

New Courier Guide Part 4

A Guide for new Self Employed Couriers.

Keeping Records

The first thing you need is a simple record of all the work you do. Using either Microsoft Word or Excel or similar, draw a table with 5 columns and 8 rows [9 with headings] the headings I used were date, invoice to, collection address, delivery address, Order no.

The first columns can be narrow enough to fit the date going down the column instead of across. The second column again I made this narrow, and put the initials of the company who had instructed me. The collection address and delivery address were made big enough to put the full address, post code and telephone number in. The last column needs to be just big enough for the ref no, of the order or delivery note. In the margin I put the mileage. Most companies who pay mileage rates work on the shortest route using Microsoft Auto route or similar.

This record was kept on my clipboard and taken home each night to enter details fully in a database. From the start I bought a copier/fax/ scanner, so that I could always have a hard copy of the Delivery note {referred to as the POD- proof of delivery} This is only necessary if you are working for courier companies, who want the original bottom copy of the delivery note for their records. If they are your own customers you only need to quote their reference number, your own customers may need a hard copy of the POD sometime in the future. After you have done a few jobs for a company they expect you to know all the addresses of the companies they deliver to, and they will simply tell you to deliver a load to 'XYZ' company. That is why you need the first simple record, of your work, which should always be on your clipboard.

Your main records should be stored in a database. If you have Microsoft excel or Access these are fine. Make sure you back these up every month to an external disc.

Your monthly database should hold a complete record of your months work, the PDF version of this article comes with a free attachment containing a specimen database template, which you should be able to import into your database programme, if you can't import it, at least you will have an idea of what records you need to keep. The specimen database comes with all the formulae to calculate all the information you need. The email explains how to alter the formulae for your figures, and how to filter the information.

Maximising Your profits

Before you can maximise your profits, you need to protect them first. You should spread your work load between several companies, with a maximum of 25% of you total income coming from anyone company. You can lose a contract for a variety of reasons, and the company you work for can lose contracts. While you were carrying out your market research, you will have come across one or two self employed contractors such as yourself, these are always worth cultivating. You will find you will get too much work one day and not enough another. If can sub contract the jobs you can't cover, you can take a small cut for yourself.[The sub contractor is working for you, not your customer] Apart from the extra money you are making, you are showing your customer that you are available whenever they need you. It saves them calling in another courier, who could be cheaper and better than you. Your customer won't know you are using a subbie, and these arrangements can be reciprocal. The first contract you got which wasn't very good pay, don't throw it away when you want to move up, get a subcontractor to do it for you [when subcontracting a contract, make sure you keep showing your face regularly, so the company know you are looking after their interests] It doesn't take long before you have ten contracts up and running, and making £50 a week off each one. If you are using sub contractors you don't normally need 'employer's liability insurance'. Generally if the sub contractor is working for someone else as well you are o.k. if he works for you exclusively, even though he is self employed, you will probably need employers liability insurance.

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