

Working on Your Own – The Advantages

Sole technicians seem to be on the rise in our schools. As staff leave or retire and are not replaced, we are having to consider a new way of working. As with all things of this nature, there are multiple considerations, positives and negatives and health & safety implications. In this article, I will discuss the positives and the benefits of sole working. Yes, there are some!!

Firstly, I must identify what I mean by sole technicians and lone working. Lone working usually is taken to be a person working in a near-empty building. Health and safety is the paramount consideration in this scenario, but not the only one. However, the term sole technician can mean working as the only member of staff in the school who is a technician. You are surrounded by people and pupils daily but do not have peers, and you may not be considered a part of any particular team or department.



The Sole Technician

1. Working on your own has the benefit of increasing your productivity and efficiency. There are no team members to allocate jobs to, explain things to or consult. As long as you have everything prepared correctly and at the right time, it is up to you to get there. This allows for working in a way that suits you best. For example, you may prefer to prepare for each lesson separately (I call this a modular approach, and it is the one that suits me best), or you may prefer to work science by science or item by item. Greater concentration and faster job completion should result in fewer errors and happier teachers.
2. Make the job as fresh and challenging as you would like. The sole technician should have a complete overview of their work in each department and therefore be able to spot areas for improvement. Being able to make suggestions, streamline processes and generally make your own and teachers' lives better can be extremely rewarding. For those of us with a creative streak, we can indulge ourselves and make the job our own.
3. Conflict at work is unavoidable, but working without a team can greatly reduce the potential for this. There may be an odd clash with a teacher, but you can generally avoid the misunderstandings, personality conflicts, mismatched work ethics and differing viewpoints that come with teamwork. Smooth sailing is almost impossible, but at least you may not need the seasick tablets!!
4. Working as a sole technician can help to eliminate politics and focus on your job instead. Less need to focus on the personalities involved and hierarchy disputes or 'that isn't my job' conversations.
5. A more relaxed environment is frequently a benefit of being a sole technician. You can work away in your prep room with little interference. Put your favourite music on and enjoy a less formal workday.
6. Job satisfaction has a lot to do with "ownership". This is your 'baby', and you can take complete credit for a well-done job. So the staff around you can recognise your skills and organisational abilities.
7. There is no need to manage staff with all the extra duties involved. No need to allocate jobs, conduct assessments, calm hurt feelings or perform a hundred and one other duties.
8. Your reputation will be enhanced as you are seen as a go-getter, an organiser, and someone who does not have to depend on others for instruction and advice. You become an asset to the departments that you work in and become invaluable.
9. Safety can be enhanced by working alone. The only person in the prep room, your mind can focus completely on your task, and you can develop a system of checks and balances that works well for you.
10. A qualified and experienced technician working alone has the freedom to make important decisions themselves. These will be based on your experience, knowledge of their particular department/organisation, and frequently increasing the support you give to a higher standard.

The Lone Worker

1. No distractions, greater productivity, fewer errors, and faster progress.
2. Organise your work as you please.
3. Clear access to classrooms to complete jobs that take more time.
4. A relaxed atmosphere so less stress.
5. A good time to undertake the annual stocktake if you have several days.
6. Opportunity to do jobs that have been on the back burner for a while.
7. Health and safety can be at the forefront of your mind as you can concentrate fully on your task.
8. A great feeling of accomplishment as you work through all those in sequence and complete them all.
9. Time and peace to think about better ways to do things and impress teachers (and yourself) with your ideas.
10. Get organised and make your term-time work easier.

Well, that is for the advantages of being a sole technician and/or a lone worker. I hope that this has been informative and given pause for thought. This is by no means a comprehensive list, and I am sure a book could be written about it all!!

Feel free to submit comments, ideas, and opinions.

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