer magazines, and was light enough to tote easily.

When Gerry picked up four new clients within the space of a few weeks—one of whom was his former employer—he suddenly began to outgrow his kitchen-table workspace. Lighting in the kitchen was uneven, and one time he nearly lost an entire project when he tripped over the computer's extension cord. Also, when his kids came home from school at 3:30

each afternoon, they headed straight for the kitchen, thus making it difficult for him to concentrate.

Gerry decided to move his office into the basement. He bought a couple of small, two-drawer filing cabinets and made a desk by laying a piece of lumber across them. Soon he signed on three more clients. Over the next few months, he purchased a new computer, a computer desk, a fax machine, a telephone answering machine, and a bookshelf.

After moving his office yet again—this time to the family den—Gerry was finally set up in a space where he was comfortable and productive. Still, his spending spree continued. By year's end, he had purchased new carpeting for the den, a two-line telephone, a personal copier, a modem, and a laser printer.

WHAT HOME BUSINESSES SPEND

Gerry's purchases follow a predictable pattern, says Davidson, author of the book *Marketing to Home-Based Businesses* (Business One-Irwin, Homewood, Ill., 1991). "Most people start out small and increase their purchasing as they begin to generate revenues," he says. But just how big—and how lucrative—a market are the Gerrys of the world?

According to LINK Resources Corp., a New York City-based research and consulting firm, 11.8 million people are currently self-employed and work full time at home.

Home-based businesses currently comprise a \$20 billion market. With the right combination of product and perserverance, you can join the ranks of those who believe "there's no place like home."