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Two's a crowd: how to share your home and office with a partner

If you're working from home, with your partner by your side, tune into the lives of other successful partnerships to hear what keeps them motivated day to day.

Working from home and running a small business can both be challenging experiences for most people. But what's it like for couples that choose to do both?

Craig and Gilda, work on separate businesses under the one roof at their home in Footscray, Melbourne. It's an experience that's helped bring them closer together.

Craig founded [Ernest Studio](#) with a desire to work on something of his own; something he believed in. He'd had enough of working 9 to 5 and set up a studio at home. Today Craig designs and makes frames, tables, stools and timber homewares.

Driven by environmental issues, Craig developed 'Waste Not, Want Not' - a project that converts un-useable materials into useable products. In 2012, he won Best Concept Award at the Australian International Furniture Fair for a foldable stool.

But according to Craig, if it weren't for Gilda, he'd be working in the studio 24 hours a day, seven days a week – which isn't exactly sustainable. A self-confessed planner, Craig says Gilda has helped him see that life isn't just about work.

Meanwhile, Gilda didn't exactly plan to start a jewellery business. It was just an idea that sparked when a small piece of timber in Craig's studio caught her eye. She took the timber, eventually turned it into a necklace, which a friend then offered to buy.

Gilda now designs and handcrafts jewellery for her business, [Kisah](#) – which means 'story' in Bahasa Indonesia, the Indonesian national language. Her products are sold at design markets and through her online store. She creates jewellery from rope, metal and recycled wood.

Craig and Gilda sit down to breakfast every Monday morning to chat, check in and schedule the week ahead. While they admit to having very different approaches in their respective businesses, they feel their personalities complement each other, rather than clash.

“The best thing about having a partner who also runs a small business is that his good day is my bad day; my good day, his bad day,” says Gilda.

Craig describes Gilda as more relaxed about solving problems and finding the right path to follow. “Gilda’s impulsiveness makes me more productive,” says Craig. “And I think my planning helps her to be more organised in how she runs her business.”

Craig and Gilda aren’t the only couples living together and sharing a home-based work space.

In Newcastle, New South Wales, the [Bike Bag Dude](#) operates a fairly hectic business from his home studio. Kedan Griffen designs, sews and distributes custom-made, ultra-light bike touring bags with his partner Kath, and a toddler-aged son in tow.

“To do what I do, working from home, being able to survive in the industry I love, without having a boss, I can’t figure out how you can top that,” says Kedan.

“Keeping the business running for the last twelve months has been hard,” he says. “I wasn’t prepared for how much time I’d lose Kath with the birth of our child. You don’t realise how much work she does until she’s not doing it.”

“When it’s been busy – I’ve called on mates to help out. You have to have support around you. But my whole drive for the future is not to have to work for somebody else. If I can continue doing this, I will,” says Kedan.

When your motivation is in sync, working together, at home as a couple can be fuelled by a common goal. Whether that’s an agreed knock off-hour or a month of holidays, knowing why you’re both working in a small business is essential.

When there are no rules to follow, writing your own can be a messy journey of trial and error. But there’s fun to be had as well. Hearing how other partnerships work together from home can help keep your own expectations in check.

Melbourne couple, Poppy Lane and Scott Gibson have been running [Pop and Scott](#) since 2012. Coming from different backgrounds – Poppy was a florist; Scotty, a trained plumber – the couple have a passion for making furniture together.

Speaking on the topic of collaboration, they shared their dream of bringing like-minded creative people together in a collaborative environment at the

popular [Creative Mornings](#) event series, and spoke of the challenges in starting a new workspace together.

“Avoid competition and conflict between businesses. Nurture each other and take care of each other. Respect what others do and what their strengths are.”

While they may have been talking about the businesses in their collaborative space, these words could apply to any couple working together from home. Working out your individual strengths, how you work differently and what you need to be productive, can actually boost your small business.

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