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# Log Your Work

by Kellé Campbell

WORK LOGS ARE HANDY TOOLS for saving time and boosting efficiency. Although these simple office-management tools are often overlooked, they can be adapted to a variety of uses:

**1. Update a traveling boss.** Keep a constantly traveling boss up to date with what's happening at the office by creating a daily log. Summarize essential (but nonemergency) information such as appointments, messages, and new tasks. Attach documents that need to be reviewed and list them and their deadlines in the log. If there tends to be a lot of information, create columns for different categories. You can update the log as you work and fax or e-mail it at the end of the day.

**2. Get organized!** A personal work journal on your computer can enhance your organizational skills in a hectic office. Using a word processor or spreadsheet application, create a table with columns denoting dates, times, task descriptions, and any follow-up required. Record your tasks and errands, the time they were completed, and the recipients, if any. That way, when someone interrupts your work to ask if you delivered those documents, contacted the travel agency, or spoke to accounting, you can bring up the task and its results on your screen instead of relying solely on memory.

**3. Coordinate team members.** Help the members of your department keep their team leader abreast of their projects by having them prepare regular summaries of their present, prospective, and completed undertakings. These summaries can be consolidated into a central log that allows the team leader and other supervisors to quickly review the overall progress of the department. The schedule for report submissions can be determined according to the department's work pace and the need for updates.

**4. Plan special events.** Logs are invaluable tools for event or project planning. They allow everyone to quickly see task assignments, interim deadline dates, the date of the task's actual completion, and any activities needed for follow-up. In her guide to executive manners, etiquette expert Letitia Baldrige recommends using a notebook with forms that cover issues such as security, press coverage, menus, invitations, and entertainment. Any additions or changes should be made immediately, and a backup notebook should be prepared in case of emergencies.

**5. Boost your career.** Recording your accomplishments will provide substantial support during salary, promotion, or new-hire negotiations. Document any profits or savings that you produced, establish a dollar amount, and include testimonials from clients or colleagues plus any other evidence of your worth that is likely to impress your boss.

You can easily create a log by using a notebook, a spreadsheet program, or a word-processing application, but if you prefer a ready-made format, there are several options available.

Business diaries or daily journals make excellent work logs, containing blank, lined pages for whatever information you wish to record. Personal organizers provide a more structured format with designated areas for task lists, projects, and reminder systems. Technological advances have also made available electronic handheld organizers with traditional features plus options such as e-mail.

If you prefer to keep your work log on your PC, there are several information-management programs available to help the busy office professional. The ones that may be most familiar are Microsoft's software programs. Microsoft programs that help you plan,

coordinate, and track activities include *Project* and *Team Manager*. *Microsoft Project* allows you to efficiently manage individual or departmental work by creating hierarchies among your projects and communicating with team members, using features such as *TeamAssign*, *TeamStatus*, and *TeamUpdate*. *Microsoft Team Manager* consolidates information on each team member's progress into one central file that provides up-to-date summaries of members' schedules and projects.

If team project coordination is not one of your regular duties, consider a personal information manager (PIM) software program, which will allow you to log your tasks or contacts and conduct group scheduling. Here is a list of some PIMs:

Claris Organizer: Claris,  
800-544-8554; [www.claris.com](http://www.claris.com)

Commence: Commence Corp.,  
800-688-7080; [www.commence.com](http://www.commence.com)

Day-Timer Organizer: Day-Timer  
Technologies, 800-225-5005;  
[www.daytimer.com](http://www.daytimer.com)

Ecco Pro: NetManage,  
425-885-4272; [www.netmanage.com](http://www.netmanage.com)

Info Select: Micro Logic Corp.,  
800-342-5930; [www.miclog.com](http://www.miclog.com)

Lotus Organizer: Lotus  
Development Corp., 800-343-5414;  
[www.lotus.com](http://www.lotus.com)

Microsoft Outlook: Microsoft Corp.,  
800-426-9400; [www.microsoft.com](http://www.microsoft.com)

Office Talk: Sareen Software,  
800-747-5914; [www.sareen.com](http://www.sareen.com)

Time & Chaos: Isbister International  
Inc., 972-495-6724; [www.isbister.com](http://www.isbister.com)

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