HR Elite

Homeworking Toolkit

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HR Elite have designed a Homeworking Toolkit to support and guide Managers in the effective management of Homeworkers which includes 26 essential checklists, guides and documents (full list below). Please also find three extracts as examples of what you can expect from the toolkit.

HR Elite Homeworking Toolkit - £99 plus VAT

Contents

Guide to Good Time Management

Many tools exist for assisting with managing time and it is useful to know the most well used ones, practice them and find out what works for you. This hand out provides a guide and tips and should be used as a reference for identifying your own best way of managing what time you have.

The Basics

Write a 'to do' list and look at it realistically. If it helps, score each task as follows:

1. Urgent and important
2. Urgent – not important (is there another way to do these? Delegate?)
3. Important – but not urgent (you'll need to plan for these)
4. Not important and not urgent – do you really need to do these?

How much work we get done is limited by the number of hours available to do it in, and by the interruptions and unexpected events that seem to be an everyday part of life. Your schedule needs to reflect these realities. After all, the whole point of time management is to decrease your stress, as well as to increase your productivity.

Block out essential tasks

In your calendar, block out the essential tasks that you must make time for, no matter what. These are the regular tasks or events that take up your time. If you hold a stand-up meeting every morning, for example, block that out. If you need to make time to discuss issues with your team, schedule this too, and so on. Essentially, you need to make time for the regular, essential activities.

Block out contingency time

It's a good idea to block out time for handling those unexpected problems that crop up from time to time, so that you can deal with them comfortably, as they arise. These can be things like answering complex, non-routine customer service queries, that no-one else can deal with.

We're not suggesting that you try to schedule interruptions – that's clearly impossible! However, when you give yourself extra time each day to complete unforeseen but essential tasks, you'll have sufficient "wiggle-room" to make up for lost time.

Schedule high-priority tasks

Using your To-Do List, schedule time for your important and urgent items. These are the A and B tasks that you can't avoid. Try to block out adequate time to do them and, where possible, rearrange your essential items to accommodate them.

Use "discretionary time" for high importance/low urgency projects

If there's any free time left in your schedule, this is your "discretionary time." You should use this to work on high importance/low urgency tasks, such as researching a potential new customer, or on developing the skills that will help you to achieve your career goals.

Refer back to your To-Do List and work your way down through your tasks. Identify those that you want to do, even though they're not top priority. Ask yourself whether they really need to be done and remove the ones that don't. Slot your remaining tasks into your schedule.

The rules that we nearly always forget when setting timescales

The 'domestic' side of business always takes up more time than we allow. When setting objectives and tasks, you should allow at least 30% more in your timetable for the following:

- Filing
- Filling in reports
- Phone calls
- Coffee breaks
- Travelling
- Tidying
- Personal breaks
- Letters
- Eating
- Meetings
- Email
- etc. . .

Interruptions and unexpected events always make your timetable longer. When setting timetables and tasks, allow extra time for surprises or one-offs, such as:

- Illness
- Family crises
- Visitors
- Deliveries etc

We must prioritise when setting timescales

You've got your list of what is to be done and that is half the battle. The next most important thing is to prioritise how you're going to deal with the items on the list. If you fail to do this, you can easily end up hopelessly switching from task to task and never actually achieving anything.

There are four attributes to identify for each task in the list: importance; imminence; fixed or movable; and high or low return on effort.

Importance
Do other activities depend on getting this task done (tidying up your filing system, ordering stationery, maintaining your vehicle)?
Do other people's tasks depend on your getting this task done (for example, setting tasks for others)?
Does the value of this task outweigh the value of other tasks (is conducting an appraisal more important than tidying up your office or is seeing a customer more important than filling in your expenses sheet?)?

Imminence
Must this task be done by a particular time? Is there a deadline set (e.g., today, later in the week)?

Fixed or movable
Is this task fixed to a set timescale (for example, meetings, end-of-the-month reports)? Or can it be moved (for example, having a drink after work with a colleague)

High or low return on effort
How much will the effort you expend in doing this task repay you in terms of profit, time saved, smooth running of the business.

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Try to get yourself into the habit of Planning and Prioritising your workload:

PLANNING

Listing – use a 'day book' and keep all lists together:

- List all business tasks.
- List all 'housekeeping' tasks. List all promised actions (from you).
- List all promised actions (to you).
- List all fixed tasks and meetings.
- List all fixed times (eating, travelling).
- List all deadlines.
- List anniversaries, congratulations.
- List all delegated tasks.
- List all tasks that need checking.
- List all contact numbers, addresses.
- List file names, locations.
- List research, thinking time.
- List holidays.
- List personal appointments.
- List exceptions.
- Keep all your day books for future reference.

Make a 'filing map' and an index – keep this in view.

PRIORITISING
(assessing)

Use the 80/20 rule:

- What is most important?
- What is most imminent?
- What is fixed?
- What is least important?
- What is least imminent?
- What is movable?
- What will bring the greatest return?
- What will bring the smallest return?

DEPENDENCIES

- Which tasks can I do on my own?
- Which tasks need others' input?
- Which tasks are people waiting for me to complete? What deadlines do I have?

Clean and organise your desk.
Begin a dump drawer - low pay-off, non-time-critical (clear out once a month)
Keep a wall calendar.
Keep an information map. Don't pile it – file it.
No horizontal storage.

Before you then proceed to 'Doing':

THE TELEPHONE

- Plan the call.
- Objectives – info – actions.
- Start as you mean to go on.
- Set time limits for call backs.
- Make a timetable for receiving calls.
- Keep a telephone log.
- Signal when you are going to end.
- Keep vital numbers in full sight.

PERFORMING

- Do it
- Delegate it
- Defer it
- Dump it

PROCRASTINATION

- Set deadlines.
- Break tasks into do-able chunks.
- Melt the snowball.
- Build motivation.
- Use the 'salami' method.
- Make a start (just for ten minutes!).
- Cut off temptation.

PAPERWORK OPTIONS

- Throw it out
- Reply to it
- Action it
- Sell it
- Hand it on

Skills Audit Chart

There are several business skills and qualities that will be important to a greater or lesser degree within your job as a remote worker or manager of a remote worker. These are every bit as important as qualification or experience.

The chart below is an example of the general qualities that a large service company considered to be particularly important in an experienced group of remote managers:

Skills in communication	What motivates them	How they organise themselves	How they make decisions
Good networking skills	Enjoy solving problems	Good IT skills	Find it easy to prioritise
Prepared to ask for help and advice when they need to	Take pride in doing a good job	Highly organised and orderly; know their jobs really well	Prepared to make decisions on their own where appropriate
Like to give and receive feedback	Overachievers	No procrastination; task-oriented	Take responsibility for own working patterns
Articulate when dealing with customers and suppliers	Liked working solo but happy being a team player	Able to work uninterrupted during the working day	Clarified decisions taken on their behalf

This chart can help to identify the skills and qualities needed for the particular job as a remote worker, and also to identify the qualities a manager of a remote team needs. It also helps to identify where the remote worker might need support or training as they become familiar with their job.

Below is a list of business qualities that could be included *(this is not an exhaustive list and you may have other qualities suited to your business)* …

Personal qualities:	Behaviour with others	Motivating qualities:
• Decisiveness • Integrity • Perseverance • Stability • Flexibility • Ability to adapt • Ability to cope with change • Obedience • Independence • Willingness to take risk • Respectful	• Good teamworking • Listening skills • Good spoken communication • Good written communication • Awareness of others' needs • Friendliness • Ability to analyse others' behaviour • Personal impact • Ability to collaborate	• Ambition • Company commitment • Self-motivation • Active influence • Stamina • Organisational ability • Concern for quality standards • Resilience • Leadership • Development of colleagues
Intellectual qualities:	**Management Qualities:**	**Physical qualities:**
• Judgement • Ability to learn • Good memory • Creativity • Attention to detail • Mathematical ability • Problem analysis • Ability with languages • Wide general knowledge • Strategic vision	• Skills in management processes • Project management skills • Computer literacy/awareness • Wider range of company contacts • Diplomacy • Public speaking ability • Political awareness • Pragmatism • Charisma • Influential contacts	• Good health • Fast reactions • Prepossessing appearance • Low stress levels • Good eyesight • Dexterity • Pleasing voice • Good eye contact
General business skills:	**Sales qualities:**	
• Knowledge of accountancy practices • Knowledge of appropriate legislation • Good budgetary control • Account management skills • Good time management • Good territory management • Knowledge of company procedures • Up-to-date industry information • Competitive product knowledge • Knowledge of money markets	• Knowledge of your products • Knowledge of your company • Knowledge of customer company • Knowledge of customer marketplace • Personal knowledge of customer • Ability to negotiate • Awareness of real customer needs • Ability to sell benefits • Ability to sell at all levels • Good presentation skills	

I am a trusted Manager questionnaire?

Managers Behaviour	Never	Seldom	Often	Always
I trust my remote worker to do a good job				
I set clear and achievable objectives for my remote worker				
I discuss these with them and update them regularly				
I feel comfortable being honest with my team, both good and bad news.				
I am responsive to my teams needs				
The members of my team contact me as soon as there is a problem				
I respond to any problems within my remote team within 24 hours				
I update my team as soon as changes that affect them occur				
I communicate with every team member in some way every day				
I provide opportunities for every team member to interact in some way				
I visit my remote team members at their remote location				
I know about my remote teams personal interests				
I act with integrity all or most of the time				
I am clear about the vision of our work and my remote teams place in this				
I am able to display empathy at the appropriate times				
I try to act as an inspiration to my remote team in all that I do				
I am competent in my role and my ability to manage remote team workers				
I am able to demonstrate a forward looking approach, often willing to learn and change where necessary				

Mostly Never	Mostly Seldom	Mostly Often	Mostly Always
Wow, you are remote! Your team probably feels that you don't care about them and will certainly be demotivated by your lack of interest in them. If you treat them with this amount of disdain they will underperform, vote with their feet and leave	You need to think about your team's needs before your own. No matter how busy you are at head office, you still need to interact more with your remote team. The more effort you put into your team, the more they will repay you.	You obviously know how to manage your remote team, but you are not consistent enough. They need to trust you to be there for them at all times. Once this trust is established, they will become more productive.	You are a well and trusted manager. You should be proud.