**How to Create Systems That Enable Business Growth**

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https://www.forbes.com/sites/yec/2011/11/15/how-to-create-systems-that-enable-business-growth/#43ccdf195ec3

It seems that as soon as a business is off the ground, and sometimes even before then, talk turns to how to grow and scale the company. Often business owners think about how to delegate responsibilities, improve leadership skills, and gain financing to allow for growth. While these are important aspects to building a healthy business, one topic that can be overlooked is creating systems in order to achieve growth.

Beyond perfecting the product or service, hiring excellent team members, and securing financing, an owner must dedicate care and attention to building an organized and systemic approach to running the actual business. Although managing a small business often involves many instinctual decisions, starting to think about operations systems from day-one may be the best way to prepare your business for growth. Here are five strategies to help your business evolve and mature.

1. **Start at the beginning.** Running a small-business often means juggling many things and responding to the immediate needs of the day. In this constantly evolving environment it is easy to work intuitively and just get things done. However, thinking about the steps and procedures of a business from the very first day is vital to the ultimate success of the business. Don’t put documenting your process off to another day. Instead, take note of every procedure from the very beginning.
2. **Write it down.** As you go through the daily work, take careful notes on the day-to-day processes. Take note on everything from how files are saved to how big decisions are made. If there are other people working in the business with you, have those people also keep close records of how they manage tasks. It is always easier to edit and delete than try to fill in the blanks and remember exactly how certain procedures were handled.
3. **Be proactive.** Anticipate problems and methodically create solutions. Identify areas of concern and meticulously develop a response system. Even when certain actions seem obvious, make a note of the steps and approaches. What is intuitive for one person may not occur to another. By keeping close notes of all procedures other members of the team will be able to understand the decision-making process and arrive at the appropriate results.
4. **Get it out of your head.** Once all of the operations are recorded, it is useful to have others review the material. Collaborate with a colleague or hire an outsider to develop a manual for communicating the company’s operations. Someone who is not in the thick of the process may have a clearer ability to convey the important ideas.
5. **Share it.** Once the operations manual is created, start sharing it with the members of the company. Make sure that all employees have easy access to the information. Posting the procedures on an intra-company website or distributing hardcopies of the material will encourage people to refer and follow the guidelines. As updates are made to the materials, have alerts sent to the appropriate parties so that everyone is up to date.

Growth and development are exciting stages in the evolution of a small business. However, without solid planning and infrastructure business owners can jeopardize valuable growth opportunities. By thinking proactively and consistently working on an operations plan, your business will be ready for healthy development.