

# 7 tips to improving your team's time management

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How many times have you been on an important phone call when one of your staff members comes into your office or lingers by your desk, stands there and waits for you to finish the call so that they can tell you something? This is both distracting and discourteous to you, and can destroy your focus during the call. In addition, your staff member is wasting their own time waiting for you to finish.



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Time management is about how you organise your day, your tasks and workload. As a business owner, do you know how well your staff members use their time to benefit the business? Do you really know whether they, and you, are getting the full value? Your team can save your time and theirs if you take the initiative as well as encourage them to be time-conscious. Here are some ideas on how you can go about organising your team and save time in the process.

## 1. Watch out for indicators of disorganised staff

There are messages that indicate that the time of the human component in your business is not being used to best advantage. Know how to spot these messages. They include:

- Employees seem to spend much time off-task chatting and socialising
- Staff morale is low probably because work is no longer challenging
- You are frequently interrupted by staff seeking assistance, instruction or direction
- Staff assignments often need to be redone because of poor quality
- Deadlines are often missed or postponed

## 2. Find out how your staff spends their time

Before staff can manage their time more effectively, it is very important that they, and you, know how they are currently using their time. You might want to keep a time/task schedule, entering an employee's name, the task assigned, the date assigned, your estimate of the completion date, actual completion date and comments on unexpected interruptions. Alternatively, have staff keep an accurate record in their own diaries or construct a simple matrix indicating times and

tasks. This is all valuable information for future discussions with individual staff members.

### **3. Help staff organise their work areas**

By observing what staff do and how they do it, you can identify efficiencies that can be introduced. You may want to, for example, consider the office layout. Proximity to essential office equipment like printer, copiers etc is very important. If your employees have to walk the length of the office to use a copier, you will have detected a real time-waster. Office landscaping also improves productivity by not only enhancing visual appeal, but also by reducing distractions.

### **4. Do a skills audit for your staff**

Employees with the skills necessary to complete their tasks will be less likely to interrupt others by asking for help. It is vital that you do a skills audit of your staff and then take necessary action in closing the gaps you identify. For example, you may find that a member of your staff is using only 40% of a machine's capability. Training in that area will significantly improve the individual's confidence as well as productivity. Skilled staff members are more productive than those who are less skilled.

### **5. Teach your staff time saving techniques**

Never assume that everyone knows about time saving techniques. You have already identified (point 1 above) that some of your staff are wasting time to the detriment of your business. Teach staff about your own time-savers which may include:

- Allocating tasks for periods when you will be most productive
- Setting daily, weekly and monthly priorities and sticking to them
- Continuing to ask "What is the best use of my time right now?"

### **6. Ensure that you are not part of the problem**

Once you and your staff have identified the list of time-wasters, check if "the boss" appears on the list, and then find out what aspects of your behaviour needs attention. It could be that you need to adjust your behaviour in one or some of the following ways:

- Avoid interrupting staff unnecessarily
- Ensure that staff are not kept waiting unnecessarily
- Ensure that staff are not kept waiting for an appointment with you
- Stop being indecisive
- Communicate more clearly or more frequently

### **7. Finally, lead by example**

By your actions, demonstrate that you disapprove of time wasting.

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

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