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WORKING AT HOME

Tales from the home front.

Home Offices **Mr. Stern Builds His Dream Home Office**

For increasing family time and decreasing overhead, a home office can't be beat.

BY CHRISTINA HOFFMANN SPIRA

Jeff Stern officially shuttered his private office at his brokerage, RE/MAX Real Estate Inc., last December--a move that's greatly simplified his life.

"Before then, I had stuff in my truck, stuff at the RE/MAX office, and stuff at my home office," recalls the Winnipeg, Manitoba-based salesperson. "We're complicating our lives too much in the '90s. The two places that practitioners should be in are, first, in their vehicle, because you're not making money in the office, and, second, in a place to meet clients and make calls."

To that end, and to spend more time with his wife, Stern designed an elaborate home office, complete with hardwood floors, a frosted-glass entrance from the foyer of his home, and a 15-foot vaulted center ceiling. Visiting clients and customers have the run of the private bathroom and beverage-stocked refrigerator. For privacy, Stern had the office insulated against household noise. "I can't even hear the home phone line ring," he says.

1998 production: About \$100 million

Web site: www.jeffstern.com

Home office size: 15 feet x 16 feet

His technology must haves:

150 Pentium desktop, IBM compatible. (He plans to add a Pentium II desktop with a 17-inch screen, which will be connected to the Internet full-time so that he can easily dial into his E-mail. "I find that I'm dialing in to send and check my E-mail a minimum of six times a day," Stern says. The other desktop will be devoted to database management and software-based functions.



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Three phone lines—one each for voice mail, fax, and Internet—with the capacity to add three more lines “should I bring in assistants for telemarketing down the road.”

Three [Hewlett Packard](#) printers—one color and two black-and-white lasers

Laser fax

MLS connection

Furniture: A round table for meeting with clients, built-in bookshelves and file cabinets, ergonomic chair, and an art glass desk custom-made to suit a 6-foot-2-inch frame.


Total setup cost: More than \$30,000 in construction costs; about \$17,000 for furnishings and technology. (He estimates that the costs would be much the same in U.S. dollars, especially for the tech equipment.)

Why did he opt for high-end office digs? With custom-made, ergonomic furnishings, everything fits him well. Besides, “I want the professionalism of a good-looking office,” he says. “For clients and customers, it looks pleasing. But when the office door is closed, it looks like a residence.”

In addition, relocating his office in-house has been a money-saving coup. “Now I don't have to pay a desk fee, so I save \$300 a month—that's basically my property taxes for a year. And I can take a 20 percent tax deduction for the home office.” But he eschews the thought of leaving his franchise, since the company takes care of escrows and other administrative responsibilities.

Want to read about Jeff's proclivity for a high-tech, mobile work style? See "[Man of Tomorrow on the Move Today](#)", October 1997.

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