Importance of Standardized Workstation Setup, Time Management and Strategic Planning

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The Importance of Standardized Workstation Setup, Time Management Skills and Strategic Planning

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Christine M. Sullivan, CIC

- Certified Insurance Counselor
- Fully licensed Broker in all lines of insurance
- 21 years experience in Insurance Agency Operations Management
- 27 years experience in the insurance industry
- Operations Manager of three different insurance agencies
- Management and Executive Team Coach
- Workplace Culture Specialist
Professional Development and Focus Programs:
- Personal Lines / Commercial lines Account Manager training and employee development
- Study and evaluation of Roles and Team with regard to the agency’s mission, vision and goals
- Management mentoring and executive coaching programs
- Operational restructures evolving the agency’s focus from a process-related to a behavioral-related sales/service culture.
- Producer training and development programs
- Time Management/Standardized workstation setup
- Focus on E&O protection with the agency without crippling the sales functions with too many redundant processes
- Development of Procedural Manuals
- Institution of Client Relationship Management programs
- Loss Ratio Management Program
- Workplace Culture Program

Key Factors for the Success of a Professional in the Insurance Industry with Today’s Challenges
- Commitment and Dedication to the Development of:
  - Organization of your Workstation
  - Polished Time Management Skills
  - E&O Prevention through Standardization
  - Importance of Planning your Week
  - Blocks of Time and Compartmentalization
  - Focus on behavioral-based versus process-based workflows
Systematic Workstation Approach

Important why?

- Enables everyone on your team to easily step in and help in your absence.
- Takes away the “awkward moment” of digging through someone else’s desk.
  - Each desk is set up the same with the bins clearly labeled.
- Reinforces Compliance to the Data Security Law
- Management has a clear visual of the daily workflow and any new business ready to be put on the books.
- Can add to your sales success – set up procedures for finalizing pending by end of the week.
- Promotes compartmentalization of work for more efficient time usage.

Key Factors of An Organized /Effective Workstation

- Get rid of the piles and the attitude, “I know where everything is!”
- Make sure your tools are within reach.
  - Computer
  - Phone
  - Necessary tools need to service your clients
- The use of bins to organize your desk top into 5 key areas (label them):
  1. In
  2. Out
  3. New Business Pending (great visual for all)
  4. Daily Workflow (changes, RMV paperwork, etc.)
  5. Renewals/Expiration Work

 Priority folder (must be completed within same work day) it should be Red – more on this later!
What about the inside?

- Like your closets at home... if the outside is organized but the inside is not...
- Scan as much as you can and create desktop folders for forms
  1. New Business Forms
  2. Reference by carrier
  3. Agency Documents/ references
  4. Use the carrier websites,- set them up in favorites

Who does this help?

- You and your day!
  - You’ll accomplish more
  - Your focus will be on the client/prospect
  - Makes your daily planning processes easier
  - Your Clients and Prospects
  - You appear organized and efficient
  - Creates instant credibility
- Your Co-workers/Team members
  - Enable easy access, if you are out of office.
- Management
  - Great at a glance visual of workflow and pending new business
Time Management Skills

- Time Management Principals and Quadrants
- Prioritizing
- Importance of Assigning Due Dates
- Workflow Alteration

Quotes:

- “The conventional definition of management is getting work done through people, but real management is developing people through work.” ~ Agha Hasan Abedi
- “Effective leadership is putting first things first. Effective management is discipline, carrying it out.” ~ Stephen Covey
- “The best example of leadership is leadership by example.” ~ Jerry McClain
Key Components to Polished Time Management Skills

- Strategic Weekly Planning
- Daily Prioritization and the 24 hour Urgency folder
- Compartmentalization and Scheduling of Blocks of Time
- Form habits and make the “To DO List” extinct in your workday.

Effective Principalsof Time Management

- Keep your desk and workstation well organized
- Prioritize and organize your workflow
- **Work Smarter, NOT HARDER!**
  - Make sales calls during key times
  - Process paper during non-peak service hours
- Don’t call unnecessary meetings
  - If there is no agenda, don’t meet
- Do less appealing tasks first to ensure their completion!
- Stay focused
- Utilize your planners
- Take lunch breaks!
Due Date Definitions

**New Business to Carrier**
Uploaded within two days of the effective date

**Endorsements to Carrier**
Within 2 days of the effective date of the endorsement

**Remarket Call in Requests that are off account review schedule**
Within 7 days of the request

**Processing from the Carrier to the Client:**
New Business policies and Endorsements -
Within 7 days of receipt

**Renewals:** 2 weeks prior to the effective date

Due Date Definitions Continued

**Certificate Requests**
- Stick to scheduled dates whenever possible - communicate your expected mail/fax date first and see if you reach an agreement.
- Immediate requests should be done within 1 business day.

**Email/phone call requests:**
- Determine category /subject matter and assign a due date based on the above guidelines.
- Immediate requests should be done within 1 business day.
- See handout sample.
Daily Prioritization

- Prioritize your work twice daily.
  - Avoid the fear of the unknown
- An organized workstation helps!
  - Before Lunch
    - Allows for a more productive afternoon
    - Gives you time to clear up any important items
    - Still time to involve management on issues and allows for time to resolve the issue.
  - Before you leave
    - Leave each work day feeling like you know what is on your desk.
    - Helps you avoid the “wake you up at night” nightmare.
    - Allows you to begin your day focused and ready to begin.
    - More productive morning

A Day in the Life of an Agency How To Prioritize...

- Paperwork is handled in order of priority
  - New business to carrier
  - Endorsements to carrier
  - New business from carrier
  - endorsements from carrier
  - Renewals should be organized in priority of effective date
- Objective is to end each day without unanswered priority phone calls, emails or workflow.
- Management should be made aware of any potential coverage issues or major claim problems by 3pm each day, if possible.
- Last ½ hour of day should be spent on organization of workstation and prioritization of work for next day.
Red Priority Folder

- GREAT tool for Management and your Team
  - Great visual – avoid out of sight, out of mind urgencies.
  - Allows you to gain piece of mind when you have a sudden need to be out of the office.
  - Management can jump in and redistribute if needed.
- Rules for the RED folder:
  - Only place high priority items to be completed within the same business day in the folder.
  - You must commit to that. You can't leave the office until it has been emptied.
  - Alternate the work in the folder with your daily work. Allows you to accomplish both priority and daily work throughout the day.

Alternating Your Workflow

- Alternate the completion of your work each day as follows:
  - One item from the red folder
  - Two to three items from your daily work
Strategic Planning – Time is not unlimited!

- Pick a day that works and stick to it! (NOT MONDAYS!)
- Focuses on scheduling of certain priority items.
- Don’t schedule all your time.
  - Service – 40% of time scheduled.
  - Sales – 70% of time scheduled.
  - Management – 50-60% of time scheduled
- Be sure to schedule the important personal things, life is too short!
  - Happy at home = Happy at work = Positive attitude
  - Win/W in situation for everyone

Compartmentalization and Scheduling of Blocks of Time

- Think of each bin as a compartment of your time, you need time for each
  - Quoting needs to be prioritized by effective date – try to schedule blocks of time.
  - Expiration list processes should be scheduled bi-weekly
  - Schedule certain days for processing, don’t let it consume your day.
  - Certificates can be overwhelming, pick two days per week.
Important Things To Schedule

- Production recording and expenses
- Large projects and prep time for them
- Your strategic planning time
- To do list items
- Family time
- Down time
- Sharpen the saw....

Agency Operational Tools

- **Due Date Definitions**
- **Time Management Quiz**
  - Prioritizing
  - Promotes the more with less concept.
  - Take the Quiz once a week for 10 weeks. Track your results.
Time Management Quiz

What is your time management IQ? Complete the quiz answering each question realistically. Base your answers on an “average” day rather than goals or ideals.

Answer the following questions with a yes or no answer.

DO YOU KNOW!

1. _____ What the three most important things for you to accomplish TODAY are?
2. _____ What specific steps have to be taken today to achieve your long-range goals?
3. _____ What the most and least productive time periods for you are during each working day are?
4. _____ How to say “no” without feeling guilty?
5. _____ How to set realistic time parameters and deadlines for specific activities?
6. _____ How many sales calls you will have to make in the next month in order to achieve your sales goals?
7. _____ What your five biggest time-wasters are?

Answer the following questions with A (always), S (sometimes), or N (Never).

Do you:

8. _____ Seek ways to eliminate unnecessary paperwork – and then implement them?
9. _____ Outline a weekly activity plan which includes priorities, activities, objectives and time estimates?
10. _____ Have written 3-month business goals?
11. _____ Have written 3 month personal goals?
12. _____ Prepare a daily “To Do” list which prioritizes activities in their order of urgency or importance?
13. _____ Update goals and activities as priorities change?
14. _____ Keep unproductive interruptions (Ex.: Drop in visits, peers, etc.) to a minimum?
15. _____ Spend your reading time effectively? (Ex: sorting out only what’s relevant, urgent and of value toward reaching your goals.)
16. _____ Look for solutions to time management problems through discussions with subordinates, superiors and /or peers?
17. _____ Avoid procrastination and eleventh –hour fire drills when you have a time-consuming project ahead of you.
18. _____ Keep your office organized and neat?
19. _____ Regularly eliminate time wasting activities from your schedule?
20. _____ Group related activities where possible?
21. _____ Handle each piece of paper that passes over your desk only once?
22. _____ Successfully avoid doing other people's work, unless necessary?
23. _____ Periodically keep a time log to help analyze how you use manage your desk?
24. _____ Set aside a period of time every week for planning?
25. _____ Set deadlines for yourself and then meet them?
26. _____ Feel in control of your time and on top of your job?
27. _____ Delegate work whenever possible.

Scoring:
Give yourself 10 points each time you answered yes or always. 5 points each time you answered S for sometimes.

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<th>220-270 points</th>
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<tr>
<td>Below average</td>
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- Take this quiz when you first start the program and repeat it every week for a period of four months.
- You will be very surprised at your results!
- If this helps you do nothing else, you will become more aware of your time each day!
Due Date Definitions

New Business to Carrier
- Uploaded within two days of the effective date

New Business Quoting (monoline policies)
- Quote within two days of request

New Business Quoting (home and auto)
- Quote within two days of request

Endorsements to Carrier
- Within 2 days of the effective date of the endorsement

Remarket Call in Requests that are off account review schedule
- Within 5 days of the request

Processing from the Carrier to the Client:
- New Business policies and Endorsements - Within 7 days of receipt
- Renewals: 2 weeks prior to the effective date

Certificate Requests
- Stick to scheduled dates whenever possible - communicate your expected mail/fax date first and see if you reach an agreement.
- Immediate requests should be done within 1 business day.

Email/phone call requests:
- Determine category /subject matter and assign a due date based on the above guidelines.
- Immediate requests should be done within 1 business day.

Tips:
1. Put due dates in upper right hand corner in red.
2. Organize your daily workflow, processing and new business by these dates.
3. At the end of each day, grab the work due the next day and place it in the red folder and begin with that in the morning.
4. Red folder needs to be treated as follows:
   a. Ideally I cannot leave for the day without getting these done.
5. Use your scheduled blocks of time for account reviews.