



My Business Ate My Evenings!

How to make running your own business as empowering and rewarding as you always thought it would be

Introduction

You love your business but, much like a clingy puppy that follows you into the bathroom, you'd love it more if it would just leave you alone every once in a while.

That's what we're here to help with. We at Appointeddd are all about helping businesses grow and succeed, while making life easier for the entrepreneurs behind them.

In this guide, you'll find top advice on how to:

- Use the tools at your disposal to streamline business admin
- Free up your time with some help from automation

So without further ado, let's get started.

Rescue Your Weekend

Cutting down on after hours admin

So you want the self-managing benefits of business ownership but the ability to go home and switch off like you did in your 9-5 job. This might seem like the kind of situation the saying 'You can't have your cake and eat it' was made for, but we think you absolutely can.

If you find your work carrying on into your evenings and weekends, the reason could be something you hadn't considered before: your secret love of 'busywork'.

A [study by the University of California in 2014](#) had some interesting conclusions about 'busywork' such as filing and emailing: they found that, despite people claiming to prefer being challenged by their work, we actually tend to secretly enjoy doing these kind of menial tasks and will sometimes choose to do them over more important jobs. The reason, which you probably already know on some level, is that they're easy -- i.e. they don't require much mental effort, but doing them makes you feel like you've accomplished something. They're high in satisfaction and low in stress, making them weirdly appealing.



But just because you feel like you're being productive by tootling along with chores, doesn't mean you are. By allowing yourself to spend time doing these satisfying but ultimately unnecessary tasks, you're only stealing precious time from yourself later on.

Our advice here could simply be to stop prioritizing low-priority tasks over high-priority, but we're going to do you one better. This is how to completely get rid of certain types of 'busywork', thereby removing temptation, through the magic of automation.

Self-scheduling appointments

It's already easier to take appointments since you replaced the appointment book with your virtual calendar, but it can be completely hassle-free once you start taking self-service bookings online. The Appointedd booking apps can be embedded on any webpage, or directly onto your Facebook page, to let customers book themselves in for an appointment without you having to lift a finger, let alone the telephone. Once a booking is made, you can see it appear in the Appointedd calendar and any connected external calendars. Plus, whenever you receive a new booking you'll receive a notification either via email or SMS, so you're always informed.

You can even take bookings online without a website since every Appointedd account comes with a free standalone microsite where customers can book with you.

No-action-required customer communication

Whenever a booking is made through Appointedd -- either booked online or entered manually into the calendar -- the customer receives a confirmation that includes all the details of their appointment. A reminder is also sent automatically at a set amount of time before the event, which users have found dramatically reduces the number of no-show customers. Rescheduling or cancelling the appointment also triggers an automatic message, so there's no need to worry about mix-ups.

Magical marketing

You can even automate your marketing efforts with the CRM tools mentioned in the first chapter, or with Appointedd's internal marketing suite. Here you can set up automated notifications to be sent out to customers, triggered by certain events -- such as their birthday -- or where they are in their customer journey. These could offer a special discount, a free gift, or simply thank them for their custom and remind them to book their next service online.

Automated accounting

When you do away with your ledger and calculator in favour of one of the many excellent accounting systems we mentioned earlier, it's not just paper and ink you're saving. It's actually possible to automate almost your entire turnover process. Here's how.

Start taking payments online

When you use Appointeddd, you can take full payment or a deposit for a service at the same time as the booking is made online. The payments are made through Stripe, which is one of the cheapest ways to take payments since it has no subscription costs, just a very small percentage charge on transactions. It takes a matter of minutes to set up, and the payments go straight to your bank account.

Send automatic invoices

If you prefer to send invoices for services after the fact, you can also automate this process with systems like FreeAgent, which can be configured to pull the information from a booking made through Appointeddd into an invoice and automatically send it for you. FreeAgent will even send automatic reminders when payments are late so you really don't have to do a thing.

Track your turnover

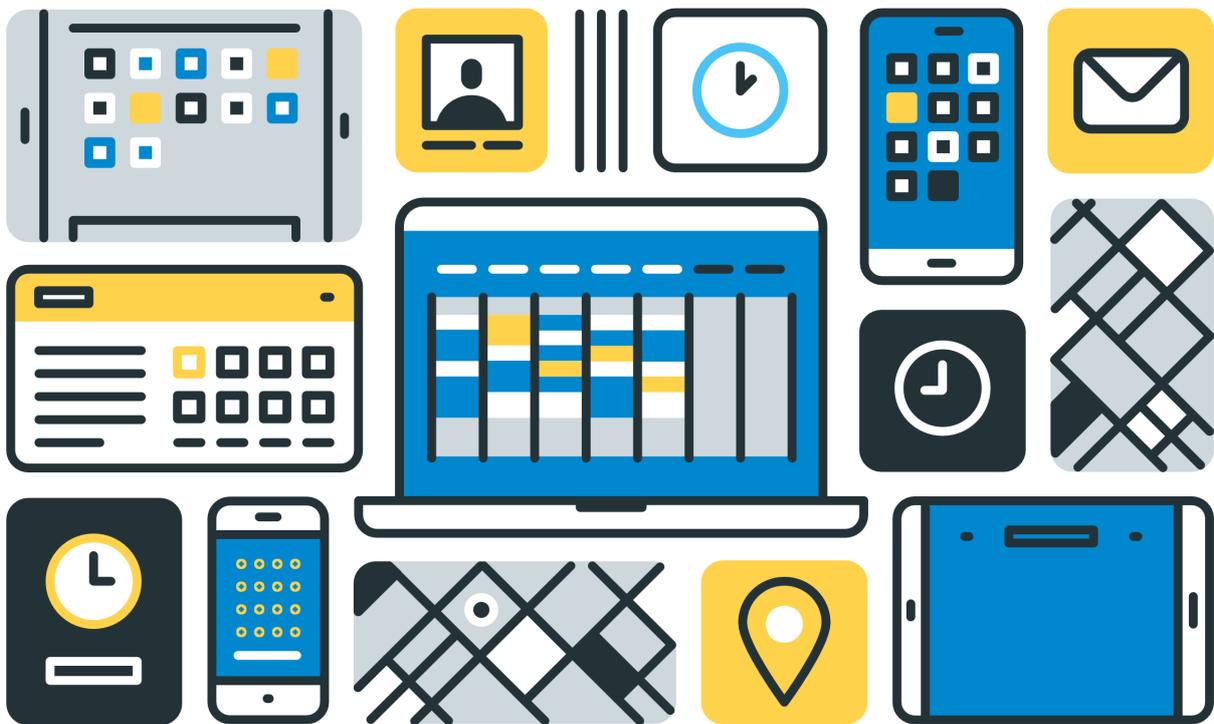
Any accounting system worth its salt will enable you to track your daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly net income and profit at a glance, no spreadsheets required. When you're taking payments online or invoicing through your accounting system, this will be automatically updated to reflect the current state of your finances.

Keeping tabs on expenses

FreeAgent also lets you keep track of your expenses on the move by simply scanning your receipts. Then you can group them into different expense categories to make things simple at tax time. Speaking of which...

Filing tax returns

If you're in the UK, FreeAgent can even automatically fill in your self-assessment tax return from the information it has dealt with over the year and send it off to HMRC for you, all from within the system.



Save the Trees, Save Time

Going Paperless

Paperless? No way, I'd never cope without my appointment book/organizer...

Paper is great. It's there for you when you want to pen a heartfelt letter or make an origami plesiosaur -- but it's also great at getting lost, being coffee-stained, and generally getting in the way. Not to mention, paper is labor-intensive: everything from updating a customer record, to rescheduling an appointment, to sending an invoice requires a process of seeking, finding, changing, creating, printing, filing...

But I have a system! I know where everything is, it only takes a minute.

OK, but imagine it didn't even take a minute. Imagine if all those individual minutes you spend working with physical materials were suddenly freed up to do, well, whatever you want. How much extra time do you think you'd gain?

In this section, we're going to take a look at all the ways you can use the tools and technology at your disposal to streamline your processes, manage your finances more easily, and gain access to all your essential information wherever you are via the cloud. Speaking of which...

The Cloud

You might have been intimidated by the idea of the cloud. For those accustomed to the concept of storage on hard drives, the intangible nature of this ephemeral 'cloud' of data can sound insecure and unsettling. But in all likelihood, you're actually already using the cloud without thinking about it: every time you access your Google drive, download an app, or stream music, that's the cloud you're using!

The cloud provides an easy and cheap way to take your business paperless, as the elasticity of its capabilities means you don't have to keep filling up external hard drives as backup. Perhaps the biggest advantage of utilizing cloud computing,

however, is that it exists independent of a physical space (i.e. your laptop) so that the data you store there can be accessed on many different devices, wherever you can connect to the internet (like signing in to your Google account and being able to see your files).

The cloud is also as reliable as you need it to be, as long as you use systems that work on the secure https protocol and protect your accounts with strong passwords.

So you see, the cloud is your friend. Now let's take a look at some of the tools that work through the cloud and how they can make for smarter admin management.

Trading in the appointment book

When it comes to managing your business there's really no contest between the organizational superiority of an online/digital calendar system and a physical calendar. It saves the process of flipping through pages to the correct date while your customer waits patiently on the phone; it removes the issue of having to scrub out a cancelled appointment and scrawl a replacement on top. Not to mention, it allows you or any of your team to view the calendar wherever they are, which immediately cuts out that "Could you just check what time my first appointment is tomorrow...?" phone call and all associated time wasting.

Appointedd's calendar is designed to work as a virtual appointment book, only better. You can create a new booking in just a few seconds, taking advantage of existing service details and customer records to make the process quick and save everyone time.

If you already use an online calendar such as Google, iCloud, Office 365, Outlook, etc. then you can stick with what you're used to while still taking advantage of Appointedd's online booking tools (more on that later). Appointedd has a two-way sync with all external calendar systems, which means that appointments made in Appointedd appear in the external calendar and vice versa. Every resource (staff member) can have their own calendar authenticated, so the team can view and

manage their own bookings even if they don't have direct access to the Appointedd calendar.

Managing your finances without a ledger

There are so many different aspects to accounting and finances that it sounds like a grand claim to say you can easily manage them all in one place without ever touching a ledger or a calculator. But trust us, it's true!

There are a number of great bookkeeping apps and tools available to businesses of every size and shape that can help you with everything from invoicing to expense tracking to filling out your tax return. We've included our top picks here, and they all integrate with Appointedd to make admin even easier.

FreeAgent

This is one of favorite systems, not only because it's award-winning and one of the most complete accounting tools on the market, but also because our full integration with FreeAgent makes it seamless to use the two systems together as one. Here are just some of the things you can do:

- Easily and securely import appointment details into your balance sheet -- no adding of duplicate information needed
- Keep your balance sheet automatically up to date with your online bookings
- Create invoices seamlessly from appointments in the diary or take deposits and payments online
- File your tax return with the click of a button

For users of FreeAgent there's also a special discount code when you sign up to Appointedd, [**find the code and more information here.**](#)

Quickbooks

Quickbooks is a top business accounting app that makes it easy to generate invoices, keep on top of finances, and manage payroll. You can integrate your Appointeddd account with Quickbooks really easily through our partner Maestrano, whose platform is totally free to use and allows the two systems to share data such as customer and booking information so that your accounts are always kept accurate.

[**Find out more about using Quickbooks with Appointeddd**](#)

Xero

Xero lets you keep on top of your cash flow wherever you are, on Mac, PC, tablet, or mobile. Track inventory, payroll, expense claims, and more. Xero also integrates with Appointeddd through Maestrano so that the two systems interact you can see KPIs from both systems side-by-side in whatever configuration you like on the customizable dashboard.

[**Read more about the Xero integration**](#)

Sage One

Sage One is a range of cloud based online accounting and payroll software, offering everything you need to run the accounts and payroll side of your small business or startup. Your Appointeddd account can integrate with Sage again via Maestrano. This gives you access to both apps with a single login and consolidates their cost into one convenient monthly payment, as well as enabling them to share data to make sure both systems are always accurate without having to duplicate information.

[**Find out more about the Appointeddd integration with Sage One**](#)

Keeping customer records

Keeping an accurate and up to date record of your customers' details is vital for (a) being able to contact them with information about their appointments, and (b) encouraging them to come back with some informed and relevant marketing. If you're noting down names, numbers, and emails in physical form or storing them in a spreadsheet, you'll know how much of a hassle it is. But there is an easier way!

As with accounting, there's a host of great CRM tools out there that could help you make a serious impact on not only how you store and manage your customer data, but also how you use it. Many of these can be connected to Appointedd: [SugarCRM](#), [Vtiger](#), [Dolibarr](#)... but to keep things simple you can use the CRM and marketing tools within Appointedd. The magic of this is that any customer details entered into the system, either through adding an appointment manually or via self-service online booking, are automatically stored so that you can easily find them later on. This completely removes the need for duplicating information, and allows you to communicate with customers directly from your appointment screen, as well as include them in your marketing campaigns.

Business, but not as we know it

It's easy to think that because your business isn't a multinational corporation you can't benefit from the latest technology to make your work quicker and easier. In fact, cutting edge tech is well within your reach, and with some canny methods, plus embracing your business in all its uniqueness, you can have the best of both worlds: a modern, thriving enterprise and your free time to do with as you please.

Enjoyed this free ebook from [Appointedd](#)? Now you can download the first in the series

The Single-Handed School of Marketing

Winning new and repeat business

Why not take a free trial for 14 days to explore what the system has to offer: there's no credit card required, and if you sign up during the trial period you get 10% off the price of your subscription forever!

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