



DOWNTOWN DIALOGUE

WORKING AT HOME NOT WORKING OUT?

BY LIZ BERGER

I am the only member of my family who doesn't have my own room.

Every evening after dinner, I set up my laptop on the bar outside my kitchen and unpack the messenger bag I lug back and forth from the office, organizing the folders and loose papers. A few hours later, I strike the set to get my makeshift desk ready for breakfast and the next day.

You know what it's like to work from home: You're not quite working and you're not quite at home. It may be my rage for order, but, without a room of one's own, somebody else's homework and bills combine with yesterday's mail, today's paper and extra Halloween candy to take over the piles of papers. My ancient fax machine is unreliable—even if we could remember how to fix it when it jams—and, while I am toying with buying a scanner, where would I put it?

Certainly not next to the phone, which invariably rings just as I'm getting started. It's always someone dear who would never call me in the office. But I'm working at home! Children, husband and dog all have urgent matters that require my immediate attention. The kitchen must be straightened, chocolate eaten.

Then, finally, it's too late for calls. Everyone's asleep, everything's neat and I'm alone. The silence is both welcome and eerie. Truth be told, I miss the hum of other people working.

The allure of working from home is no secret: It's close, convenient and cheap. But too often, working at home doesn't work. It's distracting and solitary. This is especially true if you are starting a new business, changing jobs or working freelance. You might not need, or be able to afford, a full-time office, but you might want to be around other people—to toss around ideas, compare notes or share a cup of coffee. Isn't that why David Mamet started *Writing in Restaurants*?

Now you can have it both ways. This month, the Downtown Alliance is opening the Hive at 55, a place where freelancers, entrepreneurs and small-business owners—or folks thinking about starting a business or taking on freelance work—can work independently but together, a day or a month at a time. If you live, work or have business Downtown, it's close to home, close to the subway, and close to clients, stores and restaurants.

In the New York Information Technology Center at 55 Broad Street, the Hive will be Lower Manhattan's first coworking facility—totally wired, modern and affordable. That means shared and private work space with lots of light for more than 30 people at any one time, WiFi, conference rooms, fax, printers, copiers, coffee and bike storage. It'll be a great place to write an article, prepare a pitch, edit a proposal or host a business meeting, workshop, class, networking event or meetup.

The Hive is about new ways of working in Lower Manhattan, and it is also a community partnership. The New York City Economic Development Corporation and Rudin Management are financial sponsors, and there will be special membership benefits from J&R Music and Computer World, Pace University and the Poulakakos Family restaurants, which plan member happy hours and on-site lunches. The pizza from Adrienne's might be reason enough to join.

—Liz Berger is President of the Downtown Alliance. Learn more about the Hive at 55 at www.biveat55.com or follow it on Twitter (@biveat55) or become a fan on Facebook (biveat55).

