

How being late could damage your career

Let's face it, we're all late to work at least once in our lives. Some of us only sometimes; others are tardy all the time. But did you know this could be impacting negatively on your career?

If you find you're often chasing the clock, you're not just risking your ability to leave on time at the end of the day – you're risking your reputation. Regular lateness can indicate to your boss that you're unreliable, you don't take your job seriously, and that you value your time over theirs. Ultimately this can affect your ability to move up in your workplace.

If this sounds like you, it might be time to change your ways, so we asked SEEK's HR Manager Jemima Grieve for advice on what to do if you're always running late to work.

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- **Address the problem.** Most of us are aware by now that you should let your boss know if you're running more than five minutes late. But if you regularly find yourself reaching for the phone on your way to work you're best to have a proper talk with your boss about it. "Even if the issues are genuine, if lateness becomes a recurring theme and there's no explanation for it, this may damage an employee's reputation in the business," Grieve says.

"It's therefore really important for the employee and leader to communicate openly as soon as possible, so that a workable solution can be found. Speak with your leader to explain to them the reason you're consistently coming in late – for example, is it to do with family responsibilities, or your health?"

- **Find a solution.** It's becoming increasingly common for workplaces to be more attuned to the needs of their employees – this could mean letting you start and finish work later each day, giving you the option to work from home, or allowing

you to go down to part-time hours. Many companies are happy to provide flexible working arrangements, sometimes you just have to ask. But when you do, make it clear you're considering the effects on the company, not just yourself. Grieve advises, "Work with your leader to find a solution that meets your needs and the requirements of the business."

The solution could be as simple as learning to estimate time better. Write down how long you think each part of your day takes, and then go through the day tracking the time you spend on everything you do for a week, so that you can compare your estimations with reality.

- **Trial the new arrangement.** Once you have had that conversation with your boss and discussed various options for remedying the situation, it's time to put the chosen solution to the test. "Agree on a trial arrangement, where you start later and finish later, for example. Or take a 30-minute lunch break rather than one hour," says Grieve.

These sorts of changes often require time to settle into the flow of a company, to allow other employees to adjust to your new availability or schedule. Be sure that everyone you work with is aware of your updated arrangement and make allowances for any effects your absence may have on the workplace.

Ultimately, Grieve says, "It all really comes down to developing an honest relationship between employee and leader, so that these sorts of issues don't become bigger than they need to be."