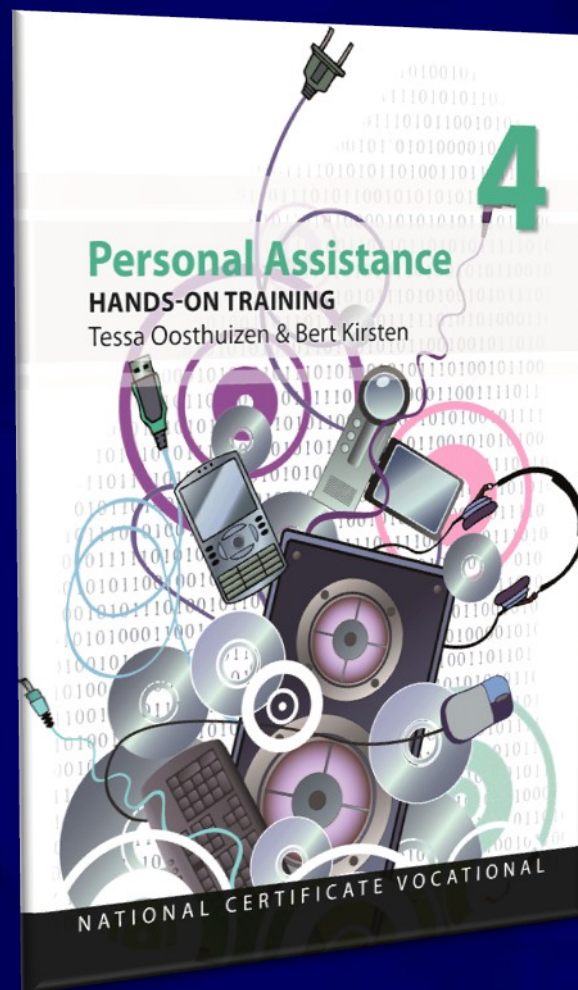# Personal Assistance 4

Module 6: Measure and improve single factor productivity at a workstation

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- **After completing this module, you will be able to:**
  - Measure single factor productivity and assess causes of its current levels
  - Plan the actions required to improve single factor productivity
  - Implement and evaluate the effectiveness of actions to improve single factor productivity

1. Measuring single factor productivity

- *After completing this subject outcome, you will be able to:*
  - measure single factor productivity through the correct application of the output-input ratio
  - identify the current causes of levels of labour productivity using the appropriate measurement tool
  - identify the current causes of levels of material productivity using the appropriate measurement tool
  - identify the current causes of levels of capital productivity using the appropriate measurement tool.

1.1 The output-input ratio

- **Productivity = output / input**
- **Productivity in terms of monetary gain**

Activity 1

1. What is the monetary value of the productivity of an outbound call centre agent who is paid R1300 a week and sells an average of R2150 per day?

2. A baker works at a large supermarket. He bakes 4000 rolls a day in his 7-hour shift and is paid a monthly salary of R4900 for an average of 21 days work a month. What rand value of his labour does each roll cost?

Performance standards based on:

- **Past history**
- **Technical output**
- **Benchmarking practices**

Activity 2

Indicate whether the following employees are performing at a rate that is lower, equal to or higher than expected. Show your calculations.

2. John is a machinist who produces widgets in a plastics factory. His machine can produce 400 in an hour. At the end of a seven-hour shift, John has produced 2650 widgets.

3. Nosiphiwo is a data capturer working at a large medical aid. She is required to update 220 files a day in the seven-and-a-half hours that she actually works per day (excludes her breaks). She is managing to update an average of 33 files each hour.

4. Sannie works in the call centre. She works a six-hour shift and answers an average of 20 queries each hour. Her target set is 600 per five-day week. 4. Thembi is a PA to a very busy senior manager in a corporate company. She is responsible for keeping his diary, organising meetings and taking minutes as well as other tasks like travel bookings etc. She is extremely busy every day and hardly takes breaks in order to keep up with the work. One week, she sends out the minutes of the management meeting on the Thursday instead of the scheduled Tuesday.

1.2 Labour productivity levels

Absenteeism

Internal departments

Materials and equipment

Office conditions

Educational qualification

Training and development

Other factors

Activity 3

Consider the labour productivity in your SIM business – both positive and negative aspects.

2. List any of the factors mentioned on page 36 or others that you can think of that are currently impacting your business' productivity levels. Think carefully about all the employees and the individual concerns that they may have.

3. Rank the negative factors from most common / problematic (1) to the least.

4. How have you identified these factors? What measuring tools have you used for the various jobs or departments?

1.3 Material productivity

Quality control of materials	Availability of materials
Wastage of materials	Stock losses and shortages

1.4 Capital productivity

- **Assets should be made to 'sweat'**
- **However, asset maintenance is vital, as capital can fail if neglected.**

Activity 4

Consider the material and capital productivity in the following case study.

2. List the negative factors.

3. How would you measure each of these factors?

Activity 4

Trend Printers is a small company that specialises in outsourced printing of large documents like reports for corporate clients. They are contracted by Sumner's to print their annual report. The cover page is printed in colour and the rest in black and white on glossy paper. The reports need to be properly bound and delivered by Friday. The order is confirmed via e-mail on Monday and the information is electronically attached.

An employee is assigned to print the order and to pass it on to the binding department by Wednesday in order for them to complete the job by Friday morning so that it is ready for delivery.

The printer immediately actions the order. He sees, though, that he does not have enough glossy paper and asks that it be ordered. It arrives on Tuesday and he starts printing. He prints all the copies on the colour machine as he forgets that the rest of the pages are monochrome. This toner for the colour machine is more expensive than the normal black printer. He then notices that the new batch of glossy paper is a problem, as some of the ink has "bled" on the page. He has to reprint these pages once he has ordered new paper. This causes a further delay and he is unable to complete the work on Wednesday. The job goes to the binding department on Thursday but their machine has broken down and they are waiting for a spare part to arrive. It arrives in the afternoon and they start the job. In their rush, they mix a batch of glue incorrectly and have to throw it away as it sets before it can be used. They mix another batch and but only complete the job late on Friday. The PA at Sumner's calls, as she has to have the reports ready early on Monday for the meeting. The driver takes the order but gets caught in traffic and only gets there at 5.30 pm. The PA has waited but is furious as she was due to finish at 4.30 pm.

Assignment 1

- **Write a report for the CEO/MD of your SIM business on what you view to be the current positive as well as negative productivity factors in the business.**

- **Cover as many aspects as possible of the following:**
  - **1. Labour productivity**
  - **2. Material productivity**
  - **3. Capital productivity**

- **How is this affecting and impacting the SIM business?**

2. Improving productivity

- **After completing this outcome, you will be able to:**
  - outline the causes and effects of current levels of labour, material and capital productivity, giving examples from an organisation
  - define the target to be achieved and actions required to improve the single factor productivity in conjunction with others
  - define the role and responsibilities of others involved in improving single factor productivity for an organisation
  - identify the actions to be taken to address the causes of current levels of single factor productivity, with time frames for each
  - compile a plan with the objectives, targets to be achieved, the roles and responsibilities of all people involved and the time frame for implementation in an appropriate format.

2.1 Personal productivity

- **Fear of change**
- **Uncertainty**
- **Time pressures**
- **Habit**

Motivating changes within ourselves

- Understand that the change may help you to be more effective and thus more valued in the organisation.

- See the value and satisfaction in personal development.

- Know that changes may lead to possible promotion or further skills training.

- Focus on the positive outcomes or benefits rather than the negatives.

Time management tips

- **Set realistic goals**
- **Identify when you are most productive**
- **Use task lists**
- **Use the Pareto rule**
- **Use a diary**
- **Use a time fit strategy**
- **Consider the environment that you work in**
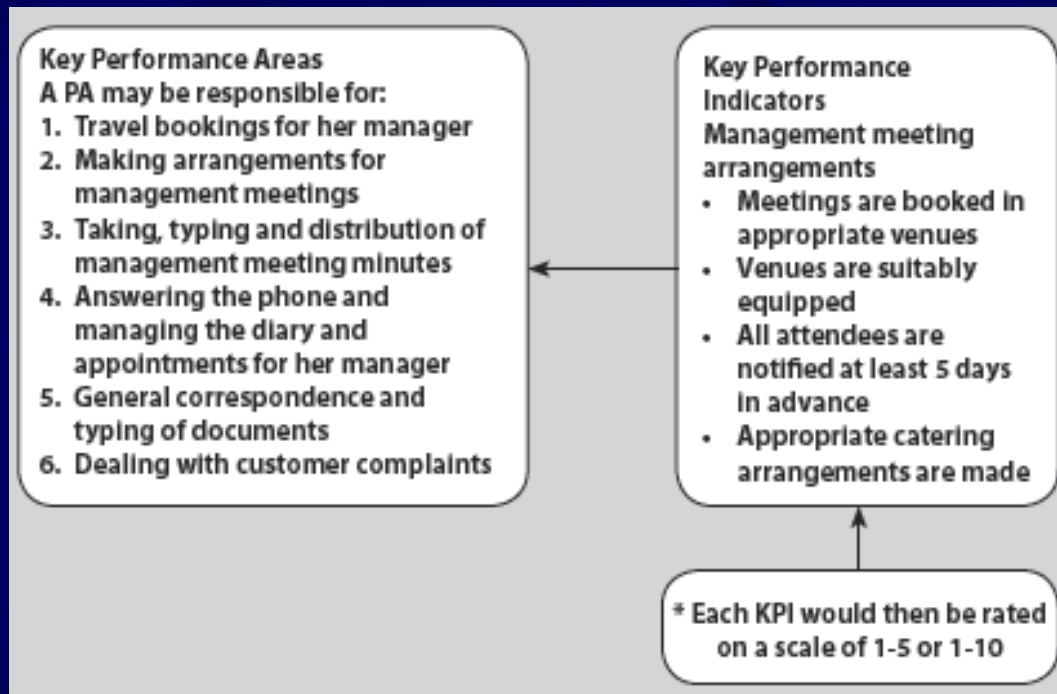- **Avoid procrastination**
- **Plan**

Activity 5

- **Discuss in groups how you can use the time management stages to improve your productivity and performance in your SIM businesses.**

- **Record your ideas and share them with the class.**

- **Then reflect on which ideas you can implement in your particular SIM position.**

2.2 Establishing current productivity levels and expectations

- **KPAs – drawn from job description**
- **KPIs**

Key Performance Areas

A PA may be responsible for:
1. Travel bookings for her manager
2. Making arrangements for management meetings
3. Taking, typing and distribution of management meeting minutes
4. Answering the phone and managing the diary and appointments for her manager
5. General correspondence and typing of documents
6. Dealing with customer complaints

Key Performance Indicators

Management meeting arrangements
- Meetings are booked in appropriate venues
- Venues are suitably equipped
- All attendees are notified at least 5 days in advance
- Appropriate catering arrangements are made

* Each KPI would then be rated on a scale of 1-5 or 1-10

Activity 6

- **Draft KPAs and the related KPIs for the areas of responsibility that you hold in your SIM position. Be as specific as possible and include any relevant time frames, e.g. weekly report submitted every Friday, etc.**

Activity 7

- **Working in small groups, read the case study below.**

- **Identify areas of lower productivity and make suggestions as to how they can be improved. Remember to look at the situation from all aspects – labour, capital and material factors that can influence her productivity. Think creatively of how her problems could be resolved.**

Activity 7

Kathy is the receptionist at a busy promotions company. She handles all visitors to the business, answers the switchboard and has some general administration tasks like faxing and photocopying as well. Kathy is required to answer the phone within three rings, using a standard greeting. There are many visitors that come to the business and she has to call the appropriate person to fetch them from the reception area. Her desk is often cluttered with papers, as people come and put faxes on her table that she needs to send. The fax machine is placed at one end of the long reception desk and the switchboard at the other end while the photostat machine stands just around the corner. Her manager notices that she often does not answer the phone in three rings, as she is standing trying to fax or copy documents and sometimes trips over her chair to get to the phone. She often forgets to use the standard greeting and says, "Hi, how can I help?" Kathy is very friendly and many clients that have visited the office have commented on how helpful and enthusiastic she is. She seldom has time to take lunch and she often eats at her desk. This is a problem when clients arrive or when the phone rings and she has a mouthful of food. She has to take messages for people who are busy and simply writes them on a notepad – she often forgets to include all the details, like the time of the call and what the person was calling about.

Roles and responsibilities

PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT PLAN					
Name:		**Job title:**			**Reporting to:**
Category/ Performance concern	**Standard**	**Action and support provided**	**Resources needed**	**Date**	**Outcome**
List any development needs (current or future) in the appropriate box or boxes below.	What performance has to be met.	List training or educational programme, job rotation, or mentoring activity to develop/improve skill performance. Who is responsible for organising/ training, etc?	Equipment, documents, etc.	List action timeline and reassessment date.	List results and/or accomplishments and related completion date.
Minutes of management meetings ineffective.	Minutes to be accurate and in correct format.	Mentoring and training from CEO's PA on recording the proceedings accurately.	Template to be provided for correct format of the minutes.	Training on Friday 21 May in preparation for meeting on Tuesday 25 May. Minutes to be ready on Thursday 27 May.	28 May: Minutes in correct format, only two small inaccuracies to be corrected by 31 May.

Activity 8

- Read the case study and draw up a Performance Improvement Plan for Anele as if you were her manager.

Anele was appointed in a position as Personal Assistant to the regional manager four months ago. Her manager is extremely busy and travels to other branches on a regular basis. He relies on her organisational skills, as she deals with much of his paperwork. Anele has settled in well and her manager has been pleased with her progress. When he calls, she is always able to provide him with the information he needs.

One of her KPAs is Administration: maintaining a filing system on both computer-based and in hard copy, according to company requirements:

- Hard copy must be alphabetical in relevant categories (e.g. budget, staff, meetings, travel arrangements, etc).
- Confidential documents of staff must be in a locked cabinet at all times in alphabetical order.
- Computer files are to be kept on the local drive and not on the desktop.
- Confidential files are to be placed in the secure folders provided. All files are to be named in the following way: Name of file. Date/month. Initials of creator, e.g. Management minutes. May. AD

Anele was ill for a week and a temporary staff member was called in to fill her position. The temp was instructed as to where to find documents but it was soon apparent that Anele had her own system and that she had not followed company procedure with regards to the filing.

- Confidential documents were in a tray on her desk waiting to be filed; those that were filed were not in alphabetical order.
- Minutes of meetings were not in the folder on the local network.
- Some computerised files were named correctly but others were not.
- The filing cabinet held alphabetically arranged files but there were no
- categories.

Assignment 2

- **Critically analyse your own productivity in terms of your KPAs and KPIs – are you working optimally? Think of at least three areas that you can improve.**

- **Use the format of the Performance Improvement Plan template to document how you plan to improve your productivity. Do not yet complete the "Outcome" column.**

3. Implementing and evaluating the improvements

- **After completing this outcome, you will be able to:**
  - carry out actions in time and in line with a plan
  - deal with contingencies in a manner that contributes to improved single factor productivity
  - establish actual improvements in single factor productivity compared to set targets
  - adjust the plan to ensure targets are achieved
  - record all measurements made, plans implemented and adjustments made to plans in an acceptable format to assist future planning.

Assignment 3

- **Use your Performance Improvement Plan and implement the ideas over a period of two weeks. Then evaluate the success by completing the "Outcome" column.**

Activity 9

- When Anele returns from sick leave, as her manager you call her in and show her the performance plan that has been drafted in order to get her input. She agrees that she has neglected the filing because she has been focused on other tasks but is willing to try to improve on the aspects that have been highlighted.

- After a month, you evaluate her progress.

3. Please complete the "Outcomes" column using the following information:
   - Confidential documents are now in alphabetical order but the cabinet is not locked during the day. This poses a risk if Anele goes to the bathroom.
   - Minutes of meetings are no longer on her desktop and have been filed in the correct secure folder.
   - All new documents have been named correctly but a few from the past months are still incorrect.
   - The filing cabinet has all the relevant categories and Anele has started refiling the files and has reached the letter "N".

4. What targets would you set for the next month?