

Why not now?



*If you can imagine it
you can achieve it!*

Studies have shown that professional services fee-earners enjoy a higher than normal intellect, want a great deal of autonomy, are very focused and have a great deal of commitment. Professional services people tend not to take kindly to 'too much management'. Therefore, why have the constant battle about punctuality, time in and out of the office and only going out between 1pm and 2pm for lunch? Why start off by restricting what comes naturally to them? Learn to work with them, not pigeon-hole them into the 'normal way of working'. Never hear yourself saying, "That's the way we've always done it."

Achieving greater control over one's own life - even if still employed - is very liberating and generates an even greater sense of commitment to the tasks - and the employer - and a sense that one wants to 'prove I can do it and do it well'.

Minimise day-to-day management

A good start to achieving greater productivity would be to minimise the day-to-day management needed for these fee-earners to provide the service they offer, whilst maintaining control of certain aspects to ensure good customer service and profitability for your business. Clearly, this level of autonomy needs a different approach to managing and management reporting but can assist in achieving the business continuity needed should problems arise in the physical office. It can also have a positive bottom-line effect on your professional indemnity! Whilst closely monitoring that your fee earners are delivering what they are contracted to achieve, give them total flexibility in delivering that service. Ensure you hold them accountable, dealing with under-performance swiftly, but reward well and publicly.

Allow full and flexible access

I knew if I gave members of staff access to the office system from home - or any other computer - they **would** log in. I was proved correct. I started to receive emails sent at 11.30pm with documents attached for work that had not been completed during the day. I started to receive emails from part-timers in their own time and some people logged on as soon as they got home every day, continually dealing with emails throughout the afternoon or evening. One comment to me from a PA when she returned from a trip to India was, "It was easier for me to log in each day and deal with my emails than have hundreds to read through when I get back from holiday."

The systems in your office can be structured so that all your staff can log in from anywhere in the world, with great ease, whilst maintaining exceptional system security. Utilising case management software and digital dictation improves the process even more. You don't need expensive and complicated hardware or software to realise this, but the return you achieve can be very high.

Culture of freedom and responsibility

However, this is not about computer systems in your office: it's about a culture of freedom and responsibility. When you are asking someone to achieve a billing target of 2, 3 or £400K, it seems incompatible with insisting they only leave the office between 1pm and 2pm for lunch. Not everyone enjoys getting up at the crack of dawn and heading to the office! Not everyone enjoys staying late each evening to finish off! Not everyone enjoys coming in at the weekend to catch up! So why ask, expect or make them?

Total flexibility

This level of freedom and responsibility can be achieved through:

- No set hours in the office
- No set holidays throughout the year
- No set desk from which to work, just plug in and connect
- Full remote access to the complete office system

This would allow you to reduce the office space you need, reduce the number of support staff required, give a greater sense of control to those generating the income and reduce the hours spent on management issues.

To achieve this there would need to be a:

- 'no less than monthly billing' target
- 'no less than weekly chargeable time recorded' target
- 'no customer complaints about communication' target
- 'no less than number of new matters from existing clients or new clients' target
- 'no idle support staff' target

Reward publicly those who achieve their target and assist those who are not meeting their target to overcome the problems. If problems persist, don't be afraid of 'managing them out'.

This is not just a futuristic desire for a business; this business structure could easily be achieved now; and in a professional services environment.



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Avalon Solutions supports your business by looking at your business support and administrative processes and improving them. Avalon Solutions also offers business coaching and seminars on a variety of management topics.

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