

Better Work Practice – Developing a Staff Work Schedule

A medical practice can often be a very hectic and challenging workplace, making it easy to lose sight of the big picture. A work schedule is a useful tool to assist focusing on personal tasks and goals as well as those of the medical practice as a whole. By developing a work schedule, strategies can be created which facilitate the completion of tasks in a systematic fashion.

Tips for developing a work schedule:

- Prepare a schedule

Prepare the daily work schedule either before leaving the Practice at the end of the day or at the beginning of the day when you first arrive and things haven't become busy.

- List tasks

Remember to list the tasks you need to complete, when you need to complete the tasks by (often referred to as a deadline) and a realistic estimation of how much time is needed to complete each task. The list could also include the frequency of tasks, their priority and any particular resource requirements e.g. stationery, office equipment etc.

- Use planning tools

Utilise planning tools such as diaries, wall planners or electronic calendar software (e.g. Microsoft Outlook or Entourage). Electronic planning devices are particularly useful as you can program the software to remind you at set times about tasks and appointments.

- Keep a log

Understand where your time goes. If you are not getting as much work done as you had expected, you may be spending time on things you haven't allowed for. It may help if you keep a time log for a few days, recording the time spent on each task you do. Reviewing your time log will give you a clear indication of how your time is spent and allow for the appropriate changes to how you plan and prioritise your work schedule.

- Seek help

If the work is swamping you and not being done on schedule, then seek help – either in the form of advice from colleagues or superiors or by delegating tasks to others. If problems of coping keep recurring then consider getting further training.

The development of work schedules and identification of priorities indicates that you have already started down the road to more effective time management and better work practice.