



## Steps to Review Your Office Systems

Running an efficient business is all about continuously improving and 'tweaking' your office management systems so that they grow with your business and not hinder your business.

But why do you need efficient office systems in place? Here are some answers!

- ▶ To quickly and easily find important contact information.
- ▶ To be able to respond to client's requests straightaway.
- ▶ So that you can immediately submit a proposal.
- ▶ To keep track of your business.
- ▶ To be able to follow-up with clients and contacts.
- ▶ So that you can stay on track with your projects.
- ▶ To monitor your latest marketing campaign.

Sometimes though problems don't become apparent with your office systems until you actually start using them -- and then you may find out that they're not working in the way that you'd hoped.

So what can you do about it?

Step #1 Look at where the problems are.

Are you constantly searching

around looking for an email address? Or cannot tell at a glance if your project is on track? Or you don't know your cashflow situation?

Step #2 Analyse what percentage of your time is being spent on administrative tasks.

Keep a diary for a week of how you are spending your time. At the end of the week look it over and see what percentage of your time is being spent on these jobs. Could this time be better spent on income-generating activities? Or market research?

Step #3 Compile a list of all non-income generating tasks that you currently do.

Could some of these be delegated? Would it help if you took on an assistant?

Once you have followed these 3 steps you should have a good idea of where your time is being spent, what your biggest time drains are, and where you can make improvements. You will be well on your way to deciding if you need to partner with a Virtual Assistant and will be able to see exactly where you need the support.

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# Concern for family issues may boost performance

Employee support programs are vulnerable to elimination in times of economic downturn due to bottom-line-only decisions according to Susan Lambert, Associate Professor in the School of Social Service Administration at the University of Chicago.

In a new book, *Work and Life Integration: Organizational, Cultural and Individual Perspectives*, co-edited by Susan Lambert and Ellen Ernst Kossek, Lambert argues that the business case for providing workers with supports for their personal lives is currently outdated and needs to be changed. "The field's quest to make a business case may have come at a cost," Lambert said. "Many early, formal employee supports largely operate as employer supports. They were designed to help workers keep their personal responsibilities from interfering with their job involvement and performance. The more time you spend with your children, the less time you're likely to have for your work."

Lambert considers that this attitude is slowly changing. In particular, a group of not-for-profit organizations concerned with work and family issues has begun to argue that the business case should be addressed at the bigger picture and move from "a narrow focus on short-term profitability to a longer-term strategy of

investing in employee and community well-being."

For example, programs such as on-site day care have been offered and promoted by some businesses as a means to improve profitability by reducing employee absenteeism and turnover, said Lambert, who, along with doctoral student Elaine Waxman, also reports on research conducted in Chicago-area corporations in the book.

Still, a business case needs to be made for accommodating family interests when dealing with employees. Employers must group work-life policies with other human resource strategies that invest in workers, Lambert said.

Contributors to the book contend that firms should be reminded that they gain a competitive advantage when they pursue their profits through quality enhancement, rather than cost containment. In doing that, they need to discuss ways employees add value to service and production.

"Part of making the case for the importance of workers' contributions to firm success would be to highlight how lower-level workers are on the front lines of customer service and technological innovation," Lambert said. That position would show that firms gain competitive advantages when they design jobs that allow employees to add value to firms through their work.



Those changes provide the basis of broader policy improvements discussed in the book. Current research also shows that laws to improve situations for workers seeking to deal with family responsibilities have been ineffective. The Family and Medical Leave Act, which allows workers unpaid leave to care for newborn children or other family members with serious health problems, is available to workers at about 11 percent of the nation's work places and covers 55 percent of the work force.

Lambert and Waxman found that workers in lower-level jobs often do not receive sick or vacation time or employer-sponsored health

insurance. "Thus, an important step in a new business case would be to focus on barriers to distributing supports that are available in many work places today, at least on the books," she said.

Lambert said employers and researchers should work together to develop a new understanding of the role of work-life issues. "It has been our experience that few employers systematically collect data to quantitatively or qualitatively evaluate the effectiveness of their work-life policies."

Longitudinal studies would help employers define the links between work and family life, and multi-method studies also could contribute to understanding the causes and outcomes of frictions between workers and the workplace, Lambert said.

Lambert added that in general, research in the work-life field needs to become more rigorous, so, for example, definitions of various terms have more consistent meanings, and so researchers look beyond two-income, married couples and their problems to examine the issues that affect low-income, single heads-of-households. Researchers also have focused a great deal on individuals and their family needs and not enough on the nature of work itself, she said.

Work and Life Integration: Organizational, Cultural and

Individual Perspectives is intended to overcome that problem.

"The book chapters help direct attention to the ways in which conditions of employment are critical to worker and family well-being, revealing multifaceted and reciprocal relationships," she said.

Lambert examined hospitality, transportation, retail and financial service jobs, and found a high degree of turnover and very limited opportunities for workers to organize their work life around family needs. She also found that in some workplaces, temporary workers fill lower-level jobs with low wages and few benefits. These temporary workers share the workload with regular employees who have job-related benefits. In general, employers often distinguish jobs by status rather than tasks, which is leading to increased stratification in the workplace, she said.

"Given the widening gap in well-being between citizens lodged at the top and the bottom of America's income distribution, it seems important to develop insights into how workplaces might play a role in diminishing inequality in those opportunities essential to balancing work and family life, and ultimately, to improving the well-being of workers, their families and communities," she said.

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## Employees addicted to social networking sites

More than half of employees (55% in the U.S. and 52% in the U.K.) are using Internet social networks at work according to Internet security company 8e6 Technologies. Even more (72% in the U.S. and 80% in the U.K.) think they should be given full access to social networking sites for personal reasons.

This notion seems to be held across all age groups - especially in the United Kingdom. Their use of the Internet could have serious implications for business systems as the most popular sites viewed at work on both sides of the Atlantic include video- and applications-heavy Web 2.0 destinations, particularly social networking and news sites.

Eric Lundbohm, vice president of marketing at 8e6 Technologies commented:

"As part of our expansion into the U.K. market earlier this year, 8e6 has devoted a significant amount of time and resources to understanding the Internet habits of employees on both sides of the pond. The survey highlights the similarities and differences in

both Internet use and workplace culture

"While there are many strategic business reasons why employees in both countries are on social networking, news and streaming media sites, IT must be aware there are also security and regulatory risks associated with employee Internet use. Proper Internet Use Policy education and effective monitoring tools are critical to solving these issues and keeping employees safe, compliant and on-task."

The survey also shows that 63% of respondents were busy dealing with personal e-mails at work - yet another potential productivity drain and security hole, according to 8e6 Technologies. When major news or sporting events are happening, 51% of U.S. employees and 55% of their British counterparts regularly check for online updates during working hours, putting more demands on bandwidth as they watch highlights on streaming media.

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## How to get the most out of your Database

Imagine how much simpler your life would be if you had all your business contacts together in one place. One click of your mouse would reveal how effective your latest marketing campaign has been. Know at a glance which of your products/services is the most profitable.

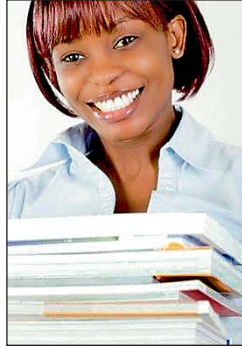
Your custom-designed database will put this information right at your fingertips. I'd like to share with you my tips for ensuring that your database gives you the business information you need, when you need it!

What is a database? A database is a collection of information relating to a particular topic kept together in one place, for you to

access whenever you need. You can use a database to simplify your:

**MARKETING CAMPAIGN**-set up a database to plan your marketing campaign; track results of your marketing campaign; or analyse trends in your marketing campaign.

**CLIENT & CONTACT MANAGEMENT**-set up a database to keep track of your clients and contacts; analyse your business-which products/services are the most profitable; or see which clients are buying which product/service.



**FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT**-set up a database to keep track of your spending; manage your invoices to clients; or monitor overdue invoices.

**MEMBERSHIP ORGANIZATIONS**-set up a database to keep track of members; send out membership renewal letters; or monitor subscriptions.

Your list for database uses will likely be much longer-just brainstorm a list of all the places where consolidated information would make your life easier!

## Demands of a job and perception of workload

When Work and Family Conflict, Men Are More Likely Than Women to Leave Their Jobs

Male and female employees are confronted with conflicts between work and family but men who believe they have a heavy workload are more likely to leave their jobs than their female counterparts. This is the conclusion of a Texas A&M University study, conducted by Ann Huffman, a doctoral student in psychology; Dr. Stephanie Payne, a Texas A&M professor of psychology; and Carl Castro of Walter Reed Army Research Institute. Their study examined whether the time demands of a job and perception of workload affected male workers more than women - and if the differences were enough to make male, more than female employees, want to leave their jobs.



"The short answer is 'yes,' gender does make a difference," Huffman says.

Their finding was presented at the recent Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology's annual conference in Orlando.

"I think a lot of the time when people think about work-family conflict, they immediately think of female employees - that they would be the ones to experience the conflict more than men, but that was not what we found," Payne says.

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# Motivating Top Talent

Two recent reports offer guidance on motivating and developing talented employees in the current global economic downturn.

### Motivating And Retaining Top Talent

A report from OnPoint Consulting identifies strategies for motivating and retaining top talent in the current economic climate when the emphasis on bonus payments is no longer possible or appropriate. Previous research has found that earnings and benefits have a 2 per cent impact on job satisfaction and engagement compared to 70 per cent provided by job quality and workplace support.

The report suggests the following survival strategies:

- ▶ Create a sense of purpose - Engagement and retention improves when people understand how they connect to the "Big Picture" and how they make a difference.
- ▶ Provide meaningful work - Allowing people to do what they do best and make a significant contribution is key to engagement and retention.
- ▶ Solicit ideas - Involvement in decisions gives people a sense of control



in uncertain times, shows them their opinions matter, and improves decision acceptance.

- ▶ Let people know where they stand - Setting tough but realistic goals is motivating even in a tough environment.
- ▶ Enhance trust and communication - Trust is built when leaders improve credibility by being candid, demonstrate reliability by ensuring their actions are consistent with business objectives and values, and are accessible.

Rick Lepsinger, president of OnPoint Consulting commented:

"Feeling connected to the people you work with also helps create a sense of purpose.... Providing opportunities to learn and grow is icing on the cake.... Clear goals are only part of the equation. People need regular feedback so they know when they are on track and recognition when they achieve key milestones....The more people feel you are focused on them, rather than on yourself, the more they trust you."

### Employee Goals and Talent Development

A report from SumTotal® Systems Inc., a global provider of talent development solutions, argues that implementing effective, universally-accepted goal setting for employees, coupled with a system for managing and tracking these processes can enable HR managers to make a significant contribution to improved organizational performance.

Richard Oyen, director of HR and talent development said:

"With the current economic forecast, it is now more important than ever to make sure employees' goals reflect the

organization's overall goals to ensure everyone is working toward the same mission. By helping to set organizational alignment, HR departments have the ability to impact their company like never before and create significant productivity improvements."

The report offers the following guidelines for the involvement of HR in employee goal setting:

1. Know the goals - HR should be involved when senior managers plan annual goals to be aware of underlying issues and challenges.
2. Get buy-in - The executive team should support HR's efforts to align goals and help communicate the importance of the program.
3. Cascade goals - Once goals are set at the top of the organization, they should work their way down to all employees.
4. Ensure consistency - As goals are established further down the organization, HR can assist by creating standards and monitoring consistency.
5. Hold everyone accountable - Managers should ensure goals are measurable with specific deadlines and then hold employees accountable.
6. Reinforce through development - Ensure that employees have skills and tools to achieve established goals using development plans monitored by HR.

## More Fun at Work: Is it another fringe benefit for highly paid employees?

The best paid employees get the highest material benefits from working, but it also seems that they have the richest social lives.

A study published in a recent issue of the journal *Social Science Quarterly* found that highly paid workers were more likely to participate in social activities with co-workers. The highly paid also reported greater cohesion and solidarity among their colleagues.

"The social attractions of the workplace are strongest for those who are already rewarded with the biggest paychecks," said Randy Hodson, author of the study and professor of sociology at Ohio State University.

According to Hodson, highly-paid employees tend to have jobs with more freedom and autonomy in which they can interact with their co-workers and develop friendships. They are also more likely to work in teams in which interaction with others is both necessary and encouraged.

On the other hand, lower-paid workers - for example, those in man-



ufacturing - are likely to spend more time working with things, rather than people, and may not have the time to interact with their colleagues.

The research was based on a detailed analysis of 124 book-length studies of employees in a variety of workplace settings. Occupations included meat packers, taxi drivers, lawyers, doctors and people from a wide range of other jobs.

Hodson and three graduate students organized and coded information from all of these books to measure the degree and type of social interaction at a variety of workplaces from around the world. Hodson was then able to build a data set that allowed quantitative, statistical comparisons of different workplaces and different kinds of employees.

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