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A typical business organization achieves its workload by creating a series of tasks that are performed and performed as needed. These tasks may include purchasing materials, selling services, hiring employees, or responding to customers. Placing these tasks in a variety of organized and interconnected systems can benefit the company by introducing efficiency and order to the working day and eventually increasing the bottom line. Work systems enable daily tasks to operate in a coordinated manner and provide a basic framework for producing services and products. A work system is a collective effort and is designed when a particular task or goal is identified as requiring more than one person to achieve. Work systems include technology, information and business resources to create services or products for customers both external and internal. The person or persons who recruit others to operate within the work system must first define and organize the system that allows the goal to be achieved. The system must be defined to know what workers and machines are needed, what each will do and how the system will flow from one task to the next for maximum efficiency. There is no single type of work system because the concept of the work system is a shell that can be filled with your organization's goals and needs. Examples of work systems include an information system, a supply chain, an employee or customer service, and the system a buyer specifies when ordering a product from your organization. E-commerce websites can also be considered work systems that perform tasks such as marketing, customer service or managing transactions. Some work systems are designed to perform a task and then exit, such as a special project (conference, data collection) or a product that is produced for a specific time and then discontinued. Other work systems can be connected to form a larger working system, such as the work system that produces a product. For example, production systems for product production (production lines) link the supply chain work system (material purchase), the design work system (engineering system), and the packaging work system (producing a ready-to-buy product.) All work systems contain a number of elements that affect the work system. The elements are interdependent and operate together to create an entire system. These elements include the worker, task, organization structure, organization policies and policies, and organization leadership practices. The worker can be an employee or a contract worker. The task at hand includes what needs to be done and how the task should be performed. The organization's structure includes individuals, the roles in the company, and how the roles are related to the work to be done. guidelines include agreements, rules and statements that dictate the way must be completed. Leadership practices within the organization control and lead the implementation of the work system and help maintain focus and motivation. Although work systems vary greatly between organizations, there is a basic framework of components that can be used to fill the work system. These components include the participants, activities and processes, technologies, information or data, physical environment, process strategies, and end product. The frame components are connected to the elements to produce the work system. The dynamics of revising an existing work system can be achieved by imposing a set of phases on the work system. These phases are known as the life cycle of the work system, and are described as operation and maintenance (ongoing improvements), initiation (new work system), development (new requirements) and implementation (installation, training, testing). Both planned and unplanned revisions and changes can occur using these four phases. Planned changes use all four phases, and unplanned or unexpected changes occur through each phase in the form of customizations, experimentation, and repairs. When you turn on your computer, it's nice to think that you're in control. It's the trusty computer mouse, which you can move anywhere on the screen, and summon your music library or browser at the slightest whim. Although it's easy to feel like a director in front of your desk or laptop, there's a lot going on inside, and the real man behind the curtain who handles the necessary tasks is the operating system. Most desktop or laptops are preloaded with Microsoft Windows. Macintosh computers are preloaded with Mac OS X. Many enterprise servers use the Linux or UNIX operating systems. The operating system (OS) is the first to be loaded on the computer - without the operating system a computer is useless. Ad More recently, operating systems have started to appear in smaller computers as well. If you like tinkering with electronic devices, you're probably glad that operating systems can now be found on many of the devices we use every day, from mobile phones to wireless access points. The computers used in these small devices have become so powerful that they can now actually run an operating system and applications. The computer in a typical modern mobile phone is now more powerful than a desktop computer from 20 years ago, so this progression makes sense and is a natural development. The purpose of an operating system is to organize and control hardware and software so that the device it lives in behaves in a flexible but predictable way. In this article, we tell you what a piece of software must do to be called an operating system, show you how the operating system of your desktop computer works and give you some examples how to take control of the other around you. I had a running start to research this article because I built an addition to my own home about four years ago - a new kitchen, laundry room and porch. I hired an experienced builder and under-supplied insulation, wall tables, roofing and cabinet work. I handled the permits and inspections myself. A big lesson: Building permits and codes are really no problem, especially if you plan to stay in your home for the foreseeable future. If anything, you want the building to exceed the code, and it is reassuring to know that your work has passed inspection. Another lesson: be good to your inspector. He or she works hard. An offer of a cup of coffee or some home-grown tomatoes never hurts. And, oh yes, always follow the old carpenter's rule: measure twice, cut once. Related Articles Barker, Bruce. Codes for homeowners. Creative Publishing International, 2010. The Building Department, LLC. Permits protect the security and value of your home (February 24, 2012) s Choice Home Inspections. The history of building regulations. (February 24, 2012) houston. Crime statutes General information. (February 24, 2012) of Redondo Beach, California. Apply for permits. (February 24, 2012) Carolyn. The value of building regulations, Regulation, summer 2006. (February 24, 2012) Adam. Extreme Building Codes: Protect your home from natural disasters, Popular Mechanics, April 9, 2010. (February 24, 2012) York City Buildings Department. History. (February 24, 2012) Association of Realtors. Building permits. (February 24, 2012) . Permits and inspection process. (February 24, 2012) Carolina. Mayor says green building regulations will help City meet PlaNYC target, ENRNew York, February 7, 2012. (February 24, 2012) John. On hurricanes and building regulations, and living in danger, CNN.com, June 10, 1999. (Feb 24, 2012) Advertising Page 2 Hiring an entrepreneur may resemble acquiring a brother-in-law, except that when it comes to an entrepreneur, you're the one who gets to make the choice - not your wildly experienced little sister. This comes from the fact that you want to be seeing quite a lot of the contractor, depending on the size of the project and the amount of subcontract involved, so it is important to find someone you can get along with who will do the job properly. To make a good choice, there are some important questions you should ask potential entrepreneurs - ideally at least three candidates, so you can compare their answers - to make sure you get a good match. This is, after all, your home; you want someone who is reliable and determined to see the project to the end. Ad On the next page, we jump right in and learn what you need to know about an entrepreneur before considering making him or her a temporary addition to the family. Content When you first get into the process of hiring an entrepreneur, you will want to dig deep to get an idea of his or her business history. This means requesting - and duly verifying - proof that he or she is currently licensed in your area, if applicable in your area. The rules vary from state to state, so if you live in the United States, you can check out this list to determine whether your contractor needs to be licensed or registered to work on the project. Other items to check up include paying employees legally and carrying employee compensation, property damage and liability insurance. Membership with a reputable professional association is also a good sign. On a similar note, find out if the entrepreneur has ever declared bankruptcy or if anyone has ever taken legal action against him or her. Get the details too, like how long he or she has been in business and under what names. You should also find out how an entrepreneur's business is structured and where it is physically based. Ad It's important to confirm if the entrepreneur has any newer, relevant experience, so get a list of references that have had projects similar to yours and follow up with them. Don't be shy about calling and visiting. Ask other customers questions about their experiences with the entrepreneur and their satisfaction with the finished product. You can obtain other third-party verifications from state licensing agencies, professional associations, state and local courts, insurance providers, providers, Better Business Bureaus and municipal departments. Once you've examined and compared the history and qualifications of entrepreneurs, you can learn more about your business practices by asking them the questions on the next page. It is important to establish during the interview how the contractor plans to handle area access and subcontractors. Firstly, many of the questions on the last page (such as those pertaining to licensing, pay, liability insurance and employee compensation) are requests you need to put to any subcontractors as well - everyone on site must be fully covered. Another reason why it's a good idea to find out contractor has a work team or intends to roll out a whole range of subcontractors? To get an overview of all the transactions between everyone to save yourself from being burned if the entrepreneur doesn't pony up. In some states, a mechanic's lien can be placed on your home if subcontractors don't get paid, and they can sue you in court for compensation [source: FTC]. You can protect yourself by asking the contractor, subcontractors and suppliers for lien releases or exemptions on each payment. Ad Additional important questions center on the presence of work. How much time does the contractor propose to spend on the project each week, and how many other jobs does he or she complete in tandem to yours? Does the contractor intend to do some of the work itself, or does he or she perform mainly in a supervisory role? How often will the contractor be on site, and who will monitor in times when he or she is not there? A credible and responsible presence should be present at all times. When consulting the references, feel free to ask them about the behavior of the workers. Did they clean up after themselves? Were they on time? And when we talk about being on time - we will consider the project's timeline on the next page. Before hiring an entrepreneur, you should ask if he or she can give you a fixed start date and a completion date - including any cleanup tasks. These dates should be included in the formal written agreement, along with a schedule of work that will be done and a substantial list of everything that will be needed. It's also smart to address how change orders will affect the project's timeline in the contract (more details about it later). During the project (assuming you don't see it unfold firsthand), you'll probably check in once in a while to see how it all comes together. So it's a good idea to ask the entrepreneur how he or she plans to keep you updated and the process of scheduling website visits. Another related concern is to decide the best way to stay in touch with the entrepreneur so that you can communicate any questions or concerns to him or her. Advertising Without proper communication - and documentation - the project can go from being a dream come true to a disaster, so on the next page, we will check out another set of questions you need to remove with an entrepreneur before hiring him or her. Like the per-payment lien releases we discussed on a previous page, guarantees are a smart way to make sure you will leave the table happy. In addition to these measures, it is a good general rule of thumb to keep off signing a contract until it contains everything you want - and that you understand all the terms and conditions. You will also keep assiduous registrations of all payments and invoices in case of a must be resolved. On a similar note, make sure that the entrepreneur warrants that he or will complete all necessary homework and get all the necessary approvals during the process. Without this precaution, some contractors can sweep under the carpet a variety of issues ranging from building permits to Homeowners' Association statutes, and you may find yourself uncovering a major legal mess the moment the door closes behind them. Ad Once you've found an entrepreneur who can solve all the issues we've discussed so far, it's time to talk price. Along with the other top questions you want to ask during the process of hiring an entrepreneur, you should also request specified price estimates from each candidate. When receiving these, it is best to examine each individual carefully, paying special attention to someone who seems too high as well as too low. Estimates that fall at the shallow end of the pool can be a red flag for a hasty job that won't leave you with a quality-ready product. If an estimate seems a good deal pricier than others, it could mean the other contractors lacked any core obstacle involved in completing the project and therefore not set a high enough estimate for a proper job. You'll also need to negotiate your payment plan and find out how any surprise expenses or potential change orders will be included. Planning your payment plan must be a give-and-take, but the more you can negotiate to keep in your pocket for as long as possible, the better: You'll never pay for more than what you've got at a certain time. And do not forget - do not sign the last check until you are completely satisfied with the finished project. Ad Communication with your contractor about the details of the project can be difficult enough. Do you really want puce countertops? Should the ceiling be so tilted? With so many details to keep in mind, remember that you're going to have a person in or around your house for at least a couple of weeks (and maybe months). And for them, your home is your workplace. So don't hesitate to ask them what kind of colleague they are. Having an understanding and expectation of an entrepreneur's routine is essential to your own happiness. When do they start working? Do they work until the project is finished, or will they work on several projects at a time? It is also advisable to ask what they do with residues or waste materials. Will there be piles of timber in your garden until April? Ad It's not unreasonable to ask the entrepreneur in advance if you have a schedule you want them to keep and let them know that you expect regular progress reports. Once you have that schedule, take advice from the next page and get it in writing. Sure, you're probably going to sign some kind of agreement that the entrepreneur will work for a certain fee, but just discussing a project in the long run is no guarantee of what kind of work in the contract, the details of the project have carefully spelled out. What dates will they start? How long does it take? What permissions are required to be drawn? And what, exactly, are you looking for in the project? There should be a clause for handling potential change orders, which allows several projects to be carried out at the homeowner's or contractor's command. In addition, if you want to make sure that your renovation professionals clean up after themselves when they are finished, be sure to include a cost clause in the contract, which legally requires them to do so. Ad It doesn't hurt to put a liability release in writing and to note the materials to be used carefully, which will also allow you to see where your budget is being spent. And when it comes to budget, check out the next page for another important financial question for your entrepreneur. Repayments are a difficult thing when it comes to renovation and home improvements. Sure, it's certainly a sign of good faith for you to anchor your entrepreneur with some money. But you also don't want to put your money in the hands of someone that you can't contact if they never show up. The vendor's state license board in Canada recommends only a 10 percent down payment, or \$1,000 (which is less). In addition, some U.S. government laws place a cap on the prepayment amount that contractors can request [source: FTC]. They also recommend not to let the payments get ahead of work; That is, no one pays for the roof over your head when you still rely on tarpaulin to keep out the rain. Ad Remember that a stable company does not need a large amount of money to pay for materials or overhead; they should have a healthy stream of cash that will allow them to safely start a project without a major advance. It's the concern that leads us to our next question: Who do we actually pay when we pay our contractor? Although it seems obvious, remember that you do not necessarily want to fork over funds to just someone for the work they have given. Paying a business - as opposed to a person - usually provides a certain assurance that you are on the books somewhere. Paying a person opens some serious loopholes. If the entrepreneur has a business license yet they are still asking for an individual check, it probably means that the entrepreneur will not report that income for tax - not exactly a sign of an honest worker. If they don't have a business license, you've now opened a whole box of worms. Not only are they unlicensed, but you put yourself in charge of poorly done work (or worse, any damage inflicted by the workers). Ad In addition, you should never pay in cash, which is impossible to track and is often requested by dubious contractors. Checks, loan financing and cards are usually much safer options. Although it is important to ask the entrepreneur about any permits needed, do not believe that due diligence after that is not necessary. Many cities and counties have online resources that will let the homeowner know what is required of renovation or construction projects. Use these materials to double-check your contractor, or call the Permission Center and ask for any necessary codes to follow. Another important reason to double check permits with the city or county is that your homeowner's insurance is not a fan of illegal work; If something goes wrong, the chances that they will cover your claim if the correct permissions have not been withdrawn are very slim. You can even take the extra step and check with your insurance about what permissions are required if a claim is submitted. If you still long to build a stronger base of knowledge about contractors or renovation projects, read on for much more information. Do you know how to expand an existing deck? Keep reading to learn the right way to expand an existing deck. Sources 10 Tips: Make sure the contractor measures up. contractors state license board. (December 8, 2008) Deb. Questions to ask an entrepreneur before hiring. BobVila.com. 2007. (December 8, 2008) the contractors' licensing board. San Francisco Chronicle. March 17, 2007. Recommended items to ask an entrepreneur. ServiceMagic.com. (December 8, 2008) website. (December 8, 2008) Larry. 10 Questions to ask a remodeling contractor. BiggerPockets.com. (December 8, 2008) Roofing Contractors Association. Fyi. (December 21, 2011) Mountain Bathrooms. Ten questions to ask an entrepreneur. 2009. (December 21, 2011.) 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