



## Shortcuts For Business

### Paperwork

By Dr. Linda Hancock

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Hancock has written a regular weekly column entitled “All Psyched Up” for newspapers in two Canadian provinces for more than a dozen years. Over the years, her readers and clients have said that they have benefited from her common-sense solutions, wisdom, and sense of humour. Dr. Linda Hancock, the author of “Life is An Adventure...every step of the way” and “Open for Business Success” is a Registered Psychologist who has a private practice in Medicine Hat. She can be reached at 403-529-6877 or through email [office@drlindahancock.com](mailto:office@drlindahancock.com)

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**Practice self-care** - All I hear these days is about how busy people are and how stressed they feel. Perhaps they need to schedule their time differently. Try thinking of your work as "projects" rather than appointments. Most professionals book one client after another all day long and then face desks that are stacked with files to be handled. Try booking time to complete each project. For example, a one-hour face-to-face appointment followed by a one-hour report writing time and a half hour for billing and filing will keep the desk clean and give you a feeling of satisfaction. It is psychologically empowering to have a couple of "that's done" moments in your day rather than several encounters with no completions. When I see new mediation clients and know that they will be back, I still write as much of their report as possible after the first session. That way, I can begin our second appointment by reading what I have written. This practice allows the clients and me to do some editing and all be at the same starting point for our time together. Plan your day so that you feel confident and in control. Soon you will notice that your stress level is reduced and you will be the envy of the office!

**Develop templates** - Because my practice is diversified I have several different formats which are used over and over again. Each of these is saved in a computer document folder so that I can easily open the file, customize the information and save it again under the client name. Templates are not only helpful for formal reports, but also can be used for smaller tasks. For example, I have a letterhead template on my desktop which contains frequently-used phrases and my standard letter ending with name, credentials and designations. Also, whenever I find myself repeating or typing the same information for others more than two times I develop a Signature file in my email. Then, when I am asked for this information the next time, I merely insert the appropriate Signature file into an email and everyone is happy in a matter of seconds!

**Know what information you will need before you gather it** - It is important to know the things that you will need to create a detailed report. I usually develop a "cheat sheet" for each type of project that I am working on and then just fill in the blanks as I go. For example, the Parenting Plan form that I use began as a simple sheet of paper with reminders of the things that I had missed in previous reports. Over time, I kept revising and revising the form until now I have several pages which the clients and I complete together. When we are done, we have all the information for a beautiful Parenting Plan. The form also keeps us on track and prevents the discussion from drifting into areas that are not pertinent to the work.