



So Exactly How Does a Systems Approach Work for Small Business Owners?

When you adopt a systems mindset, you begin to look at how one area of your business affects the other areas simultaneously. So what's this systems mindset and how does it work, you ask? According to the INCOSE Systems Engineering Handbook, a systems thinker "knows how systems fit into the larger contents of day-to-day life, how they behave, and how to manage them." "Systems thinking is a unique perspective on reality – a perspective that sharpens our awareness of wholes and how the parts within those wholes interrelate."

Unfortunately, effective business systems are the most underutilized tools by small business owners. Last week I was chatting with a gentleman who also worked with small business owners. We started talking about the importance of creating systems to leverage business (a subject I'm passionate about). He mentioned that a number of his clients, like mine, are former corporate employees who have decided to start a small business. The one comment he hears from them is how much they disliked working in a large system. However, they realize that when they aren't bringing in income or clients just how important it is to have systems in place to leverage their small business.

We can all agree that when systems are broken, they can be the biggest frustrations. If your computer system has ever crashed, then you know what I'm talking about. Just one day without email and everyone is wondering how work ever got done. However, when there are no systems or limited systems, you're working much harder than you actually need to.

There are different kinds of systems. In a previous article, I wrote how to tame your email monster by using a simple system that helps to sort email which is built right into many email systems. Whether its phone management, email management, client management, time management or business management, there are systems to leverage each of these areas.

One client learned the hard way just how critical having automated systems were to her business. When a new client started to work with me, she needed to care for a sick relative leaving her little time for her business. Unfortunately, she had no systems in place. Before she knew it, her client list dwindled. After learning how she could systematically and automatically market, she built up her client list in less than 60 days while caring for her sick relative.

The reason many small business owners struggle is that they are not systematizing their internal business or implementing processes to leverage their time or resources. One client who was a Coach was incredibly frustrated over spending way too much time with her intake process. She estimated 60-120 minutes or more with each prospect. Unfortunately, many of the people she met with were

just kicking the tires and weren't committed to moving ahead. With a few tweaks to her intake system, she learned how she could automatically pre-qualify her clients through her own lead generation system and how to use her website more efficiently. Within just 30 days of implementing her systems, she spent just 20 minutes with a prospect before converting them into a client all because she implemented systems to help pre-qualify prospects.

A system doesn't have to involve machines to work. A simple manual system creates efficiencies. One of my referral sources devised a system to make sure his bills get paid on time. When he receives a bill, he reviews it, approves it, and puts it in a special bin. Each Thursday, his bookkeeper arrives and takes the bills in the bin to be paid. It is an internal system that utilizes his resources efficiently and makes sure his bills are paid on time.

When you adopt a systems mindset, you will fundamentally look at your business through a clearer lens. You'll begin to see how each part of your business flows into the other. Your perspective will sharpen your awareness of your whole business and how the parts interrelate.

What kind of systems have you implemented that work in growing your business?

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