Microsoft

Work smarter:

3 practical ways to increase productivity for your small business

85% of business leaders say hybrid work makes them less confident that employees are productive.[1]

Looking for ways to help your small business employees be more productive? With so many distractions today, it's critical to help them focus on the work that's most important.

Here are three practical tips to accomplish that:

01
Set clear, specific, and achievable goals >

02
Eliminate distractions >

03
Stay organized >

01

Set clear, specific, and achievable goals

81% of employees want managers to help them prioritize workloads. Only 31% say leaders have given clear guidance.[2]

Employees achieve objectives faster when working toward a shared vision and purpose. Clear goals enable you to measure and share progress easily—and adjust if something isn't working. Regularly reviewing and adjusting goals helps you adapt to changes in customer and business needs.

Here are a few ways to make goal-setting an effective tool for your business:

1. **Make sure your goals are SMART:**
   Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound. Following these standards helps keep ideas grounded and actionable.

2. **Involve your team in the goal-setting process:**
   When staff help set the goals, they have a stake in achieving them. Plus, collaboration brings forward new and valuable ideas.

3. **Set both short-term and long-term goals:**
   Short-term goals help motivate the team with fast results. Long-term goals set the strategic direction and help you achieve big things.

Measure productivity progress:

How many of your employees are aware of your business's key short- and long-term goals?

Tool tip:

Create a channel in Microsoft Teams specifically for discussions about organizational goals. Or, if you have multiple employees, you can create a separate team in Microsoft Teams that serves as a working group for tracking goals.

02

Eliminate distractions

23 minutes – the average time it takes for a worker to become refocused after a distraction.[3]

Focus helps employees complete challenging work, think creatively, and generate innovative ideas.

Research shows that breaks between tasks and meetings help reduce stress[4] and a healthy work/life balance helps prevent burnout.

1. **Implement time-management strategies:**
   Coach your team in effective time-management methods, such as the Pomodoro Technique: work for 25 minutes, then take a 5-minute break. After four work periods, take a longer break of 15 to 20 minutes.

2. **Use technology to block distractions:**
   Empower employees to use settings and software to reduce distractions while working. For example, they can use apps to manage social media sites or set up a "do not disturb" mode on their phones to silence certain notifications during work hours.

3. **Encourage and model healthy work/life balance:**
   By setting clear boundaries around work time and personal time, staff gain time to recharge and can be more productive when they're at work.

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Measure productivity progress:

How many of your employees set at least 30 minutes of focus time daily?

Tool tip:

It's easy for employees to change their presence status in Microsoft Teams. By letting teammates know when they are available, busy, or need to not be disturbed, they can block out time to focus on important work.

03

Stay organized

Efficiency is the top benefit small and medium-sized businesses expect from technology over the next 2-3 years.[5]

If you rely on paper or local digital storage, it's tough to keep information organized—which can get in the way of collaboration and creativity. The cloud helps you keep everything in one place and work together more effectively.

Here are a few ways it can help:

1. **Keep everything in one place:**
   Modern cloud storage provides one place for employees to find what they need while helping you keep information secure and backed up.

2. **Share notes in one location:**
   Using a cloud-connected notetaking app such as Microsoft OneNote can bring everyone together in one place to share ideas and capture information.

3. **Work together in one document:**
   Instead of emailing document versions back and forth, encourage employees to work on the same document stored in the cloud. Automating version control will keep track of edits.

Measure productivity progress:

How easy is it to access files from all the devices employees use to get work done?

Tool tip:

Microsoft OneDrive ensures files are centrally managed and backed up and supplies many tools for staying organized. You can pin and unpin shared libraries for quick access, switch between libraries for different teams with a consistent experience, and securely move and copy files between locations.

Real productivity means achievement, not just activity

By setting organizational goals, staying organized, and eliminating distractions, you can help each employee contribute their best toward the success of your business.

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[1]Hybrid Work Is Just Work. Are We Doing It Wrong?, Microsoft, 2022
[2]Hybrid Work Is Just Work. Are We Doing It Wrong?, Microsoft, 2022
[3]Protect time with Viva Insights, Microsoft, 2022
[4]Research Proves Your Brain Needs Breaks, Brainwaves reveal sustained concentration in video meetings leads to fatigue, Study conducted in 2020, Microsoft Human Factors Lab.
[5]SMB Voice and Attitudes to Technology Study, Microsoft small and medium business (SMB) voice and attitudes to technology study, 2022, page 29.

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