

Optimizing Processes

You've documented your processes. You've got the list of all of them. How do we optimize? This is really where the secret sauce is, so to speak. Remember, you documented your processes as is not as they should be. Now, we're going to take them as they are and turn them into how they should be but let me give you a little shortcut on all of this. Whenever I'm thinking about something that I want to do, whether that's something new or whether I want to get better at something, I don't think how. I think who.

One of the great resources that you have as being a member is that you can go into the community. If ever you're struggling or if ever you need a starting point on a process, a marketing material or anything, always go into that group and ask. That's so much easier than trying to reinvent the wheel. That's one of the reasons that we facilitate such a great community. They're so giving. You're so giving because everybody is there to help one another. That's a great shortcut, right?

It's not about what you know. It's about who you know is the saying from old times, but what I want to do right now is to tell you how you start the genesis of optimizing your process. It starts with asking others how they do it, getting ideas from them. It's anecdotal, or it's not anecdotal. It doesn't mean that because it works for you that it will work for me, but it can give you ideas. It can give you ways in which you could possibly do your process better.

Now, we ended up... What did we end up with in the last video? We ended up with a screen walkthrough, a video, an MP4 of the process. You showed me how to do it. I also have a written document, whether that's on my screen or printed off that is walking me through. It's a transcript basically of what you're saying, just a little bit cleaned up. The first thing that you want to do, and this is a document, your processes, the start of optimize, and that's to create a checklist.

A checklist is a great thing if it's done properly. What I want to do is I want to show you this. You won't be able to see this, but I'll share the link down below. I'll share this resource so that you can take a look at it. This is a checklist for a Cessna 172 aircraft. This is an entire system. If you look up here in this corner right here, it looks like it's the upper right-hand corner, I think, to you or left to me. It's all conundrum because we throw it around. Anyway, this is a system for normal procedures in a Cessna 172.

Underneath, you see that there is a section that says aircraft acceptance, basically taking it on. That's a process. Then you see the checklist that's down here. Now, my point in bringing all this up is that I've seen checklists that are just crazy. If it's more than seven steps, if the checklist has to have more than that, then it should be broken down into two processes. That major process should be broken down, because we don't want to have all kinds of steps and checklist on there.

What you want to do, as your first assignment, I want you to go through the transcript that you had, and I want you to highlight. Get yourself a highlighter or do it on screen, however that you

want to do it, and highlight the three to four to five critical things that have to be done. For example, going back to the info gather that we used in the process documentation, number one, I would want to make sure that all the information is there. Make sure that there's no gaps in the activity, making sure that everything is inside of there.

Making sure that we have asked our clients for anything that's not reflected on the bank statement, outstanding checks, outstanding deposits. That's a major thing that I have to do to make sure that it's all there, because as we've talked about in previous videos, there's errors of omission and errors of commission. Omission is usually what we see when we have an info. We don't have all the information. That would be a major thing that I would want to have there.

That would be my checklist. When I'm reconciling, I would want to have the two or three major things that need to be done there. It's not a how to do everything in minutia. It's the highlights. If somebody wanted to get into the minutia, how could they do that? Well, they got that video. You're showing them, and they have the transcript. The checklist is meant to be the highlights. It's meant to be for a more seasoned professional to make sure that they hit everything. Whether that's you or whether that's a team member, it doesn't matter. Get a checklist.

Again, I'll leave these so that you can see an example of how it should be. Really, you should have a one sheet of paper that has all the checklists for your deliverables, and then one sheet of paper that has your checklist for all of the marketing and sales. We don't want to make the checklist complicated. We want to make them very quick. By the way, just so you know, there is also an emergencies procedures system for a Cessna 172. It is even less because, hey, if you have an emergency in an aircraft, you don't want to have 14 different steps that you have to follow. You want to go as little as possible.

Take a play out of their playbook and make this very concise. Make it the important highlight things that you need to know. That's the very first thing to optimizing the process. Now, as you're going through it and you're doing this, as you're recording it and as you're reading through it and as you're creating the checklist, your mind is working in a different way. You see, when you're doing that, when you're doing that process and you maybe have worked with this client for six months or six years, you've done it from six times to 72 times, your subconscious starts to take over.

But now, you're doing something different, so your conscious mind kicks in. It's being analytical. It's being critical. Not in a bad way, but it's saying, "Hey, is there a better way to do this?" Optimizing all starts with great questions. The first question is, "Which of these processes do I need to eliminate?" Which of these processes should I eliminate altogether? Are there any that are just unnecessary? There's usually one or two that you could just totally get rid of. Which processes should I eliminate?

The next one is which processes could I automate? If you can't eliminate them, could you automate them? Again, this comes into a great place to ask the community how they've done that. Look at tools like Zapier, Z-A-P-I-E-R.com. Look at what's already built into the bookkeeping platform that you're using. The best place, again, is to just ask other people what

they have done, because as you automate, eliminating something, that's the best thing because you don't have to spend any time on it. You don't have to spend any money on it.

Automate, that's going to make sure that things are consolidated, excuse me, like bank feeds. That's something that years ago, we had to do everything manual, but now those are there, and that can be a great benefit for us. That's a form of automation. It doesn't mean it's totally outsourced, but how can I automate it? Then as we talk about and bringing on team, whether that's a virtual assistant or a bookkeeper, can I delegate it? If I can't eliminate, if I can't automate it, can I delegate that to someone else?

These are critical things that you need to be asking. Which ones can I eliminate? Which ones can I automate, and which ones can I delegate? This is just getting the juices flowing, but the real big one that you want to ask is, "How can I do this better? How can I be more efficient?" Before we drill down into that, I want to really bring up the fact that your clients hired you to do one thing. They don't hire you to reconcile their bank accounts. They don't hire you to categorize expenses. No, they hire you for the end result.

For you, that's probably preparing the financial statements, but even more important is having that meeting with them and for them to know that you care. As you focus on these things, I want you to optimize those processes that are closest to what your client truly pays you for and then work your way down. For example, a process that I have is that I share the financial statements with my client. That's a vital, vital process. That's the most important one that I do with them is when I'm having that meeting, I'm sharing the information.

I'm going over my findings, and I'm answering their questions. That's a process that I would want to start optimizing. Ask yourself, "How can I do this better? How can I provide them, my client, with a better service? How can I explain this in a different way? I want you to think yourself, "How could you do that?" I want you to look at the steps that you have in there as part of your process. Can I eliminate? Can I automate? Can I delegate these things? You're thinking how can you do this better?

Now, I'll tell you that this isn't going to become something that just overnight, you're going to totally optimize it. If you can find one little point, something that you could do better, then all the better, but you've got to continue to do this. That's you thinking, "How can I do this better?" What's another way that we can do it better? What's another way that we can discover a better way of doing things? Ask our clients. I explained to them exactly what I'm doing. "Hey Jim, you know what, I'm going through and I am really buttoning up my processes. I want to make sure that every time that we come on this call, that it's worth your time."

"So tell me, how can I do this better? How can I explain the financial statements better? Where do you see friction points? How can I serve you more efficiently? How can we make this meeting effective?" Ask them that. Don't just ask them one time. Ask them continually. When we talk about doing a net promoter score, that's one of the questions that you'll ask. That's one of the things that you will... Well, not in the net promoter score, but in a different survey. We'll talk about asking your client how you can do yourself a better job.

Then the other way is to go into the group and say, "Hey, I am developing a process and refining it and optimizing it for the client meeting every single month. What are some of the best tips that you have?" That's one of the benefits of having a group of thousands of people is that, "Hey, there's other people who have been through this. They've got great ideas." Asking yourself good questions is the key to optimization. Up to this point, what have we done? We've listed out the processes that we want to optimize in optimal order, so starting with that client interaction, starting with a meeting that we're having with the client.

Then the next thing is I ask myself is that, "Okay, if that's the most important thing, what's the next most important?" Well, that would be my quality assurance on the financial statements, quality assurance, which might include the analysis or whatever it is that I'm doing. What's the step that's right before I have that meeting? Well, I got to finish the financial statements. I got to make sure that they're of quality, that they're correct, that I've reviewed them, that they're timely, all the things that we talk about in there.

The quality control check, that would be where I would want to go. Again, I ask myself, "Is there anything, any step in here that I could eliminate? Is there anything that I can automate? Is there anything that I can delegate?" Those are the first questions that you want to ask. How can I do this better? All right, how can I leverage all the tools at my disposal to make this better? One thing to do also that I really like to do is I like to draw this out. What I get is a three by five note cards. That's a three by five note card representation.

What I do is I write down all the steps. Now, I use a three by five note cards because I'm a little bit old school, but if you have a magnetic board, this makes this a lot fun, a lot more fun. I have these three by five cards. I'm writing on here step one, step two, writing down all the activities that have to occur. Now, a great thing about this is that this allows you to start seeing, "Are there inefficiencies?" This allows you to break down each step to say, "In step one, how can I do this better? How can I be more efficient? Can I delegate? Can I eliminate all these different things?"

What you're going to find is that there's steps in here that either maybe in the wrong order. They may be totally unnecessary, but what you're doing is you're putting yourself in a different frame of mind. You're not doing the work. You're being critical on the process of the work. You're not criticizing, but you're being critical on the work asking yourself these questions. Let's say that we had three steps in here. We have three cards and we figure out, "Hey, if we did step three, we're doing it as step three right now, but if we did that first, it's going to speed things up.

We're just going to speed things up. What I can do, if I have a magnetic board, I take a little magnet, and I put these on the magnetic board and I can move them around, so very low tech, but highly effective. This is something that I do. I've got a huge board in there, and I do this on it all the time because it helps me to see that. You can do it on a big sheet of paper. I don't care how you do it. I just want you to do it. Processes, these are very critical. These are important to you getting less done in less time.

That's where we talk about being effective. We've talked about that in other lessons here in the lab. Remember, very first thing that I want you to do is to document those processes. I want you to list them out. I want you to understand that your business is four key systems, and that those processes are what drive those systems. Then once you've done that, and once you've gone through everything, start to optimize starting with the most important one, the one closer to what your client is truly paying you for.

There we go. Processes, how to optimize, how to document them. Now, I want to lead you with this one last thing. You don't optimize. It's not a set it and forget it. The more critical that the process is going back to the client explanation or the client meeting that we have, the more that I want to review this, the more that I want to optimize it, the more that I want that to be in front of me. One thing that I would encourage you to do is to use some tickler or reminder system that says, "Hey, I need to take a look at this. I need to take a look and see if there is a better way. I need to go back and ask myself those questions."

For a critical process like this, there's probably three to five of those in the deliverable. This is something that you want to do on a quarterly basis. Things that aren't as critical, you may set a reminder to review that in six months or maybe even in a year, but no more than that. Then another little key here, as you start to bring on team, I make it part of their responsibilities to find a better way, to challenge the status quo, to figure out how we can deliver better. One of the things that you've got to do is that once you have these processes, work with the team, because if they're doing it day to day and they're having interactions with your client, they have a lot of good ideas.

They just might not feel the freedom to actually bring those up. Be overt about this message and telling your team members that, "Hey, I know that this is the best way, and I want you to find a better way to do this." Reward them when they do that because there are going to be a lot of discovery and a lot of efficiencies that are gained from the team members that are working on your clients and working inside of your processes. I hope that I've sold you on processes how important they are. Just documenting them puts you ahead of about 95% of the competition. Optimizing them puts you in the top 1%.

That doesn't just mean in terms of efficiency. That means an earnings. If you can get a client's work done and 40% less time, what does that do? Well, that frees you up. It frees you up to work on more clients. It frees you up to hang out with your kids. It frees you up to live your life how you see best fit. One of the keys, one of the big dials that turns all of this as having efficient processes. There we go. Document those processes. Optimize them and borrow and steal from others.

That is it for processes. I'll see you in the next set of lessons.