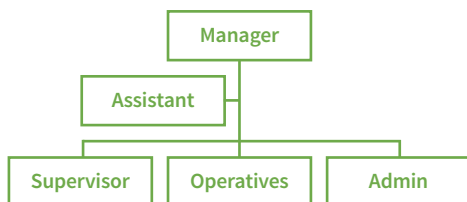


Designing Job Roles in SMEs

In small to medium (SME) organisations, designing job roles is a balancing act. It is often difficult to provide clarity whilst maintaining the flexibility needed to meet changing needs with a small team. Consideration of the following five areas will increase the likelihood of striking the right balance.

1 - Overall Organisation.

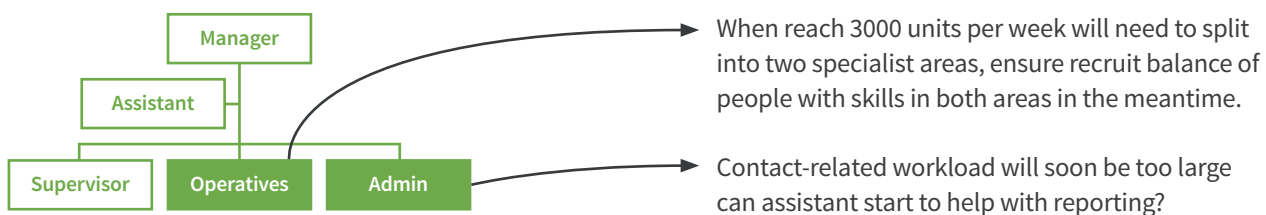
The first step is to ensure that the overall organisation is well-defined, with clear distinctions between roles. A classic organisation chart can reveal a lot, but is often not enough in itself. The completion of a project-management-style responsibility matrix can be a beneficial exercise. Even if full job descriptions are already in place, this matrix can reveal any weaknesses or areas that need further definition. A key question is *“if everyone in your organisation were to complete this matrix, would they all give the same answers?”*



	Responsible	Accountable
Production of monthly reports	Administrator	Supervisor
Risk Assessment Reviews	Operatives	Assistant
Liaison with delivery team	Supervisor	Manager

2 - Where next?

If you are planning further growth or other future changes, consider how the organisation will adapt. It can help to do a future organisation chart capturing what it will need to look like when you reach a certain turnover or expand into a particular area. Highlight which roles are likely to be impacted, and in what way. Then consider what can be incorporated into the roles now to make the transition as smooth as possible.



3 - Focus on purpose.

Ensure the purpose of each role is clear, then focus on capturing this purpose in job descriptions, rather than an extensive list of responsibilities or tasks. As the details evolve over time the principles should remain true and effective, and the description will still add value rather than going out of date so quickly. This also enables greater flexibility and accountability for employees, rather than a strict To Do list.

- “ Create the weekly ABC report.
- “ Create the monthly XYZ report.



“ Create required reports to increase understanding of alphabet management.

4 – Relationships are key.

It can be highly valuable to take time to consider the relationships and communications between roles and teams. When conflicting priorities (or outright conflicts) arise, then established links and routes to resolve problems will mean these small hurdles can be navigated more efficiently.

“ How will information be gathered, shared, discussed and decisions made between different roles and groups?

“ What needs to be in place in terms of team groupings, meetings or leaders to enable these to happen?

5 – What if?

In SMEs every employee is key, so the risks associated with unplanned absence or sudden departure can be significant. How will each role be covered when that person is taking a planned or unplanned absence? Is there anything that needs to be in place to minimise the impact if a key employee won the lottery and never came back?

	Short term	Longer term	Notes
Assistant	Administrator	Supervisor	Priority to ensure access to systems maintained
Supervisor	Administrator	Manager	Key activity is scheduling – need to train up in advance for back-up
Operatives	Within team	Agency?	Can only cover up to 3 operatives within team, therefore only up to 2 approved holiday at any time to allow for sickness?

Checklist for constructive job roles:

- There is a clear organisational structure with defined responsibilities**
- Roles are future-proof**
- Any written job descriptions are purpose-focused, rather than task-focused**
- Relationships are clarified**
- Cover is in place**

Consideration of the five areas above will increase practicality, flexibility and clarity when designing job roles.

When this activity is completed by an individual or small team, there is often risk of carrying over assumptions and not challenging future impacts, particularly where they are closely involved in the work themselves. It can therefore be highly beneficial to utilise a trusted business advisor, HR contact or other unbiased party to help challenge assumptions around how tasks can be organised, provide new perspectives or ask fundamental questions around the implications of changes and plans. External input can also be helpful in designing career development options and building in greater resilience and flexibility.