Employee Paperwork Done Properly and On Time



The collection of information and data serves many practical and mundane purposes within a business. The completion of paperwork, time sheets, records, reports, forms, requests, receipts, invoices and more may not always offer exciting data but the information collected can be vital components workplaces success.

Unfortunately the completion of paperwork is frequently a source of irritation. Chasing down employees and scrambling to gather information at a later date can be an inconvenient headache and it can also hamper productivity, cost money and even result in legal problems or fines. Health and safety records that are not accurate or are incomplete may be the difference between defending a claim successfully or incurring fines and legal judgements.

Frequently when people fail to do something that is required it is because they don't understand it or are not motivated to do it. Some of the primary reasons people do not complete paperwork accurately or on time include:

- They do not know how which can include not having the ability
- They do not understand why
- They do not remember or run out of time
- They do not care

Why do the reasons matter? You can begin to address employee's failure by understanding why they struggle and designing your training and data collection techniques with these issues in mind. A one size approach or solution rarely works well for everyone.

5 Tips for Improving Employees Paperwork Completion

1. Show them the how: Many people ignore or make mistakes on the completion of paperwork because they are not clear on how to complete the paperwork or the timing and process for completion and submission. Walking someone through once may not be enough especially if the paperwork is not completed daily or weekly or if disability, cultural, personal or language barriers are in the way. Making the information easy to complete and accessible is one way to combat people's failings

- Try posting annotated samples of the paperwork with notes and symbols in key work areas or online.

- Create a simple 1-minute audio/video walk through (try using annotated Powerpoint) that can be viewed repeatedly.

2. Show them why: Some people learn best by doing and others by understanding.

- Provide the purpose and show the complete path the paperwork travels indicating the other employees (roles) who rely on the information.
- Visuals such as flow charts or infographics that show the workflow can be fun and informative and emphasize the value of the paperwork.

3. Show them when: Some people love 'to do' lists and set themselves frequent checklist reminders to complete tasks and for those people one notification is often enough. For other people reminders have to be delivered differently and at novel intervals.

- Consistent repetition is a good way to develop a habit. Establish a process and time of day, week or month as relevant for the completion of standardized paperwork and post this information in a shared calendar. Ask employees to set calendar alerts if they use technology in their work.
- But consistency can also breed inattention in some people. Reminders that are interesting and novel can actually be effective in combination with the routine. Make the reminders interesting and fun. Instead of an email or posted reminder with written text send an email or post a notice with a funny (but appropriate) image or saying.
- When feasible ask employees for their IM or Text information and/or create a simple company reminder app with calendar notifications (you would be surprised how inexpensive this can be today when you can find existing apps or have a local college create a simple one for you).

4. Show them the fun: You can choose to discipline employees for their failures or reward them for their efforts. Providing individual and team/department/shift incentives using a gameification process can be easy, inexpensive and motivating. Consider frequent and small rewards and change up how they are earned.

- Allot points to each team and per individual weekly for the timely and accurate completion of paperwork (try a 5 or 10 point scale nothing to complicated). Some weeks award points for the team with the fastest individual to hand in all paperwork on time another week award points to the first entire team to complete the paperwork and so on. You do not have to announce the criteria ahead of time but create a list of 10-15 ways points will be assigned so people know what counts. Each month the team with the highest points total can receive a token reward such as a going home an hour early, buying a few lottery tickets for the team members and so on. Variety of measures gives many people the opportunity to 'win'.

5. Leverage people's strengths: At the end of the day some people are better at completing their paperwork. Knowing and leveraging individual strengths is a way to make everyone's days a little easier.

- Identify when it is feasible to add monitoring, checking or collecting paperwork to one person's role in a team in exchange for some benefit, trading another task or being given a small bonus for the added responsibility. This might be especially useful for critical paperwork such as safety inspections, incident reports and more.