



Achieving more in a busy world

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But remember when it used to be fun?



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The early days are exhilarating. Every choice you make matters. Everything you do, whether it's sourcing suppliers and premises, or setting up your accounts system for the first time, feels like a positive step towards realising your dream. You're finally realising your lifelong goals of doing your own thing on your own terms. And it feels fantastic.

Imagine feeling like that again.



As your business matures, you and your team are faced with more and more tasks that must be completed every single day. Things like admin, accounts, timesheets, and expenses. These things matter. They need to be done. But when you and your team focus on these tasks, the real value-adding tasks can often fall by the wayside.

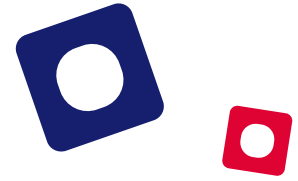
If you can focus on tasks that will make your organisation grow, you'll recapture the energy and the optimism of those early days. You'll feel like you're in control again, like you're successfully realising your dreams once more.

If you and your team are feeling stressed, or feel you've lost sight of your vision, we're here to tell you that you're not unhappy. You're just unproductive.

Focus on productivity, and running an organisation will be fun again.

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What would more productivity do for your organisation?

“Productivity” means different things to different people. But we’re sure most people would agree with this definition: Productivity means that everyone in your team is free to focus their time on work that creates value.

Imagine what you’d be able to achieve if everyone was free to make the most of every second they spend at work. If, rather than getting lost in a sea of admin and paperwork, they were instead able to draw from their talents, feel empowered through trusted autonomy, and make tangible contributions to a shared vision.

What would more productivity do for your organisation? You’d be able to offer your clients and customers a better quality of service. Your team would be happier and more engaged, and you’d see better working relationships across your organisation. Your relationships with your clients would likely improve too, as you’d be able to meet and exceed their needs as a matter of course.

But beyond all this, more productivity means a greater focus on the sort of work that creates value. Depending on who you are and what you do, the work that creates value can take different forms. If you work in the [care sector](#), for example, more productivity means you have more time to focus on your clients' health and wellbeing. If you work in [manufacturing](#), more productivity means a greater output, and perhaps more time to spend on research, development, and quality control. And if you run a pizza parlour, more productivity means shorter queues, more satisfied customers, and as you'll have more time to perfect your recipe, you'll create more delicious and satisfying pizzas.

So more productivity means you have more time to do whatever it is that you do best. It means that, rather than focusing on endless repetitive tasks, you and your team are instead able to dedicate yourself to whatever it is that drove you to start or join your business in the first place.



Chapter 2:

Why do so many organisations become unproductive?

It's all about the disconnect between core tasks and non-core tasks.

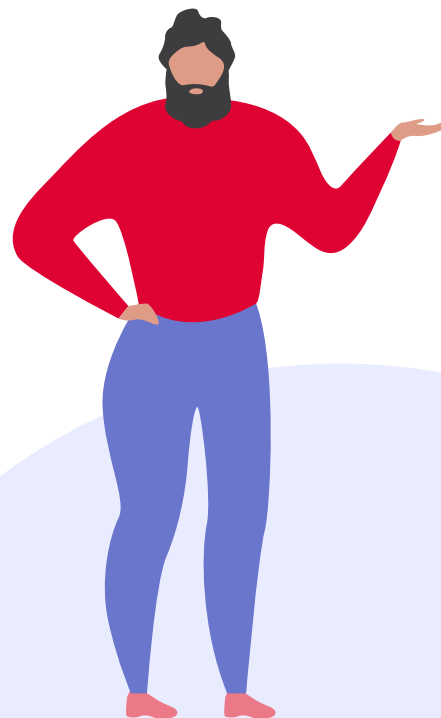
What's a core task? It's the sort of value-adding task we referenced above – making and selling pizzas, if you're a pizzeria. Tending to your clients' wellbeing if you're in care. Developing software if you're a software developer. You get the idea. These are the tasks that are going to contribute to your business's profits, your charity's mission, or the learning of your students if you're an educator. These tasks are your organisations' core reason for existing. That's why we call them core tasks.

What are non-core tasks? These are all the things that are essential to keep your business running. But they're extremely time-consuming, and they don't add any value. Things like timesheets, admin, absence management, accounts, expenses, and invoices are all examples of non-core tasks. Ignore them, and your business cannot function.

But spend too much time on them, and your business cannot grow. And far too many organisations are spending far too much time on non-core tasks.

According to our research, employees spend 16% of their time on non-core tasks. All of this time adds up, so ultimately SME employees spend 26 days a year on non-core tasks. Meanwhile, mid-market organisations with between 300 and 500 employees lose nearly twice as much time to non-core tasks compared to smaller businesses.

That's right – the bigger your organisation gets, the more time you and your team must spend on non-core tasks. So the more you grow, the less productive you get.





Finding the source of the problem

Why does this happen? Why do productivity issues worsen as organisations grow? This happens for many reasons, and they're all in some way connected.

Too Much Data

What happens when your organisation grows? To help meet customer demand, you hire more people. You might even create whole new departments. The problem is that the more people you hire, and the more departments you grow, the more data you create.

Data can help you make more informed business decisions. But when you've so much data, where are you supposed to start? What are you supposed to prioritise? And with 98% of people interviewed saying they need to share data between teams weekly, but only a third of workers saying they have access to the info they need, it's clear something isn't working.

Not All Tech is Created Equally

Another problem with many organisations is that more often than not, departments just don't talk to each other. Or if they do, they struggle to share information and data in a meaningful way.

Why is this? It may be because, as your organisation expands, you'll invest in a wider number of different software systems. Your accounts team will have their own accounting software. Your marketing team will have their own software suites, and HR will use a completely different set of systems.

Each system will generate its own unique set of data, and people across your business might have to access this data. But more often than not, they simply cannot. Either their software systems do not communicate, or there's no framework or culture in place to enable data to be shared between departments.

Plus, not all software systems are built to be intuitive. How many people in your team are required to use systems that they simply don't understand? How much time have you spent training your people to use unwieldy software?

According to our research, 75% of software used by mid-market organisations are on separate platforms. It's all very well to invest in tech. But when your team has to rely on unintegrated and difficult to use software, they'll struggle to collaborate, they'll find it difficult to share data, and everyone will find it that little bit harder to get on with their job. What's more, there's the risk that using different data sets means we start to make the wrong decisions.



Organisations Try to Fix the Wrong Problems

If you want to improve productivity in your organisation, investing in technology is a great place to start. Unfortunately, far too many decision makers don't seem to view investment in tech as a priority.

How would you go about solving your productivity issues? [We surveyed a number of UK organisations about their productivity.](#) In our survey, we asked participants to rank their priority investments for productivity improvements. Across all sectors, the biggest priority investment areas are training, employee engagement, communication, and company culture.

These are all people-focused solutions. And it makes sense for businesses to prioritise these areas, as productivity is arguably a people problem. The thinking seems to go that, if you can help your workers to achieve more without working longer hours, then your overall productivity levels will rise. But it's not enough to make people better equipped to perform their core tasks. You also have to minimise the time they spend on non-core tasks.

Chapter 4:

So how do you remain productive as your organisation grows?

Let's sum up the problem:

- As your organisation grows, you'll get more people, more departments, and more data.
- It's essential that people across various departments can effectively share this data to enable productive working relationships and fruitful collaborations.
- You invest in tech, but it's not always effective in sharing data across the organisation. Plus, there's the risk that individuals in your team may find the tech you invest in to be too unintuitive to use.
- When you do try and address your productivity issues, you focus on the sort of solutions that won't really solve your problems. You invest in people, and you invest in technology, but don't have a solution that combines the two.

So what's the solution? How do you remain productive as your business grows? How can you make your life as a manager fun and exciting again?

You need to achieve a harmonious relationship between your people, your technology, and your departments. Essentially, you need to enable people across your organisation to spend more time on core value-adding tasks, and less time on repetitive non-core tasks, giving them the freedom to do more of what they love and that adds real value.

All of this is easier said than done, right?

Not at all. You know you need to invest in tech. All it takes to solve your productivity problems is to invest in the right tech.





Give People the Tools they Need to Succeed

Don't get us wrong: You still need to complete those non-core tasks. And things like [absence management](#), [expenses](#), and other [HR and admin tasks](#) won't take care of themselves. Or will they?

The right technology actually has the capability to automate many of those repetitive tasks. This will liberate your staff to focus on core tasks – the value-adding activities that will delight your customers and help your organisation grow.

And it's important to focus on quality, not quantity. Rather than investing in a separate system for HR, a separate system for accounts, a separate system for marketing, and so on, you could see real benefit from investing in a system for everyone – one that any individual from any department can use.

The Importance of an Integrated Platform

An integrated platform is a secret weapon. It just might be the single most important asset of a truly productive business. Let's take a look at some of the ways in which an integrated system will help to solve your productivity problems:

🔗 A single source of data

93% of the people we surveyed said they need to access information or insight from colleagues either on a daily basis, or a weekly basis. Data sharing needs to be a deeply-ingrained part of your company culture. With an integrated platform, rather than separate sources of data for each team and department, you'll have a single source of data that starts to break down silo working, one which everyone can access as and when they need it.

🔗 Department-agnostic reporting

We asked earlier – when you're approached by your HR team and your accounts team, both with different reports advising different courses of action, who's right? Technically, they both are. But how are you supposed to decide what to prioritise? With an integrated system and a single source of data, your reports will be department-agnostic. You won't have to risk alienating any member of your team through favouring one department over another. Instead, you can make more informed business decisions based on insights gleaned from your operations as a whole.

◉ **Integration with back-end processes**

Every little task that's necessary to keep your business running – from absence management to dealing with [invoices](#) – can be integrated into your system. You can draw data from every aspect of your operations. And with job-specific apps to automate the most repetitive tasks, you can free everyone from the burden of admin. Your support staff will be more efficient in their roles, and your front-line staff will be free to focus on core tasks that add value and delight customers.

◉ **More satisfied staff**

Ever swore at a computer? We've all been there. But when your employees struggle to use the systems you've given them to do their jobs, are they resenting the systems, or are they resenting you? Give everyone the tools they need and you'll make their lives easier and their jobs more rewarding. And because everything's integrated and many things are automated, you'll find there's less need to micromanage everything. Every member of your team will feel more trusted and autonomous, and better placed to work towards your shared vision.



All this saved time, and all these shifts in focus – they'll go right to the top of your business. Right to you.

You too will spend less time worrying about those time-consuming non-core tasks. Instead, you'll be able to focus on your own core tasks as a manager. Rather than simply keeping things running through repetitive admin tasks, you'll be able to focus on achieving your vision and realising your dreams.

Think about why you started or joined your organisation in the first place. When you don't have to worry about minutiae, your ultimate goals can become your focus again.



Chapter 5:

Ready to change your way of thinking?

Too many organisations struggle with productivity, because they all too often think about people first and solutions second. Instead, you need to think about both at once. Your priority needs to be on acquiring and implementing integrated intuitive software that solves all of your problems – disparate teams working with disparate systems – in a holistic way.

You need a balance of people and technology. Want to know how to get there? Want to find out how to achieve more in a busy world? [Read our report](#) on productivity trends. You'll learn more about the mindset and the priorities that are holding so many business owners back. And you'll learn how to reframe your thoughts to improve productivity and fall in love with your job again.





About the Access Group

The Access Group has been recognised in The Sunday Times Tech Track 100 in 2019 and is a leading provider of business software to mid-sized UK organisations. It helps more than 20,000 customers across commercial and not-for-profit sectors become more productive and efficient. Its innovative Access Workspace cloud platform transforms the way business software is used, giving every employee the freedom to do more.

Established in 1991, The Access Group, with an enterprise valuation of over £1 billion, employs more than 2,000 staff.