

Footnote: The Right To Work Independently

Where the nature of one's work allows, there is no good reason why one should not be allowed to work at home. But corporate employers will have none of it. [PDF]

Rightful Market Share

The Institute of Manpower Services produces an annual report about the information technology industry. It is called the IT Manpower Monitor. The 1989 issue stated that the IT manpower market in the United Kingdom:

- was currently worth £20,000,000,000 a year,
- was currently growing at 15% a year, and
- was currently serviced by under 250,000 IT professionals.

This works out as a market value per head of £80,000.

I am an artisan of the IT industry whose skills and experience profile matches precisely that which the IMS says is most in demand and for which the [shortage](#) is most acute. As such, I think I should have a right to £80,000 worth of that £20bn market.

Becoming Home Based

A universal wish among almost every employee and contractor I have spoken to on the subject has been eventually to leave his job and set up on his own. Their vision is akin to the small self-sufficient agrarian of old. Their desire is to manage their own resources and be in charge of their own economic and personal destinies. Their notion is of a liberation from slavery. Most do not make a point of voicing this publicly. Most relegate it to a daydream. But it is what they really want.

Due to [family circumstances](#) in 1976, I was forced to make this dream a reality. I had a simple choice. *Either* I could work at home and keep my family. *Or* I could keep my normal job and have my wife committed to an institution and my daughter to local authority care. I chose the former.

The nature of my work is such that there is no practical reason why I should not do it at home. I therefore had my house extended to include [a study](#), which I equipped with the best office furniture and equipment I could afford. My study was better equipped and far more conducive to work in than anything a large company could have offered me. I had all the modern communications aids I could need. I managed, with great effort and difficulty, to make a living. I was keen to build a good reputation. Whenever I got the chance to serve a customer I would always walk the second mile with them to try to get the job done well and quickly.

Additional Advantages

Based on my experiences and constraints in the 15 years I ran my business, I have experienced many advantages from being home-based. Working at and from home:

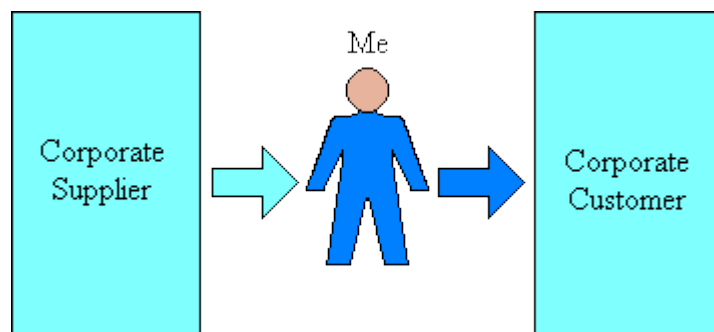
- eradicates the fatigue of daily commuting
- allows one to keep local social ties not having to move to find new work
- allows parents to raise children without forced out-of-season school changes
- allows parents to meet children from school and
- allows children to see how their parents work and what their work is about
- allows nation-wide sporadic demands for expertise to be met without trauma
- reduces traffic and hence pollution.

Above all, in my case, it meant that I could look after my wife and daughter and keep the family together.

Corporate Intolerance

But, in all but a very few one-off cases, the corporate establishment will have none of it. They generally won't buy products or services from an individual freelancer. On the few occasions when they do, they frequently never seem to get around to paying. And quite apart from this, I found very early on that if I were to breathe so much as a word about my wife's illness, their doors would shut instantly.

Some of my projects involved buying equipment from a corporate supplier, adding value in terms of software, and then selling it on to a corporate client.



In almost every case, the corporate supplier has approached my corporate client to try to circumvent me, even though they did not have the software expertise necessary to complete the project. My corporate supplier would then try to force me to become subcontracted to them for the duration of the project, which circumstances would not allow me to do anyway. Had they succeeded, the only difference would have been that the corporate supplier would have got my profit element of the project, while I, having done all the marketing and won the contract in the first place, would have ended up with a standard per-hour rate for finishing off my own software which would then have become their copyright.

The Corporate Agenda

The whole motive behind this circumvention and back-stabbing is of course profit. The corporates want the profit element from every artisan's work. This means that they cannot afford to let artisans go directly to the marketplace - the customer. All artisans must be relentlessly rounded up and safely corralled within corporate employment, being uncompromisingly required to commute daily to spend all their prime productive time on the bland corporate premises.

To this end, corporates spend vast amounts of revenue on mass-media advertising to establish their images and the reputations of their products. They thereby cut off from the direct marketplace all who cannot match their massive marketing spend. The result is that the individual artisan is, one way or another, essentially locked out of his rightful share of the market for his skills, which for an IT professional like me, according to the 1989 IT Manpower Monitor, would have been £80,000 a year. I was thus effectively barred, by corporate marketing and bullying, from free access to my rightful share of the market I was trained and moulded to serve.

A Truly Free Market

I believe that the so-called 'free' market should be made free to all - irrespective of size and means. Access must be by right not might. I believe it to be my right to have direct access to my fair share of the market without being harassed by crushing competition from the customer-impressing images projected by large corporates with bottomless marketing budgets. This could never be achieved in an unmanaged market. There has to be a referee.

Whether I work directly through my own account, or as an employee through a large corporate, I would be doing exactly the same work for the same customer. The only differences would be that as an employee:

- I would not have quite the same natural motivation to do the job as well,
- my qualified decision-making would probably be interfered with by a middle manager desperate to justify his existence, and
- most of the income my work would generate would go towards my employer's profit.

Some of this profit would then fuel my employer's corporate image through expensive public relations and marketing exercises to build up and maintain a bastion against any attempt by such as me to gain my small-but-rightful direct share of the market.

Right To Work At Home

I believe that every working person, where the nature of their work makes it practical, should have the right to be able to work at home if they wish. I think the normal home of the future should incorporate rooms and facilities for work. Homes should not be the minimal brick boxes of today stuffed together in the maximum permissible number to the acre to maximise builders' and land developers' profits.

I believe the right to trade is a fundamental human right. But self-employment is riddled with complex bureaucracy and legal vulnerability, which the puppet governments of capitalism seem to have no desire to ease. Often the whole status of self-employment - namely the right freely to trade - is subjected to an added restriction, such that the self-employed find themselves, by default, working in ever-greier areas of the law.

[Parent Document](#) | ©December 1996 Robert John Morton

© This content is free and may be reproduced unmodified in its entirety, including all headers and footers, or as “fair usage” quotations that are attributed as follows: “ - [article name] by Robert John Morton <http://robmorton.20m.com/>”