

## **Task Management and the Small Business**

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**by**

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You hear the phrase “*Task Management*” a lot these days, and with good reason. In a world that demands more from us each day, it’s vital for companies to approach their goals, deliverables, and deadlines in a logical and streamlined manner.

Today’s digital marketplace has opened up new opportunities for companies both large and small, making it easy for them to rapidly grow by tapping into global distribution channels. However, with growth comes complexity, and with opportunity comes competition. By utilizing solid Task Management principles to streamline operations, small businesses can remain nimble while greatly increasing both productivity and efficiency<sup>1</sup>.

### About Task Management

But what, exactly, *is* Task Management? Simply put, it’s the process of systematically managing a task through the completion of its life cycle: automatically tracking the task’s progress and sharing information about the task with others.

A good Task Management system allows you to easily break a complex task cycle into discrete levels of steps or mini-tasks. For example, if you are tasked with writing a report, you might break that major task into mini-tasks such as research, outlining, first draft, editing, final draft, and delivery. Those levels, in turn, can be divided into a descending level of steps.

The real value of using task management tools in the workplace is the ability to empower employees with the ability to group a large number of tasks into projects that can be viewed, tracked, and reported on in various ways. By helping to organize and manage the execution of your company’s core deliverables, and the tasks that drive those matters forward, you will see a significant increase in productivity with very little capital investment.

Task management platforms also enable the collaboration and sharing of information on a wide scale, helping small businesses and their employees attain collective goals. The ability to distribute tasks to many different team members is particularly helpful when your company is engaged in time-critical projects requiring a relatively large commitment of resources, planning, and personnel.

The combination of task management solutions with the connective power of the internet, mobile computers and today’s always-on smart phones, delivers the additional advantage of being able to coordinate task and project completion, across large teams, in different locations, using your existing infrastructure.

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<sup>1</sup> Maus, Heiko, M.P. van der Aalst, Wil, Rickayzen, Alan, Riss, Uwe. V. “Challenges for Business Processes and Task Management,” *Journal of Universal Knowledge Management*. Volume 0, Issue 2, 2005.

## Task Management is Nimble Management

Task Management allows a small business to remain nimble—that is, quick, light, and agile. A nimble business is able to respond swiftly to customers, problems, and opportunities empowering both management and employees alike. Being nimble means energizing everyone, resulting in added value across the board.

Task management solutions help to do this because they streamline business processes, encourage teamwork, and offer transparent visibility over key deliverables. Whether you are planning a marketing roll-out, the development of a new product, or are managing different sales and support processes, both the team and the business will run with increasing ease when all participants know exactly what needs to be done.

### Streamlining Business Processes

A streamlined workplace is a productive workplace, especially when the organizational methodology and processes are in place that enables employees to thrive. When tasks are assigned in a task-managed environment they become part of your company's internal systems, with built-in checkpoints and follow-through.

With a solution in place that can track and report on this process, areas of concern are recognized early on and dealt with before they create major problems. Gone is the inefficient paper-shuffling, note-taking and data replication—replaced by consistent standards and global governance. A properly-integrated task management solution will help you to:

- Organize tasks and deadlines in a way that improves performance, saves time, achieves goals and provides a transparent measure of results
- Automatically plan, track, and report on projects while handling an intricate level of steps and events
- Reduce costs by limiting record maintenance, travel for face-to-face meetings, centralize input and feedback, automate reporting mechanisms, bring projects in, on or under budget, and more
- Give a clear cost picture at any point in the project with precise cost breakdown, inventory across categories, and a realistic assignment of resources

### Encouraging Teamwork and Collaboration

Teamwork solutions lay the groundwork for collaboration within a business by helping to bring employees together around common goals. In high-functioning teams everyone is energized, communication is open, information is shared, and improved outcomes are the norm. By encouraging shared viewpoints and a sense of ownership, teamwork is key to achieving business success.

Task Management solutions enable this process by allowing the members of your business to track multiple levels of tasks and data across numerous projects. This keeps everyone up to date and aware of their deliverables so they can function as an efficient and committed team whether they are located in one office or in multiple locations around the globe.

Once properly implemented, a teamwork solution will help your business to:

- Build trust among employees across departments due to increased transparency (and when a project ends, the trust remains)
- Allow employees to assign and share project plans, schedules, calendaring, and tasks amongst themselves
- Encourage the development of improved communication skills and improve productivity via the easy exchange of ideas and information
- Offer a sense of ownership, accomplishment, and pride to team members and exponentially increase creative input due to teamwork synergy
- Maintain a positive work environment that motivates employees and helps to build and recognize the company's upcoming managers and future leaders

### **Increasing Visibility in the Workplace**

A task management solution increases visibility into workplace processes and procedures. This eliminates one of the seemingly inherent negatives in both large and small companies: it allows employees to know what's going on in matters that affect them.

Increased visibility not only makes for happier and more motivated employees, but also creates a more streamlined workplace. The ability to give management a better insight into the collaboration and sharing of information throughout your company will help them respond to both opportunities and problems. This process makes it easier to:

- Track how and where time is being spent on projects and key deliverables so you can make adjustments that provide maximum value
- Inform project managers and other employees, regardless of geographic or hierarchical location, about the status of current projects and resource needs
- Drive project clarity by providing clear insight into project roles and accountability; and eliminate the need for routine status meetings, allowing the discussion of real problems and issues

The ability to give employees added visibility into their daily objectives is a powerful tool for any business. When used as a shared platform, it has the additional advantage that it gives management a clear view of all business operations at any time.

## Task Management and your Business

In today's ever-demanding business environment, task management is one of the most important resources a company can have in its management toolkit. It can prevent a small business from becoming bogged down in minutia through enabling the distribution of information and deliverables.

By enabling companies to streamline their workflow, task management solutions deliver a significant increase in the efficiency of their core business processes. This delivers a significant reduction in operating costs while helping to accelerate key business operations - resulting in a faster route to revenues.

Whether you have small projects that need to be completed in a timely manner, or are managing a large team that needs to meet collective goals; with the right processes in place your company will be able to save on costs and move faster than the competition. When properly utilized, task management is an ideal solution for companies seeking an efficient and workable way to get things done.



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