



Boosting Team Productivity



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Welcome to our November newsletter!

Every rising demand from clients, the increasing burden of administration and the desire to have a better life-work balance presents a **common source of conflict** that is, at times, seemingly impossible to reconcile in any modern professional services firm.

Whilst being busy, with multiple matters, projects and deadlines running in parallel may be satisfying but processing all of these professional demands efficiently can be a significant challenge. The critical element to achieving all of this, and ultimately having more quality time with family and friends, is workplace productivity.



In this newsletter, we illustrate how focusing on productivity can help you in many ways to increase efficiency, improve your performance and perhaps, not spend so much time in the office. We also outline five workable tips that you can adopt to help you boost productivity and reach your absolute potential.

1. Reasons to Improve Productivity

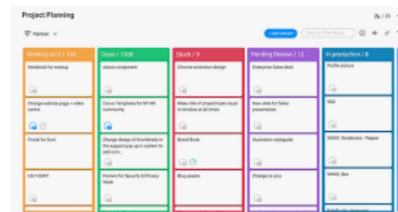
When smarter techniques are used to increase productivity, everyone can benefit - including clients, the firm as a whole and, of course, individual team members.

- a. **Greater Efficiency Means Increased Profitability:** This is especially pertinent with the growing proportion of fixed-fee work that many professional service firms are asked to perform. The nature of this work model means that regardless of whether the project in hand takes an hour or a day, the cost billed remains the same. Boosting productivity makes it possible to get through workloads more efficiently. This increases personal and firm capacity, enabling more matters or projects to be completed — and ultimately drives team and firm revenue generation higher.
- b. **Increased Efficiency Can Mean Fewer Errors:** Missed deadlines are among the most common causes of complaints from clients. Other causes of complaint include rushed, poorly drafted documents, failing to identify key issues and failing to provide clients with proper advice. There is much greater scope for error if workflow is overwhelming, especially when constantly switching between clients or projects. Implementing ways to operate more efficiently and productively allows sufficient time to consider the major issues linked to individual files in more detail. This helps reduce the chances of important points being overlooked or inaccuracies being generated within project documentation.
- c. **Save Time for Clients:** Streamlining regular and repetitive tasks generates more time for what really matters - whether that is building and sustaining relationships with clients or generating business from new clients. Rather than trying to prematurely usher clients out of the door, productive working practices can mean more time to devote to genuinely meaningful face time with clients of all types. This can also include spotting opportunities for cross-selling additional services from within the firm that would otherwise be overlooked.

2. Ideas for Being More Productive

a. Split Complex Projects into More Manageable Small Tasks: A long, complex project is often daunting. Procrastination becomes far too easy, as it's often preferable to deal with smaller, less complex tasks and projects first. This maintains the sense of being productive (always an ego positive) whilst simultaneously making it possible to find excuses to put off the larger, more complex challenge that is lurking in the background. To become more productive and break the 'force field' that can develop around difficult projects and matters, take note from the goal-setting theory. Put simply, this is the concept of splitting tasks up into specific goals. A series of bite-size tasks tend to be much easier to approach than the 'entirety' of a wide-ranging project. The greater use of mini milestones is often a highly effective tool for de-bottlenecking the procrastination challenge and dramatically improving workflow.

b. Digitize Task Management: Traditionally Kanban boards have been used to give a visual overview of the entire workload and its various stages. By creating a Kanban form for "all" tasks (tasks often held in a team member's head or on a screen), the Kanban board allows a visual representation of every invisible piece of work. In the past, this was a series of columns jotted on a whiteboard or paper with sticky notes as the tasks. Fortunately, times have moved on and technology has replaced this clutter. Now, digital tools such as the *tasks function* within bilabl give quick access to matter and project details, timelines, tasks allocated and resources committed or accrued. This enables team members to see the status of tasks easily, collaborate with other team members and enable team leaders or managers to have an instant overview of project progress as a whole. This simplifies the reporting process, negates the need for reminder emails/calls requesting updates and streamlines the execution of workflow between all participants.



c. Establish Time Blocks for Responding to Communications

d. As wonderful as technology is for productivity, it can also (occasionally) be a curse. The ever-present connectivity to messaging apps and emails can generate a wall of white noise that actually flattens the productivity curve instead of enhancing it. Breaking off tasks to deal with incoming communications is simply inefficient and will often result in higher error rates within the task cycle. The solution is simple and costs nothing. Set aside several blocks of about 30 minutes each day to respond to messages. Structure these around the workflow tasks so that each task can be addressed adequately within the required time blocks. For sure it is a lot more efficient to respond to messages in batches rather than sporadically. Also, by spreading these blocks of time throughout the day, it still means that response times are still appropriate to incoming communications. The shift from instantaneous reaction times to appropriate reaction times will do wonders for productivity, accuracy and collaborative workflow.

e. Manage Your Templates: Document templates are a must for any professional services business that is seeking to improve productivity and increase efficiency. Templates save time by removing the need to re-enter the same text into multiple documents and reduce the scope for error on matters or projects that demand standard wording while still



providing the flexibility to tailor the document to a client's specific circumstances. Sometimes though, there can be so many templates in play within a professional services firm, that searching for the right one can be something of a barrier to productivity in itself. To increase efficiency, make sure that templates are centrally stored, logically organized and named, and that out-of-date versions are archived or removed. This helps ensure less time wasted searching for documents, meaning more time putting them to work.

f. Use a Leading Document Management System within Your Tech Stack: Whilst the SaaS



offerings in the Document Management Systems space have grown dramatically over the past decade there is often a gap with implementation at the firm level. At bilabl we regularly find firms with several under-utilized DMS solutions running in parallel, accompanied with a tendency to continue to store critical files on individual user hard drives. This complicates document retrieval, generates multiple copies of collaboration files and acts as a substantial drag to potential efficiency gains from the investment in the overall tech stack. At bilabl plug-ins are provided to key DMS products such as SharePoint. This enables all files to be accessed from within bilabl platform, tasks assigned, completion dates set, hours recorded and workflow monitored whilst always maintaining the critical data and files within SharePoint. This critical integration saves both time and energy and enables teams to focus on what really matters – serving clients, improving billable hours, the completion of assignments and the overall growth of the firm.

At the same time, managing workloads more efficiently can also reduce stress levels, improve job satisfaction and generate a better work-life balance.

To find more information on how you can boost your productivity and other challenges affecting the growth of your professional services business, get in touch with the bilabl tech experts and get a free consultation.



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