

REALIZE

MINIMIZE

ORGANIZE

SYSTEMATIZE

OPTIMIZE

In our last newsletter, we discussed ORGANIZE, a crucial step of the Paragon Optimization Process - REALIZE, MINIMIZE, ORGANIZE, SYSTEMATIZE and OPTIMIZE. We are now moving into step four of the business optimization process, which is to SYSTEMATIZE the business. The goal of this step is to create standard ways of performing all the important activities in your business to increase the efficiency of your team. You can only systematize after you have DEFINED and QUANTIFIED the work in your business. A system is a series of steps or activities that work together to produce a PREDICTABLE and CONSISTENT result. So, what do you need to systematize in your business? EVERYTHING. The ultimate goal of this stage is to have an OPERATIONS MANUAL where all the tasks and activities that make up the functions of your business are broken down and DOCUMENTED. Documentation commits you and your team to the business.

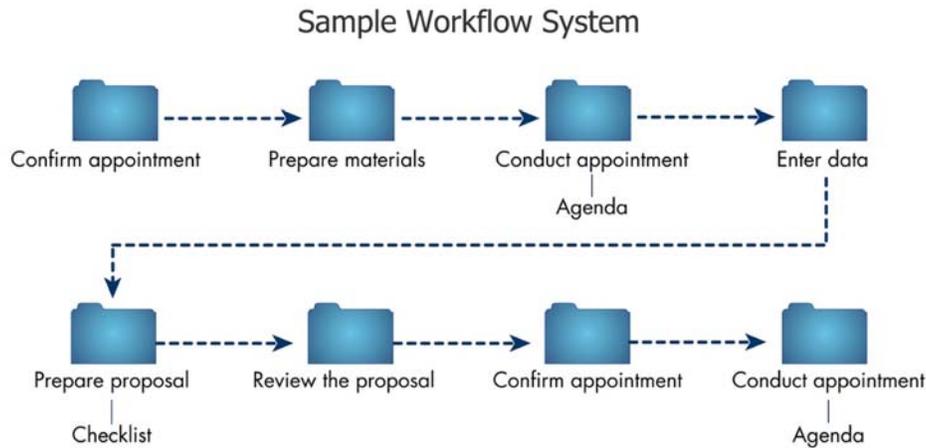
One of the benefits of systematizing your business is that you increase productivity because people become more efficient when you give them systems. Another benefit is that systems facilitate the training of new personnel. If you have systems in place, it will take considerably less time to get new team members acclimated to the business and their positions. Plus, providing them a training manual gives them the information they need to know to perform their job well, leading to their success. The third benefit to having systems in place is that not only your service, but also your advice gets better. Systems are what great service firms are made of. Do you think Disney, Lexus, or Nordstrom could deliver the great customer experience without systems? No. Systems are what enable their people to deliver the great, personalized service they are known for.

When creating systems you must include every team member in the process. Not everyone is skilled in or enjoys developing systems. When you involve everyone, you get better, more accurate systems. There are five types of systems that you should create for your business: CHECKLIST, WORKFLOW, INFORMATION, HARD systems and SOFT systems.

The CHECKLIST is exactly what it sounds like. It is the easiest system, and consists of simply putting each detail of your process, step by step, in writing. A checklist works best when only one person is involved in doing the work.

The WORKFLOW system is the most complex, and is best used when you have processes where there are two or three people involved. This is the FLOW of WORK that makes up any process that involves several people on your team. They are the toughest to design, but your team will benefit the most when you design these systems.

An example of a workflow system would be your SALES PROCESS. You have an appointment to meet with the prospect, and the first step of the system might be to have someone call to confirm the appointment. Another step might be to prepare the materials or presentation for the meeting. Then you actually have the meeting, and there is a sub-system within this step that includes a documented checklist or agenda for the meeting. After the meeting, someone is then given all of the paperwork or files to enter the data, and then prepares a proposal. The proposal comes back to you to review, and ultimately is presented to the client in a second meeting. This is a great example of how work flows from one person to another in a practice. When creating workflow systems, you may find it helpful to draw the process as we did for this example and then fill in the details of each step.



You need to have a system in place to manage the tremendous amount of INFORMATION that flows through your business. There are three different types of information systems. There is INTERNAL information about your business that you should be tracking, such as your revenues and how much revenue each client generates. Another kind of information is EXTERNAL information that includes areas such as information about the economy and the markets. CLIENT information consists of client files and family data that should ideally be stored in a contact management system in order to be managed in an organized and effective manner.

HARD systems are part of the client experience. This is everything that is TANGIBLE to the client during their interaction with you. This includes everything from your presentation materials and how your office looks to the china that you use when you serve your clients.

SOFT systems are the INTANGIBLE aspects of the client experience. Elements of the soft systems cannot be seen or touched by the clients. These can include what the receptionist says when the clients call your office, the way the client feels when they speak with your team, agendas for client meetings, etc.

The best way to identify systems is to start with the functional org chart. Write down each function and think about what happens in it. The goal is to document everything that you do and organize it by functions. It is not always an easy process, so first prioritize the systems that will have the most impact on your team. Be sure you and your team are committed to taking the time to do this step. The reward will be well worth it.

In our next newsletter, we will discuss the final step of the Optimize Your Business Process, OPTIMIZE.

Do you want your business to grow faster? Would you like to spend more time with family and friends or just having more fun? Are you tired of dealing with business problems and personnel issues? If you answered "YES" to any of these questions, *Optimize Your Business :: A Virtual Practice Management Workshop CDROM* is the answer.

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