

# DESIGNING BUSINESS PROCESSES

## JOB PERFORMANCE

NEWSLETTER AUG 2008

One of the most challenging aspects of business is developing structures that enable the service and/or product to be completed in the most efficient, consistent and effective manner. These structures or 'processes' are the backbone of the company as they provide the blueprint for the business itself.

Designing processes is often tedious and may fall to the wayside due to day to day demands. Businesses that are successful recognize the value in not only designing but evaluating and refining their processes. Small business owners may not devote adequate attention to this area which can lead to a sense of 'recreating the wheel' or, worse yet, never knowing what are and aren't working.

The processes that the company develops are considered the link between organization and individual performance. The processes offer the greatest opportunity for improvement as employees cannot improve their personal performance if poor or inadequate processes are in place. As I mentioned earlier, the more successful a company is the more dynamic are their processes which should take into account feedback from the staff that are directly involved.

Since processes are the vehicles through which work gets produced, goals must be set for each one. A process must be structured (designed), logical, and streamlined in order for goals to be effectively and efficiently achieved. A process also must be followed with consistency; this is essential not only for production for the service/product but also to ensure quality and customer satisfaction.

Any time a process is in place it is possible to gain clarity on factors that would otherwise be anecdotal and/or unsystematic such as:

- The interconnectedness of group performance on subsequent groups and individuals.
- The obstacles which adversely affect performance

- Other problems which are highlighted through analysis of the process itself and, therefore, can lead to 'in time' solutions.

The ongoing management of the multiple processing in any company includes:

- Monitoring the outcome or goals.
- Soliciting feedback from staff and external customers to improve systems. This may include the outcome (product/service) of the process as well as the steps themselves.
- Creating the tools and environment for success to occur. Being understaffed or inadequately financed is sabotaging to any process.
- Managing the less structured time inherent in process itself as well as the steps of the process. Any and all systems can benefit from close examination and re-design without removing the human element which is unique.

The best laid plans may not result in satisfactory outcomes. Close observation will illustrate where the process is breaking down and/or where the staff is not following the process.

Your business will benefit from the systems you create. Be careful and comprehensive in design, training of staff, and monitoring for problems. Processes must be dynamic and responsive to the customer, the market and changing work environment.

## JOB PERFORMANCE

I'd like to break job performance down into 2 categories:

- I. Your own job performance
- II. The performance of your staff

## YOUR OWN JOB PERFORMANCE

As business owners we may not think of our own "job performance". We more likely think of profit and loss, of growth and competition and of the multitude of other responsibilities associated with being an owner.

However, just like our staff, we are accountable to managing our time, meeting goals and deadlines etc. There are likely responsibilities that we put off, complete

halfheartedly, and some we may avoid altogether. By being in charge we may overlook our deficiencies and not recognize the need to improve and change.

Here are some steps to better assess your own performance to address problem areas:

1. Outline your responsibilities
2. Rate your effectiveness and efficiency in each category. Identify your strengths and places where you need to improve.
3. Take into consideration the comments of your staff. Perhaps you have a mechanism to allow staff to give their opinions on your strengths and weaknesses and those of the company.
4. Talk with your executive team. Be willing to accept their comments; it's not a matter of agreeing or disagreeing.
5. Identify goals to improve your performance. Enlist the support and resources you need. Investing in yourself not only provides a powerful model to your staff, but it's the best investment you can make in your business.

#### THE PERFORMANCE OF YOUR STAFF

Anytime we evaluate staff we look at typical factors including productivity, quality of work, adherence to company policies, attitude, perception of others etc... There are other indicators related to performance which are of equal, if not greater value.

1. How well is your employee learning? If they are new this will be more focused on their new role. For others, are they continuing to grow in their knowledge and expertise of their work? Of the mission and expectations of the company?
2. How much and to what extent are they contributing to the company? If you have created an environment of open exchange of ideas, are they getting involved beyond the confines of their role?
3. How well do they represent your company to external customers whether they're in direct service or not? Your staff interfaces with customers, vendors and other businesses on a routine basis. Do you contact external sources for feedback?

It is time consuming to gather data of this type; however, evaluating is not complete when done in the traditional, check box format. The solution to some of these potential problems may lie with the individual as well as the management and company itself. In reality no problems occur in isolation.

Making the very best selection of staff is the first step to maximizing performance.