

# Technology for Office Productivity

*By Raymond F. Posa, MBA*



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Often in business it is all of the little items that we take for granted that can have the biggest cumulative effect on the bottom line. It is very easy to dismiss items or processes as being too small to worry about; and if they were single events I would concur, but it is the little things that repeat on a regular basis that can really add up. A good example is light bulbs. When you switch from a 60 or 100 watt incandescent bulb to energy saving compact florescent that uses only 15 watts yet yields the same amount of light you are saving a large percent of power. If however we only addressed a single bulb, the savings would be so small as to not be noticed. When you start adding up all of the bulbs in several rooms then the cumulative effect becomes significant. Now, you are getting the same utility from the device, in this case the same amount of light, yet the cost of use has decreased over 400%. This will show up as a nice little savings each and every month, resulting in a significant savings at the end of the year.

The point being, we want to identify items or activities in the office that may be small, but cumulative and address them with technology that can add efficiencies. I spend a lot of time traveling between doctors' offices and get to observe the operations and styles of many practices. One of the most common things I observe that fits this scenario is that of tracking employee's time and payroll.

I see everything from the honor system to a sign in book to punch cards. From just a legal prospective I think we can all agree that what ever system you use must be written and or recorded. The days of the honor system unfortunately are long over. Having all of your employees on a fixed salary, can also pose labor board issues. If you are in a situation where you have your employees on fixed salaries, I would advised you to seek the opinion of a labor law attorney, just to be aware of any possible implications.

Far in a way, the most common method I find in use is the punch clock. The traditional punch clock with its paper slips. It is an old workhorse whose days are numbered. Ask any of your employees if they like the punch clock. Most will grumble about it, the card got stuck; the ribbon ran out of ink, the clock stamped over a previous time stamp, etc. The only reason why employee endures it is because it is mechanism by which they get paid. Have you ever looked at the cost of operating a punch clock? The first and most obvious is the time cards themselves. You are replacing these on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. You have the cost of the ink for the time clock, the cost of the batteries or the electricity to run the clock. You have the initial cost of the time clock which is several hundred dollars.

Those are the obvious in your face costs; but what are the subtle "hidden" costs. First, depending upon your state, you may be required to keep the time slips for a number of years. You know have to deal with organizing and storing the cards. This will involve someone's time to sort and store as well as the physical space to store them. The real cost behind time cards is the time involved for the person who has to process the cards for payroll. They have to go line by line and do the math to determine the days hours, then they have to calculate the week's hours, then the pay period hours and then repeat this for each employee. The pay roll process can take hours to complete. You also have to now factor in the human element of the person processing the data. Did they calculate a day's hours wrong? Did an employee get underpaid or over paid? If they did it either cost the practice by paying out more than it should or you have an irritated employee who is taking time out of the work day to correct a clerical error, as well as the person who has to correct the error.

I have found a great solution to this. It is a software program called Punch Clock. It is actually a very simple program that runs on a PC. It has a very clean simple interface where by an employee selects their name and clicks on the word IN or OUT and the program will only let

them click on or the other depending upon the last click, this way an employee can not click in twice without punching out. The program also has the ability to require an employee to enter a pin number, so that only the employee can clock themselves in or out. That is the neat wiz bang on the front end that employees love, but the real power is on the back end, for the administrator.

The program calculates all of the hours for each employee and process the payroll for the whole office with a simple click on the administrator reports menu and payroll is done in a matter of minutes. The administrator also has the ability to quickly adjust individual punches for employees in case they forget to punch in or out. The program also keeps a complete history of all punches for all pay periods.

If you would like more information on this product or if you have any technology related questions you may contact me at [Rposa@rfrancis.com](mailto:Rposa@rfrancis.com).

*Raymond F. Posa, MBA. President and founder of R. Francis Associates. R. Francis Associates is in its fifteenth year of operation. Mr. Posa comes from a background in the Aviation and Military Defense Industries. After receiving a BS in Airport Management and an MBA in Information Systems, Mr. Posa spent several years as a database programmer and project manager for several military projects. It was this background that helped hone a unique skill set of analyzing the operations of small companies and medical practices and applying appropriate technological solutions. R. Francis Associates was awarded the 1999 Circle of Excellence Award for best small business in Monmouth County, NJ, by the Western Monmouth Chamber of Commerce and recognized by the New Jersey State Legislature for this accomplishment. Mr. Posa is a national speaker and writer on technology and HIPAA related topics. He has been published in Podiatry Management, and was a guest speaker at the APMA national meeting in Washington, D.C. Mr. Posa serves as the Technology Advisor to the American Academy of Podiatric Practice Management as well as a member of The Board of Trustees (AAPP).*