

How Business Owner Effectiveness Can Add To The Bottom line

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As a business owner how often do you feel stressed or short of time? What would you do with an extra two hours a week? That's over 140 hours or 17 workdays a year! So what is an extra 17 days worth to your bottom line? If you'd like more time to focus on important business building projects or even to take a vacation, it may be worth its weight in gold.

These six steps are designed to support business owners and management teams in reducing stress and improving productivity. It is a process for making way for increased business activity. Everyone in the company can follow this system to coordinate, communicate, flow paper and manage time for the most productive administration of any small business.

If you're building a business, additional work flow and paper will be a big part of your upcoming experience. Without anticipating increased business activity, business growth will feel more like a burden than a sign of success. If your goal is to reduce stress, enhance personal satisfaction and be prepared for more success, then let's get on with it.

Simple Steps to Personal Effectiveness

1) Zone your office—departmentalize! Create a place for everything and keep everything in its place. Using the proper receptacles for every piece of information is key. Determine zones for all aspects of your business: client or customer file zone, employee records zone, financial records zone, administrative file zone, personal project file zone, supply zone and so on. Client files, project files, financial records and employee files may be kept in a locking file cabinet. Project drawings or odd six documents should have their own receptacle. Working files for task oriented projects should be in a close desk or credenza drawer.

Your organizing zone is the most important zone. It's your desk-top on your computer and in the real world.. Keep it free and clear of clutter. Create files and sub-files within your computer desktop by subject. Stage your desk with a blotter, in/out boxes, pencil box, and business card holder. Everything else should be put away when you're not working with it. The placement of your computer should not interfere with ample space necessary to your organizing zone .

2) Take time to prepare three times a day. Select a quiet space and schedule times every day to review to-dos and prioritize. The more relaxed you are during this organizational update time, the better prepared and focused you'll become. After all, focus on priorities is a major key to success.

3) Use the right tools for the job. Select the right time management system. Manual or mobile, it must be simple to use, especially if any part of your job requires work in the field. Also, since you will come and go from your office, you need your system with you 24/7 for maximum effectiveness.

Block your schedule by consolidating groups of similar tasks. Use your ideal schedule as a target to shoot for. Schedules are alive and will change; however, priorities are more likely to be met when you take the time to set them to begin with.

Prepare a to-do clip board for greater mobility. Make sure your list has a column for priority A,B,C, deadline dates, task notes and action steps.

Use stackable in-box, out-box and to-file boxes. Mark the boxes and keep them empty.

Sort your in-box by: 1) to-dos, 2) send on to another, 3) file, 4) toss. Take time to file as you work from your in-box —no less than once per week. If paper is piling up past an inch in your to-file box, file more frequently or delegate.

Set up a database. Computerized databases like ACT or Access, or even Excel and others are wonderful computerized systems with templates ready to receive your important numbers, names, addresses and contact history information. Online systems abound.

These days everybody got a cell phone with contact capturing capabilities. Make sure yours is up-to-speed.

Even if you don't have a computer, a rolodex is a must.

Manual card file rolodexes, believe it or not, are still available in every office supply store. A card file system allows you to file business cards you collect in alphabetical order and you won't have to spend extra dough on special die cut cards. A card file rolodex box can also be a receptacle for collecting cards prior to inputting into your database.

Set up working files on tasks you know will amass paper. Keep a good supply of manila folders accessible. If you think the task will not require amassing more documents, create a working file for 'Follow-up'. Identify time to work your Follow-up file on your schedule, from your to do list. Handwrite the tasks, customer's, supplier's or vendor's names on folders in pencil. When you're finished with the tasks, make sure there isn't an existing file on your subject already located in your office. If there is, file your working documents in the existing file. If there is no existing file, prepare a permanent label and file it.

Batch phone calls. If you're not the receptionist or main customer service support person, have messages taken for you. Be sure to have them use carbonless message pads. Carbonless pads allow your message taker to access important numbers later if you've taken the original or it has been lost. Designate a special place and specific time to pick up or receive messages. Incorporate voice mail in your communication management. Be sure to let callers know when you will be returning calls, so when they leave a message, they know you're still attentive, even though you're not available to them at that moment. It is crucial to return all phone calls within 4 hours. Even if you don't have answers for the caller, you can update them on your progress and set a realistic time line to expect your follow-through. Batch your return calls and select a time in your schedule to make callbacks two to three times per day, depending on volume. For the best customer-service possible, if you cannot return a call personally, designate a someone in your office to do it for you. These steps save hours over the course of a month or so.

Schedule work sessions as meetings. Be prepared and be on time with and agenda and goal, your to-do list, time management system and any file related to the project(s) your working on.

Schedule work flow coordination meetings at least once per day. As business-owner or manager, meet with all team members, separately or as a group, depending on project requirements. Meet as a group if you're all working on the same projects. Meet individually if you have

separate projects. Work flow coordination benefits everyone involved. This is the meeting where short-term priorities are clarified and bottom-line important information is communicated with the best interest of the business, customers and each other in mind. Your agenda should cover reviewing to-dos, delegating or coordinating tasks and recognizing specific accomplishments. This meeting should take no longer than 45 minutes. Meet once per week using the same technique for a Team Strategy Update. This meeting may take 1 to 1&1/2 hours depending on the number of people involved. Add to your weekly agenda; what worked well last week in your coordination efforts and what you need to change for it to work better. Everyone involved in this session needs to create a working file for this activity and track progress together. Follow-through is essential to the success of well-coordinated work flow meetings.

4) Make your system a habit. Successful people embrace change. Although changes in personal habit are challenging, understand that resistance to a change in habit is normal, not a character flaw. Notice your resistance, then coach yourself through it! Overcome the urge to resist by anchoring your thoughts in the results you seek, rather than the task. Do the task anyway. If the results you seek are important to you, then the only person you're letting down by not following through is YOU! When you forget to follow-through with your new habit or succumb to resistance, forgive yourself quickly and get back to your system as fast as possible.

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to a change in habit is normal, not a character flaw’*

5) Go back to basics. When you start to feel overwhelmed, chances are you’re not using your system. Refer back to this article and review the steps and the system you developed. Objectively determine which step you’re missing, then go back to basics and stick to them! Mini-refreshers are always a part of a successful manager’s agenda.

6) Self-evaluate every week. Be your own supervisor. Rate your performance based on compliance to your system, on a scale of one through ten, ten being the best. If you are below eight, ask yourself what you will do differently this week to bring up your score for next week. Take it a step at a time.