





Yourself

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Check your ability to run your business

You are the most important thing in your business, so you must know what you are good at doing. It's also important to look at how you can get better at the things you don't do so well. This will help you avoid problems later.

This involves making sure that you:

1. decide what skills are needed for your business
2. look at your own skills, strengths and weaknesses, and working out the ways these may affect your business
3. check how your performance affects your business

What you need to do

- analyse what you should be doing in your business
- check how your performance affects the success of your business
- take into account the views that other people may have about your business
- regularly set and review targets for your performance
- check whether you are reaching your targets
- make sure that you use all relevant information to make judgements about yourself
- change what you do to improve your own and your business's performance
- set yourself new targets when previous targets are met
- monitor your performance to see if it is affecting the success of your business
- decide what your strengths and weaknesses are and decide if you need to develop your skills, knowledge or abilities



What you need to know and understand

Your performance

- what you need to be able to do in the short, medium and long term to run your business successfully. (For example paperwork, sales, marketing, finance, production, purchasing, business law, getting supplies, maintaining equipment, monitoring quality, getting publicity, writing promotional materials, strategic thinking, communication, dealing with stakeholders, leadership, negotiation, decision-making, problem-solving and delegation.)
- your ability to deal with opportunities and threats. (For example, any changes in the market, new technologies, threats from competitors or meeting new laws and regulations.)
- what ways you could improve your contribution to business success (for example, delegating work to others, recruiting more staff, training yourself and others)
- how to judge your own performance

Your skills

- what information there is about your own skills and abilities

Consultation

- why it is important to ask others for feedback. (For example family, funders, stakeholders, customers.)
- how you can confirm the changes you have made in your personal performance. (For example qualifications, evidence of attendance at training and development sessions, and awards for excellence)

Business focus

- what information is available on the overall needs of your business
- what changes you are planning to your business that may need new skills or general management support (for example, growth, size reduction or tackling operation problems)



Information and advice

- where to find help in assessing your performance. (For example from business associates, business advice centres, business advisers, mentors, counsellors, specialist consultants, non-executive directors, accountants and other professionals.)





Delegate work to others in your business

If you find that there is too little time or you have not got all the necessary skills, it may help you to delegate or pass things on to other people. To do this you need to know how to ask others to do work for you in the way that you want.

This involves making sure that:

1. you work out what you want help with
2. you make plans of the tasks, responsibilities and targets for work that you delegate
3. preparing information that will help people do the jobs they have been told to do

What you need to do

- decide which tasks and responsibilities need to be delegated
- choose people that have the right skills and time to do the work
- where appropriate, agree work with outside people
- decide and explain the targets and limits of the work
- make sure people understand what you want them to do
- encourage progress by giving any advice, support and training
- suggest ways to solve any problems that arise
- monitor delegated work to check that agreed targets are met

What you need to know and understand

Planning

- how to set targets for what needs to be done
- how to plan work. (For example by setting short- and long-term targets, breaking down the targets into smaller activities, ordering the activities in terms of importance and urgency and estimating the time involved.)



- how to set limits for the way something needs to be done. (For example about timescales and deadlines, costs, use of materials, tools and equipment, quality, health and safety and customer service.)
- how to agree contracts with outside people. (For example temporary staff, subcontractors or specialists.)
- how to decide if someone is capable of carrying out a task
- how to decide if someone can be relied on to perform the task satisfactorily and responsibly

Motivating staff

- how to delegate authority
- how to communicate what you expect and check that you are understood
- how to motivate people and gain their commitment
- how to encourage others to be creative
- how to offer advice and support. (For example by providing information, giving hands-on help or encouragement.)
- how to train someone to carry out a task in the way that you expect

Checking work

- how to solve problems with the work that you delegate
- how to monitor other people's work. (For example use a work log to write down what you plan to do, then compare this with what you did, review your time a few days each month and note your goals and progress.)
- how to assess whether someone is performing well
- what things can be used to show improvements. (For example things that can be measured like time taken, things that are difficult to measure like customer satisfaction or better working relationships.)



Explore your own business motives

You are the most important thing in your business so it is important to make sure that your business is supporting your chosen lifestyle, you are getting what you want from it and are enjoying what you are doing.

This involves making sure that you:

1. compare what you give with what you get out of your business
2. look at your own role in your business
3. balance your own needs with those of your business

What you need to do

- analyse what you want personally from your business
- think about the benefits you get and what you are prepared to risk personally for your business
- think about your role in your business, what parts you enjoy and what parts you are good at
- think about your position and decide what is most important, and least important, to you
- think about what you are putting into your business and what you hope to get out of it
- make sure that you use all relevant information, including the views of other people, to make judgements about yourself
- think about where you would like your business to be in the future
- decide how you can balance your own needs with your business needs

What you need to know and understand

Yourself

- what you can put into your business. (For example time, money, commitment, enthusiasm, and creativity.)
- what you hope to get from running your business. (For example financial rewards, personal achievement, independence, business success.)



- how much money you need to live per week, month or year including the effect of gaining or losing any benefits or working tax credit that you may be entitled to
- what gross income your business needs to make to give you the money you need to live on
- the benefits and disadvantages of running your own business
- what you need to put into your business to make it work and how this affects your lifestyle
- how to analyse your aims in the short term (one year), medium term (two to three years) and long term (four years or more)
- the difference between your own personal needs and the needs and aims of your business
- how to identify risks and how much risk you feel comfortable taking

Your skills

- what technical skills and experience you have in making the product or providing the service
- what operational skills you have which will make your business work. (For example getting supplies of raw materials, maintaining equipment, monitoring quality, providing administrative support.)
- what managerial skills you have in areas. (For example marketing research, developing a business strategy, new ideas and creativity.)





Improve your business skills

You need to make sure that your skills meet your business needs and keep pace with your business as it grows or changes. Improving your skills will help to keep your business successful.

This involves making sure that:

1. you work out what skills you need to improve
2. you find out about how to develop your skills
3. you make plans
4. you put your plans into practice

What you need to do

- decide what skills you need to develop and what might stop you doing this
- set clear targets to develop your skills
- link your own skills targets to your business targets
- think how developing your own skills will affect the success of your business
- find out about opportunities for developing your skills and identify the costs and benefits involved
- decide how you will develop your skills before you approach contacts for advice and support
- make sure that the cost of any development is agreed in advance, along with the methods you will use to judge the effectiveness of the development
- make any changes that will help improve what you do and what your business does
- set yourself new targets when previous targets are met

What you need to know and understand

Your skills

- what you need to be able to do in the short, medium and long term to run your business successfully. (For example paperwork, sales, marketing, finance, production, purchasing, business law, getting supplies, maintaining equipment, monitoring quality, getting publicity, writing promotional materials, strategic thinking, communication, dealing with stakeholders, leadership, negotiation, decision-making, problem-solving and delegation.)



- how to decide which skills and knowledge you need to develop and who might be able to help you decide
- who might be able to help you develop your skills and knowledge
- what might make it difficult for to develop your skills and knowledge
- what different ways there are to develop your skills and knowledge and where to find out about them. (For example books, the internet, business advice, business mentoring, other businesses and contacts, workshops, conferences, training programmes and courses.)
- how to work out the benefits and costs of developing your skills and knowledge. (For example, the fees, loss of time, extra wages for substitute staff.)
- how to make sure that developing your skills and knowledge will help your business
- what things affect your own ability to identify your needs and to plan your self-development programme
- what the self-development plan involves, and how regularly it should be updated

Information and advice

- what kinds of free and paid-for help are available to businesses. (For example from business associates, non-executive directors, business advice centres, business advisers, counsellors or mentors, accountants, lawyers, banks, financial advisers, trade associations and specialist consultants.)
- what subjects professional advice can help with. (For example long-term business planning, day-to-day business activities, finance, marketing and sales, staffing, information technology and the law.)
- where you can get professional advice and what sources of funding there are to help you pay for it, if you need to
- how to work out costs and benefits, and compare fees
- what questions you may need to ask to get the advice you require
- what the advice service can and cannot do when providing help
- why it is important to keep a record of the information and advice you get



Manage time in your business

You may well feel that there are just too many things to do and too little time to do them. It may be that you need to look at how you manage your own time and work out how to get things done more efficiently. This will help you to develop a method of reviewing your time management so that you can set new goals and recognise your achievements.

This involves making sure that:

1. you look at what you do and how you do it
2. you work out how long different activities take
3. you make plans for your day-to-day working
4. you monitor your time management
5. you try to find better more efficient ways of working

What you need to do

- think about what you do on a typical work day
- where appropriate, find out what any colleagues or staff do on typical days
- decide which parts of your job you are good at and which you are not
- decide if you generally do the work you plan to do
- identify things that get in the way of achieving what you expected
- identify things that make you feel good about your work
- identify if the things you do are cost-effective
- decide how you can use your strengths and weaknesses to your own advantage
- identify how you could improve your effectiveness and efficiency
- prioritise the improvements you have identified
- decide if there are any things that you do that could be done by other people
- plan how you will change the way that you carry out your work
- monitor your work to check improvements in your effectiveness and efficiency



What you need to know and understand

Your performance

- why it is important to be effective and efficient
- how to find out exactly what you do. (For example use a work log or diary and keep a note of how you spend each hour.)
- how to compare what you want to do with what you actually do. (For example use a work log to write down what you plan to do, then compare this with what you did, review your time a few days each month and note your goals and progress.)

Yourself

- what gives you a sense of achievement. (For example meeting a deadline, finishing a piece of work, closing a sale, getting praise from a customer.)
- your personal strengths and weaknesses in managing time
- what gets in the way of your work. (For example interruptions, stress, worry and tiredness.)

Time management

- how to plan work. (For example by setting short- and long-term targets, breaking down the targets into smaller activities, ordering the activities in terms of importance and urgency and estimating the time involved.)
- how you can save time. (For example making efficient use of meetings and communications, minimising interruptions, delegating tasks to others.)
- what information can be used for making decisions about managing time. (For example what you know and understand and what other people suggest.)
- what things can be used to show improvements. (For example things that can be measured like time taken, things that are difficult to measure like customer satisfaction or better working relationships.)



Seek advice and help for your business

There are many instances when you may need to get some advice or support to help you in your business. There are lots of different people, agencies and organisations that can help you in your business. They may provide general advice and information about setting up or running a business or advice and help that is specific to the products or services you produce. You will want to make sure that the advice you receive is

up-to-date, relevant to your business and meets your requirements.

This involves making sure that:

1. you know what help you need
2. you identify how and where to get the help you need
3. you get the help you need
4. you check that it meets your requirements

What you need to do

- identify your business requirements and the issues or problems you need to resolve
- identify the kind of help you need in order to take your business forward in the way that you would like
- work out where you can get information, advice and help to support your business
- identify the range of people and organisations that is available and select those that are likely to meet your business needs
- work out how to get the help you need and choose the most effective means
- work out the cost and benefits of getting different forms of help and advice
- decide when and how to make contact with those that you think may be able to help
- identify your needs and targets clearly before seek advice or support
- check that the help offered is suitable to your business needs, is well-founded and can be relied upon
- listen carefully to any advice that is offered and discuss any points that you don't understand
- decide if there is any further support that you need and could get
- keep records of the advice and support you have received and make a note of how well it matched your business needs



What you need to know and understand

Information and advice

- what your business needs are and what kind of help you might need.,(For example business planning or development, funding, location and premises, staff, ICT or marketing)
- what sources of advice and help are relevant to your business., (For example friends, relations, specialist advisers, business support organisations and government agencies at local, regional or national level)
- the best means of making contact to get the kind of help that you need. (For example telephone, email, internet, meetings or visits)
- what questions you may need to ask to get the advice you require
- what help and support contacts can offer to your business
- how to make best use of contacts and avoid overloading them
- how important it is to get the right kind of advice and help
- how to check that the advice and help you are considering is valid, sufficient, reliable, user-friendly and practical
- how to work out costs and benefits of support and advice
- whether or not there is funding available for any advice and support you need to pay for
- what support services can and cannot do when providing help
- why it is beneficial to keep a record of the information and advice you get and the extent to which it met your business needs