

Achieving

EFFICIENCY

Through Process

SHARED THOUGHTS FOR TURNING VISION INTO ACTION

Behind everything your organization does, there's a process. It might be formally documented or it might simply be the commonly accepted doctrine of "that's how we do things here." Most businesses have a mix of both. The efficiency and effectiveness of these processes are what drives your ability to compete successfully and achieve your growth goals.

Good processes improve shared understanding, ensure consistency, build confidence, ensure accountability, facilitate the transfer of knowledge, and prevent your organization from making the same mistake twice. Great processes are clear, well documented, actionable, efficient, up to date and actively used. Organizational areas with key processes include: marketing and sales, engineering, production, quality control, customer service and accounting.

When it comes to process improvement, organizations tend to fall at the extreme ends of the spectrum. At one extreme, leaders don't think about their processes at all; as a result, they can't figure out why it's so difficult to achieve their vision. At the other extreme, organizations get overwhelmed by taking on a host of process improvement initiatives without first identifying which processes are truly meaningful to their success. These organizations tend to end up frustrated with their lack of progress, often wasting valuable time on the wrong things. Process optimization helps avoid the dangers of losing the most important relationship the organization has: the one with the customer.

THE PROCESS OF IMPROVING YOUR PROCESSES

The first step toward achieving efficiency through process improvement is to make sure you have a method in place for reviewing and developing processes. Key components in process improvement include:

1. Assemble a cross-functional team.
2. Identify existing processes (documented or not).
3. Prioritize processes in terms of which have the greatest immediate impact and the greatest long-term impact on performance and competitive advantage.

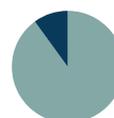
4. Select 5 high value processes and assign responsibility for them.
5. Determine what a well-documented process should look like (use a checklist or template.)
6. Document and evaluate existing processes; identify opportunities for improvement.
7. Refine the processes and obtain buy-in.
8. Implement changes and identify future dates to assess the impact at regular intervals.

COMMON CHALLENGE: THE MEETING PROCESS

There's one common process almost every organization could improve: the process of holding meetings. This may not sound like a big issue, but it is when you think of it in these terms: meetings consume employee time, drive employee actions, are often the birthplace of strategic decisions, and directly impact both morale and productivity. Be honest: how much do you enjoy and value the meetings you attend?



amount of time **time most managers**
spend in meetings each week



90% of managers say that
half their time in meetings is wasted



Meetings can be the most frustrating part of your employees' day, but they don't have to be. Managed well, meetings can be a powerful and invigorating source of communication, collaboration, accountability, and results.

How do you make your meetings more efficient and effective? Improve your meeting process! Taking the time to think critically about how and why you hold meetings can lead to more efficient use of time, more effective communication, and greater return on everyone's invested effort.

INGREDIENTS FOR A GREAT MEETING:

-  1. A clear purpose.
-  2. Including the right people.
-  3. Preparing ahead of time.
-  4. Starting and ending as scheduled.
-  5. Including time for questions and encouraging discussion.
-  6. Providing notes including actions assigned to attendees within 24 hours.

MEASURING THE IMPACT OF PROCESS IMPROVEMENTS

Often, the impact of process improvements can be measured with hard data such as throughput rate, cost savings, and revenue growth. But what about measuring the impact on intangible factors such as employee motivation, customer satisfaction, and skill development?

For soft factors, you can evaluate your process improvement return on investment using surveys. First, conduct a survey prior to implementing a

new initiative to establish your initial benchmark. Once the new processes are in place and fully functioning, follow up by asking the same questions in another survey. Comparing the results will help you measure your progress and assess the impact of your process improvements.



SUMMARY

Every organization has processes. The question is: are your processes enabling you to achieve the greatest possible efficiency and effectiveness? No matter who you are or what industry you're in, the answer is probably no. And there's always room for improvement. From getting more out of your meeting time to streamlining the processes at the core of your business model, taking the time to evaluate and refine these key activities can pay both immediate and long term dividends if you approach it the right way.

That's where Applied Vision Works comes in. We're guides who provide an objective perspective combined with a depth and breadth of experience to help you and your team see more clearly. We offer practical advice and consistent mentorship to help you and your team overcome hurdles, drive the markets you are in, and become the best you can possibly be. If you're ready to achieve results that are even greater than you thought possible, give us a call.



APPLIED VISION WORKS

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