

“When I started I did not consider making journalism a career, but now I can earn money doing something I enjoy – life doesn’t get much better!”



When I was at school my English teacher was keen for me to pursue a career in journalism. However, I thought I knew best and went to work for a bank. Thirty years later, having held management positions in banking and healthcare, I am now working as a freelance journalist.

I had often wondered whether I could write articles for magazines but had never had the time or the confidence to try. However, I saw the “Professional Freelance Journalism Course” advertised on the internet whilst I was browsing one day and as my boyfriend and I were taking time out to build our dream home in rural France, it seemed like the ideal opportunity to try.

I thought that the Course was relatively inexpensive and hoped it would live up to my expectations. I wondered if there would be enough support as it was all by distance learning. I need not have worried. My tutor was always helpful and encouraged me to ask questions as we went along. The Course content was excellent and showed me how to structure an article and approach a publication in a professional manner. I was amazed and thrilled when one of the first three magazines I approached agreed to me writing an article. I wrote a time management article which covered sharpening up your daily routine. I had

heard nothing after nearly three weeks and thought that they had not liked it but I then got an e-mail with a proof attached.

Seeing my article in print was an exciting experience and as it was read by several of my ex-work colleagues and friends I felt like a minor celebrity.

The title even featured on the front cover of the magazine which was even better.

The Course was very informative and I am sure I shall read many of the tutorials again and again. I was pleased that it was flexible enough to fit around my other commitments and found the advice and encouragement from my tutor beneficial. When I started I did not consider making journalism a career, but now I can earn money doing something I enjoy – life doesn’t get much better. I have submitted a further article to the magazine which they are publishing and I intend to approach other magazines with my ideas on a regular basis to see if I can turn this hobby into something a little more lucrative.

Joy Sutton

Please scroll to the next page to read Joy’s article

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Time management

Sharpen your daily routine, says **Joy Sutton**.

The current financial climate has made all of us look for ways to save money. Businesses now need to operate with the minimum number of staff working to optimum efficiency. Whilst you may often scrutinise staff performance, is there room for you to be more effective?

If you leave the office wondering where the day went and not having achieved any of the tasks you intended to get done you may feel inefficient and possibly stressed and anxious. By taking control of your time you can accomplish more and feel a sense of achievement. To do this you need to become 'time conscious' in all that you do. Think of time in monetary terms (that is, your hourly rate).

You should start by gaining an accurate

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picture of how you are spending time and particularly where time is wasted. Keep a log of your time, recording what you do for each 15 minute slot of the working day. Once you have an idea of how your time is spent, look for ways to streamline your daily routine. It helps to work in a way that fits with your own way of working and the operation of the practice. Consider when you are at your best and when events occur such as meetings, arrival of post and so on. Make sure you prioritise your tasks and schedule the most important at the optimum time of day. Saving



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● Think of time in terms of your hourly rate.

up tasks of the same type, for example, photocopying, and doing them together is more efficient than breaking off to do them individually.

Plan your day, allocating time limits to each task. This helps you to be realistic about what can be achieved in the hours available.

Stick to this plan and do not be distracted by events. I find it helpful to allocate set slots for dealing with emails as these can be disruptive. If tasks take longer than expected then ask yourself why, and what can be done differently to make it quicker if the task has to be repeated. We often underestimate the

- Become 'time conscious' and think of all tasks in terms of time and money (for instance, any task that takes you an hour costs £x).
- Find out where you are wasting time and change your behaviour.
- Plan your day and allocate time limits to each task. Stick to your plan and do not be distracted by events that occur.
- Try to reduce or prevent interruptions. Make yourself unavailable if necessary.
- Identify tasks which can be delegated or outsourced to free up your time.
- Examine the meetings you attend and decide if they are necessary or if they can be made more productive.

● Top tips for managers.

time a task will need, so build in some contingency time to allow for unforeseen problems such as printer breakdown.

If there are too many interruptions during your working day, you should analyse these and try to think of ways to reduce them in future. I used to be interrupted by staff asking for light bulbs which were stored in my office as my predecessor used to change them. By training others and moving the stock the problem was solved. If there are times when you don't want to be interrupted then make yourself unavailable. Explain to staff, divert the phone, shut your door.

Review your policy regarding taking calls from sales representatives. Should you refuse future calls as there may be better ways of keeping up-to-date with product development, or keep them to certain times or days?

You should review your role and identify any tasks which could be delegated to others. Are there tasks which are time consuming but perhaps do not directly influence the profitability of the practice? For example, giving up the editing of the practice newsletter releasing more time to review practice expenditure and obtain lower prices from suppliers may be a more productive use of your time.

Many managers find that the time spent in meetings is considerable. Do you need to attend all the meetings? Is a meeting necessary and if so could it be made shorter and more productive?

Improving your time management skills takes time and relies on you changing your behaviours to work in a more efficient way. The key is to always be in control of what you do and to focus on your objectives for the day. You should then leave the office with a sense of achievement and satisfaction. ■

About Joy Sutton

After working for a major high street bank for 23 years, mostly in business finance, Joy worked as a practice manager in a rural GP surgery. She loved the challenges and variety of the role and although it was a steep learning curve, many of the skills and experience she had gained previously were invaluable, particularly as the role was becoming much more business focused. It all changed when she and her boyfriend moved to France last year and from whence she wrote this article.