

Taking Business Support online: Working at a distance : The EEUK Way

As you take your business support and guidance fully online and start to work with all your clients at a distance, here are some tips to help you plan your approach.

If you have anything to amend/add, or can share any resources to help others, please email us at EEUK through alison@enterprise.ac.uk to help build this special collection of online materials.

Understanding your priorities and taking steps

Firstly, appreciate that your expectations, current commitments and plans, and well as the needs of your clients, have all changed. The working environment, traditional communication routes and access to personal support networks have also significantly changed for you personally, as it has for your clients and beneficiaries. This is going to impact on you, your clients and your approach to working with them and you will benefit from taking steps to establish appropriate new working practices that you can implement from the start.

Step 1: Recognise that these are unusual and unprecedented circumstances which will require significant changes that will be in place for a while. They will benefit from **planned and agreed change** within your team as well as with your client-relationships, so expect this to take some time.

Step 2: Get yourself set up to work online: establish your own working space, understand the available online options (for meetings, conference calls, and working with clients, whether SKYPE, Zoom, text or phone) and recognise the need for breaks in your day as well as considering how best to balance tasks within your work (between client time and ensuring full record keeping).

Check you are following your institution's approach to **capturing client/beneficiary interactions** and ensure that you are following institutional policy for GDPR (handling confidential data). Ensuring that you are keeping clear records of the work being undertaken, and use this to review what new data that you might wish to share as a team to help you build an understanding of client needs and create an agreed response to these new queries.

Step 3: Determine your priorities to offer help to those that need it most, and plan interactions and engagements with others once you have a clearer understanding of how to proceed.

Suggested priorities are:

1. **Self Employed Clients:** concerned about income, cash flow and clients
2. **Trading Businesses:** concerned about employees, responsibilities, cash-flow and customers
3. **Would-be business starts:** losing momentum/adjusting plans and expectations

In addition, your priorities to each are:

1. **Latest on CO-VID 19:** Understanding what is meant by latest guidance and restrictions on a personal level as well for their own business, their customers and their premises and approach.
2. **Supporting Income/cash flow:** ensuring the latest advice and support is provided (Government sources) and that steps are taken to support the business itself (working with suppliers, landlords, staff as well as customers) and exploring new channels (online; delivery etc).
3. Ensuring **Health and Wellbeing:** working within extreme and constantly changing situations requires balance and a clear focus on developing support structures, personal and professional networks.

A planned approach with each client/group could include:

Addressing the immediate challenges:

- Understanding responsibilities: Recognise the public health responsibilities of working within a global pandemic to yourself, your customers, suppliers and your business. Ensure these are adhered to throughout.
- Review Government support packages and business options to manage the cash flow and provide income

Addressing the impact of high levels of change:

- Understanding and supporting emotional responses (fear and loss)
- Ensuring health and wellbeing routines are maintained
- Establishing new routes / mechanisms to access support

Understanding Business options:

- Accessing Government packages of support
- Finding alternative approaches to delivering services if possible
- Exploring options with landlords, suppliers and banks
- Limit expenditure /review planned spend
- Recognise changes in community/social needs and explore opportunities

Plan for Change:

- Recognise need for clear communication (customers and staff)
- Expect that further change may impact on initial plans and develop approaches for “worst case” scenarios

Build for the future:

- Recognise the need to develop plans for the future
- Draw out learning from new experiences and build future capacity

In addition, EEUK are curating a library of online support so check for latest and consult:

- UK advice <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>
- Your own institutional advice and guidance /working practices/online support
- Government advice and support: such as <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/covid-19-support-for-businesses> including specific COVID-19 measures for trading businesses <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>
- Partner organisations providing support such as FSB advice <https://www.fsb.org.uk/campaign/covid19.html>