

# Taking a Meeting With Batman Watching

By **MARK HENRICKS**

*Editor's Note: This piece is part of a series, Working from Home, in which StartupJournal speaks with people about how they manage working from home. This week, Denise Dorman, a marketing communications consultant, tells writer Mark Henricks how she and her husband, artist Dave Dorman, meet with clients in their Geneva, Ill., home.*

Both my husband and I work from home, and we do many client meetings here. My husband is an artist who is considered one of the top Star Wars artists. He also does Indiana Jones, Alien, Alien v. Predator and beautiful Batman work. Our house has Batman paintings hanging everywhere. My business clients who are unaware of what my husband does initially think I'm some sort of a Batman freak. Once I explain, they visibly relax and get into the fun of it and want to see more.

Dave's clients range from Lucasfilm (limited edition prints) to Hasbro (toy packaging). He also does commission work like fine art canvas paintings. I do marketing consulting for clients including Kevin J. Anderson, co-author of the Dune novels, and Diamond Amplification, a Texas-based boutique guitar amp designer and manufacturer.

We have a dining room that becomes the boardroom for our more formal meetings. It's a lot like a meeting room. There's a big table so everybody can spread out. It has comfy chairs. The coffee pot is just around the corner. I sometimes do videos that explain new technology and, if we're doing video work, we can go right in to the living room and watch video.

For less-formal meetings, my clients meet with me in my naturally cool basement office. Our house is about 3,000 square feet, and Dave works in one of the bedrooms upstairs. When we lived in Florida we had a giant studio with northern exposures. We're going to recreate that here once we sell our house in Florida.

Meanwhile, I have the basement, and our son Jack, who will be 2 in November, runs around the second floor. The dining room is also on the first floor. So if we have a meeting here, Jack usually goes to the neighbor, who is our nanny on Mondays and Fridays.

One afternoon, however, I had an interior design client here and our son belted out, "Daddy! I farted! (pause) Again?" There was nothing to do crack up, which I did. Luckily, so did the client. As it turned out, my client had a son as well, and he has since visited our home again because he is fascinated with the type of work Dave does.

We have meetings about a month, if I had to average it out. It's usually me having the meeting. One of Dave's clients is based in Chicago and we usually meet with them here. Other than that, it's mostly my meetings. It has been great with local clients. A lot of my clients are either in Los Angeles or New York, so that's a phone thing.

When Dave doesn't meet clients here, he meets with them in their own offices because he has to have room to spread out to show his portfolio. You have to be careful about having meetings in public places like coffee shops, where it attracts attention and it can be disruptive.

I have one client who's strictly corporate and not used to operating in these surroundings. But they really have a good attitude about it and at least are willing to accept that this is my working environment. Most of my clients, though, are people I know and who have gotten to know me and all the crazy stuff in my house. Most are kind of excited to come here and see everything. It's like an art gallery. People come over and want to meet Dave. So for me, it has been a benefit.

One day, we'll put in the full studio above the garage. There'll be room for a meeting table up there. But the Batman paintings are staying. I love them. It sounds crazy, but you should see them. They're beautiful.

-- *Mr. Henricks, an Austin, Texas, journalist, is the author of "Not Just a Living: The Complete Guide to Creating a Business That Gives You a Life" (Perseus Books, 2002).*

*If you'd like to share your working from home story, please email [sjeditor@dowjones.com](mailto:sjeditor@dowjones.com).*

*Email your comments to [sjeditor@dowjones.com](mailto:sjeditor@dowjones.com).*

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