How to Think About the Systems in Your Business

Opinions expressed by *Entrepreneur* contributors are their own.

Many entrepreneurs start a business and end up owning a job. The difference between owning your job and owning a business lies in the various systems used to operate the company. These systems determine how the business functions and its structure.

Many small business owners are content with owning a job. They want independence. They want the ability to work for themselves. But others strive to turn their business into a self-functioning entity, one that gives them more freedom. They can walk away from the business for months, but when they return they find their business continuing to run like clockwork.

Whether you are striking out on your own because you want freedom or scaling to sell, the key to success is in the systems. These systems run the business. They determine the steps needed to create orders, sell products, deliver goods and invoice customers. If you have consistent processes and procedures, your customers learn to trust you.

Trust from customers comes from giving them what they want and doing it so they can count on you. But you can’t do that if you don’t have set procedures to follow and wake up every day trying to wing it.

Here are 3 ways to think about the systems in your business to help improve it and grow.

1. Begin to see the patterns.

Patterns tip us off to the underlying systems. What are the phases at each point in product development? What do customers tend to write in their online reviews? What is the average time for each step in your billing process?

The patterns are the first way to start to think about the systems in your business. This will help you see that the sales process isn’t as random as you thought. It likely follows a similar pattern each time.

This is the foundation for many sales training programs. They have better steps to get someone to purchase your offering. They know that they can teach you how to create a gap between what your customer currently has and what they want. The sales process highlights this gap with an easy bridge to what they want (buying your product).

Once you start to see the patterns, you can start to ask what the steps are for each specific business function at your company such as sales, billing, customer service and product development.

Related: **How to Evolve Your Core Product**

2. If you had to explain what you do at each stage, how would you describe it?

If you were training a new person, how would you walk them through what you do, so they can replicate it? This will help you see that the steps you take form a pattern and create your process.

If you don’t think about it, then the process develops organically. Organic processes are not as efficient and

effective as well-thought-out procedures. A good way to find out if you are following the most ideal steps is to ask, “Why?”

If you ask why you take each step, you start to see if it developed because you happened to do it that way or if you have a solid reason for it. If the answer is “I don’t know, I’ve always done it that way,” then become more active in creating the procedures. Don’t assume the way you happened to do it is best – most of the time it isn’t.

Related: 3 Reasons Entrepreneurs Struggle When Building Business Systems

3. Processes and procedures in your business are like habits in your life.

This perspective of habit explores the nuances of human existence and realizes that we go through life repeating much more of our daily lives than we realize. We want to think each day and each decision is unique.

But psychologists see the way we live as much more systematic. These habits drive our thoughts and our behaviors. They form patterns that can be helpful or harmful to us over time.

The processes and procedures in a business are like the habits of an individual. They tend to form by deciding once. Then, when faced with a similar decision, we make a similar choice. When we do this repeatedly, we start to create habits.

Most people don’t optimize their habits. But the most successful businesses optimize their processes and procedures. They don’t take their success for granted or assume an employee will do everything right without training and structure. Instead, they optimize the processes and then help

employees do what works best.

Big businesses spend large amounts of money on business process improvement. They don’t chance their success by winging it. They know the value of the process.

Even if you want to remain small and own your job, there is great value in following a process. It will provide a consistent value for your customers. Customers can learn to trust you because they know what they get from working with you.

With processes, you know what to expect. Without processes, you hope for the best.

Finding ways to think about your business systematically will help to create the right steps that will lead to better processes. This leads to more success. Regardless of how you see your business, make sure you know the systems to continue to grow and improve.

Related: A Four-Step Approach That Will Make Your Business Profitable

https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/419608