

7462-323 Level 3 Diploma for Legal Secretaries
7465-323 Level 3 Award in Proof-reading in the Legal Environment
February 2010 Proof-reading Test Answer

Write the correct answers below

PRIORITISATION AND TIME MANAGEMENT SKILLS

The legal secretary **possesses** a multitude of skills. Amongst these skills is the ability to prioritise tasks. This sounds like a matter of common sense as it is obvious that something that is urgent must be done before something that is not. **However**, it is not always that simple. For example, you may be responsible for the work of several Fee Earners. If they all have urgent work to be completed on a particular day, how will you deal with **it?** You may find that you have constant interruptions. Dealing with clients' telephone calls, e-mails and general correspondence can be a time-consuming process. Do not constantly check your **e-mails**. Discipline yourself to check them at certain times during the day (unless, of course, you have been told that an urgent e-mail is **imminent**).

Prioritising is essential in order to make the best use of **everyone's** efforts. It is especially important to prioritise when you have limited time and seemingly unlimited demands. You must allocate your time where it is most needed. This will then free you up from less important tasks that you can attend to later in the day. By developing an efficient time management system your workload should become less **chaotic** and reduce your stress levels.

Consider whether you are able to delegate certain tasks to other colleagues. Delegation is regarded as an essential part of a **manager's** job. However, a legal secretary also has to manage, both a busy office and a heavy workload. If you are able to effectively delegate work to a colleague it could provide them with motivation and a feeling of worth. It could assist in your **colleague's** professional **development**. This allocation of tasks and responsibilities would help you to manage your workload more efficiently.

Daily action **plans**, lists and use of your electronic **diary**, are effective ways to ensure tasks are allocated a time for their completion. The completion time should reflect when in your day you can be most productive. Some urgent tasks are better attempted when you are less tired. **Adherence** to timelines will enable you to establish routines for task completion and ensure the effective use of time. This should enable high priority tasks to be satisfactorily completed by the required deadlines. Try not to panic if you have to re-arrange priorities because an even more urgent task suddenly **crops up**. It may be that a Fee Earner requires a draft Will to be typed for a client's appointment in 5 **minutes'** time. A **solicitor** may be exasperated that you have still not completed the statement which he requires in court that morning. This could have a knock-on **effect** and targets that were not initially very urgent might now have become urgent too.

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Once you have organised times for your tasks, adhere to them. Your time management system will become out of control if you **waiver** too much from the times allocated. Legal offices are hectic environments and therefore the need to manage time is essential. Prioritise your tasks in order of High (H), Medium (M) and Low (L) priority, starting at the highest priority. When **prioritising** tasks and setting timescales, follow the simple rules below:

- Be realistic when setting deadlines for completion
- Undertake the priority or most difficult task while your energy levels are high
- Allocate a set time each day for difficult ongoing tasks
- Do not be tempted to put everything into a 'pending' or 'jobs to **do**' file
- Highlight any specific deadline dates so they are not **missed**
- Aim to complete some tasks in advance of their deadlines

There are many benefits of good time management. It could work to your advantage as increased job performance and promotion may result. Your legal company is a business and therefore must be profitable. From the company's **perspective**, it may well achieve productive, competitive and financial benefits from the observance of good time management **practices**. It is **pertinent** to note, however, that maintaining time management to continually improve attainment of targets is only possible if **employees'** behaviours change. Members of staff must respect each individual's need for time to complete tasks. Strategies for **effective** task completion should be regularly worked upon at team **meetings**.

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