

Centerway Execucenter Helps Solopreneur Improve Productivity By 25%

Company Background:

Ted Goldwyn is the owner of Ted Goldwyn Writing, a commercial writing and content marketing firm based in Corning, NY. Ted started his company in November 2014, to provide thought leadership and content marketing expertise to firms in the financial services industry. Specifically, the company produces a variety of written content including white papers, case studies, blogs, social media posts, web content, and placed articles in leading industry journals.

Before starting his own business, Ted had over 25 years' experience working for mid- to large-sized corporations. He spent the past two decades in the financial services industry, serving in a variety of management roles, first with a money-center bank in Manhattan, and then with a regional credit union based in Corning.

Ted Goldwyn Writing serves clients all over the continental U.S., from Portland, OR to Wilmington, NC. The company also has several clients located in the Southern Tier, including small businesses, non-profits, and universities. Ted transacts most of his business remotely via phone and email. He does travel a few times a year, to visit with top clients or attend industry trade shows and conferences.

Challenges:

When Ted first decided to leave the corporate world to startup up his own solopreneur business, he counted on being able to work productively from his home office.

"I am fortunate enough to have a dedicated office space on the first floor of my home," Ted says, "complete with closing French doors and plenty of room for a desk, bookshelves, filing cabinets, and a multi-function printer. I also have access to reliable Wi-Fi at home, something that is somewhat rare in the rural outskirts of our region."

Despite these advantages, Ted found that working from home was more challenging than it first seemed. As a father of three school-age children, the distractions were built-in.

"Once I left my corporate job, and focused on building my business, I quickly became aware of the limitations of a home office," Ted says. "I only had about six hours of real 'focus' time, while the kids were off at school. Once 2:30 pm or so rolls around, my youngest gets off the bus, quickly followed by my two middle schoolers. And although they all try really hard to 'be quiet' when Daddy is working, they are kids, and they are going to be rowdy and raise their voices every once in a while. Plus, just having me around naturally gives them license to interrupt to ask for help getting a snack or changing the TV channel."

For Ted, this actually turned out to be the best-case scenario – during the half a year when school was in session. When the kids were on a break from school or had a scheduled half-day, he found that working from home was nearly impossible. Even with a spouse working in the school district, who was generally able to be home when the kids were off from school, the work-from-home scenario added undue stress on Ted’s family.

“My wife does her best to keep our kids occupied and out of my hair when I’m working, but it puts a lot of pressure on her,” Ted says. “And its not fair to the kids either; they should be able to relax and have fun at home, without worrying about being quiet because Dad is working.”

As if these distractions weren’t enough, Ted’s family also has two pet dogs. It turned out that they are quite active during the daytime working hours, to the detriment of Ted’s business productivity and professionalism.

“I spend a lot of time on the phone for my business,” Ted says. “Whether it is discussing a project with a client, briefing a prospect on my services, or interviewing a source for a case study or article assignment, I need to present myself professionally over the phone, or sometimes visually via Skype. Every time I took a call from a client or prospect, I was anxious because I knew that Cody or Manning might start barking on a moment’s notice at the truck driving down the street, or at the neighbor’s cat.

“I’ve had to apologize many times over the phone because my dogs were barking obnoxiously in the background. It comes off as unprofessional, makes the calls less productive, and impacts my ability to focus on the task at hand.”

Ted took several steps to address these various pain points, including establishing “quiet hours” when his children were at home, posting a “writer at work” sign on his office door, and purchasing barking collars for his two dogs. He also got in the regular habit of apologizing in advance to his clients at the beginning of each phone call, for the inevitable poor behavior of the pets.

Beyond these concerns, Ted also found it hard to focus on projects when working from home.

“Without anyone to hold me accountable, I found myself drifting to social media, or going to the kitchen for a snack, or reading the latest issue of my favorite magazine,” Ted admits. “After six months or so of this routine, I found myself longing for a more professional environment, some regular interaction with other business owners and creative professionals, and even the opportunity to dress up a bit beyond shorts and pajamas!”

Bottom line, Ted found that the home office scenario, as attractive as it was initially, was having a negative impact on his business. In his first nine months as a solopreneur, Ted was regularly achieving an average of just six productive working hours each day, and was on track to attain just half of his first-year revenue goal.

He knew something needed to change.

Solution:

Desperate to improve his situation, Ted started researching local solutions to his home-office challenge.

“I looked at some co-working and ‘incubator’ spaces in the greater Corning area, but found the available options to be very limited,” Ted says.

Ted had known the partners at Centerway Execucenter for several years through his local professional connections and his involvement in the local Rotary Club. He attended a Chamber of Commerce business after hours event hosted by the Execucenter and got a tour of the facility. Ted walked away impressed.

“Centerway Execucenter is the only solution in the local Corning area that offers true Class A office space, centrally located, with many flexible options to serve the needs of multiple types and sizes of businesses,” Ted says. “As a single person shop, I was looking for a quiet, professional office space where I can drop in as needed. I also was looking to join a community of other like-minded small business owners, to share ideas, explore potential collaboration and partnership, and socialize around the ‘water cooler’.”

Like many small business owners, Ted sought all the benefits of working in a professional corporate office environment, without the many drawbacks such as office politics, scheduled working hours, limited flexibility, and reporting to a “boss”. He found the perfect combination at Centerway Execucenter, along with the best coffee in town!

Once he decided to move his office to Centerway Execucenter, Ted found that implementation was easy and pain-free.

“It was ‘plug and play’!” Ted says. “[Centerway Execucenter partners] Al and Stu were very accommodating to my needs and requirements, and made me feel right at home from day one.

“There’s rarely a problem, but if an issue ever pops up with the printer or copier, Al is always very quick to jump on it and get the situation resolved.”

Results:

Since joining the Centerway Execucenter community in late 2015, Ted’s business has experienced real, quantifiable improvements. These include:

- ***Enhanced Productivity:*** Ted reports that his productive workday has increased by 33% on average, from 6 hours to 8 hours. As a result, his project through-put has improved by 25%, increasing capacity and improving service and timeliness to his clients.

“After moving to the Execucenter, I have employed several new productivity techniques allowing me to focus more diligently and consistently on my client projects,” Ted says. “In conjunction with a longer workday, I have seen real improvements in my productive output and ability to hit project deadlines.”

- **Fewer Distractions:** Without the distractions of kids and dogs, Ted can get more work done, and feels better about his business.

“I no longer worry about having my kids yelling, or dogs barking in the background while I’m on a client call,” Ted says. “It’s not even an issue anymore; I have much greater confidence now when I speak with a client or prospect over the phone, and my Market Street office has added a heightened sense of professionalism to my business.”

- **Greater Access to Clients and Prospects:** With a convenient location in the heart of Corning’s Gaffer District, Ted provides better service to his local clients. He’s also had the opportunity to prospect for new business, and meet with potential clients in a professional, fully-serviced office environment.

When the need arises for an in-person, confidential meeting, Ted has access to a beautifully appointed, private office (option available with some plans). Private offices may also be rented as needed for those unexpected, last-minute appointments.

“It feels more like a ‘real’ business now,” Ted says. “I’m proud to tell people I have an office on Market Street!”

- **Better Visibility:** For sole proprietors, a common challenge is how to have a visible, professional presence on a startup budget. Centerway Execucenter solves this challenge elegantly and efficiently.

“Having my name on the sign out front gives me exposure I wouldn’t have unless I rented my own private office on Market Street,” Ted says. “The Execucenter displays my marketing materials and business cards in reception, and Al and Stu have personally referred me to their connections.”

Dedicated phone lines with voicemail and Market Street business addresses are available with some plans to increase exposure and enhance visibility, access, and professional presence.

- **Access to Leading-edge Technology:** From reliable high-speed broadband Internet service, to videoconferencing equipment and high-capacity printers, Centerway Execucenter provides business owners with everything they need to plug in and get to work.

For Ted, who regularly communicates with clients and prospects via email, phone, and Skype, this level of confidence is critical to his business.

“Since I first started working out of the Execucenter, I have always been able to rely on fast, reliable Internet service,” Ted says. “It isn’t a worry for me anymore. Also, I’ve used the facility to lead remote webinars for over 100 people. That’s not something I could ever do from home!”

- **Expanded Networking Opportunities:** By joining a community of like-minded professionals and small business owners, Ted has been able to engage in numerous networking opportunities and expand his circle of influence in the Corning area. Centerway Execucenter sponsors a regular series of business seminars, known as the Lyceum Series, and periodically hosts networking and social events for the community.

“The educational seminars have helped me to grow my business, and I’ve met so many peers and potential clients through the after-hours and other networking events,” says Ted.

Beyond the many tangible advantages of having an established business office at Centerway Execucenter, Ted has discovered some surprising and unexpected benefits as well.

“Our semi-regular Friday afternoon happy hours are developing into a bit of a tradition,” Ted says. “It’s really cool getting to know my colleagues and being a part of helping the Execucenter grow into a real, vibrant community.

“But my favorite part of working at the Execucenter has to be the fresh-ground coffee. It’s the best around, always hot, and always on!”