Finding the 90 Minutes Each Day You Need to Spend Quality Time with Clients

Overview

Introduction

Most partners in an accounting business generally want to add value to clients. Their day-to-day business is what gets in the way of reaching out to those clients.

It can be useful to remind ourselves of our background. Most of us were raised as employees in an accounting practice. At some stage the senior partner tapped us on the shoulder and asked if we'd like to be a partner.

At some point in time we realised we're running a business and therefore managing a bunch of staff and clients. And that begs the question – how well do we manage those clients? Or are we still behaving like technicians, stuck in the same habitual way of doing things and focused on the technical aspects of accounting and tax?

If you were to closely analyse the working day of a partner in an accounting business (and we have, countless times) you'd be amazed by the number of lower level accounting and tax matters, as well as practice administration matters, they're spending significant time on.

We've seen partners reclaim upwards of 10 hours per week by isolating these tasks and delegating them 'down the line'.

Contents

This section contains the following topics.

Delegation in Action

Who you can delegate to

You may think that's all very well, but who am I going to delegate these tasks to?

Firstly, you should be able to delegate low-level accounting and tax tasks to others in your accounting team.

After this you'll find you're left with a pile of practice administration and management tasks. If you already have a business manager, pass on these tasks and let them get on with the job of managing the tasks and staff.

If you have a smaller business, and you don't have the support staff to perform administration tasks, then hire someone. We call this role the client services assistant (CSA). Do not be fooled into thinking that the cost of a CSA comes straight off your bottom line. Nothing could be further from the truth. These people can be up to 60% productive and, by opening up your capacity to reach out to your clients, your profits will increase.

To assist you in determining tasks you can delegate and the time you will save, worksheets are provided on the next few pages.

Before you begin

In order to determine how much time you can save by delegating tasks, you firstly need to keep very detailed timesheets for a month.

Make sure you write plenty of remarks about the myriad of administrative tasks you do each day.

To help you determine what tasks to delegate you we recommend you:

1. Analyse timesheets
2. Identify all tasks that can be delegated
3. Determine how much time each task takes (this is the time you can free up each day)

Determining Practice Management and Administration Tasks

Introduction

You can use a table similar to that below to record your findings and determine how much total time you will find each day.

In the 'Delegate to' column, note if you could delegate the task to a CSA (client services assistant), EA (executive assistant) or BM (business manager). In the 'Tool available to assist' column, list the tools you have to support this task (procedure, form, etc).

Month	Task	Time to complete	Delegate to	Tool available to assist
	Client-related tasks			
	Dealing with client correspondence			
	Maintaining records of client contact			
	Making and changing client appointments			
	Following up new and prospective clients			
	Client database maintenance			
	Preparing annual client questionnaires			
	Contacting clients for missing information			
	Chasing unreturned and unsigned tax returns			
	Advising clients of tax obligations			
	Setting up client records folders			
	Project liaison with clients			
	Organising client seminars			
	Talking to clients about routine queries – The 'What's my IRD number?' syndrome			
	Setting up client files			
	Returning client records			
	Client payrolls			
	Preparing fees			
	Coordinating events			
	Systems and IT			
	Writing and updating systems (including Content)			
	IT management (software updates etc)			

Month	Task	Time to complete	Delegate to	Tool available to assist
	IRD and government agencies			
	Dealing with simple IRD correspondence			
	E-filing tax returns			
	ACC management			
	Organising Accredited Training Organisation (ATO) status			
	Companies and Trusts			
	Preparing trust and company minutes			
	Preparing resolutions			
	Incorporating companies			
	Winding up companies			
	Dealing with changes of Partners, Shareholders etc			
	Any other trust or company administration tasks			
	Trust account management			
	General administration and management			
	Filing			
	Opening the mail			
	Typing letters and simple reports			
	Organising gifting documentation			
	Printing, binding or finalising financials			
	Forwarding financial statements to third parties			
	Ordering supplies			
	Organising insurance			
	Building maintenance			
	Managing Partner emails			
	Managing workflow			
	Most aspects of tax administration			
	Debtor management			
	Paying the bills			
	Reporting and monitoring			
	Preparing KPI reports for the Partners			
	Monitoring tax return filing			
	Monitoring Work in Progress (WIP)			

Month	Task	Time to complete	Delegate to	Tool available to assist
	Team and personnel			
	Organising team induction programmes			
	Bank account management			
	Organising performance reviews			
	Day-to-day coaching for staff			
	Day-to-day work management			
	Performance reviews			
	Following up performance review outcomes			
	Coordinating team meetings			
	Recruitment			
	Writing recruitment ads			
	Corresponding with candidates			
	Organising recruitment interviews			
	Organising employment agreements			

Lower Level Accounting and Tax Tasks

Introduction

Look at the tasks in your practice and use a format similar to the following to determine what you can delegate to others in the accounting team.

Month	Task	Time to complete	Delegate to	Tool available to assist

Determining the Value / Profit to Your Practice

Partner Delegation Calculator

When you know the tasks you complete each month that you want to delegate, you can use a calculator similar to the following to determine the value / profit to you of delegating these tasks.

Activity for Delegation	Hours Spent Per Month	Charge Rate	Value
Completed by You			
Accounting and Tax			
Practice Management			
Administration			
Total (you)			
If Delegated			
Other accounting staff			
EA			
CSA			
Business Manager			
Total (others)			
Profit			

Changing behaviour

We know what holds you back here. You are successful people already. You got this far by repeating certain behaviours and these behaviours are ingrained in you. But to go to the next level, you have to let go of those behaviours and to change seems counter-intuitive.

Of all the partners we have ever coached into having a new CSA for all of the above reasons, we have never had a single one regret that choice.