

7 ways to make your organization more efficient

by Andrew Miller

There are many ways to make your organization more efficient, but I have listed seven basic ways to help you reduce operating costs and improve focus on your customers.

1. Standardize forms and documents

Wherever possible, ensure that the different departments in your organization are using the same forms and documents and have them stored in a central repository for everyone to access electronically. The consistent use of documents will show professionalism to your internal and external stakeholders and will also reduce the administrative time used in developing a new form or template every time one is needed.

2. Use technology whenever possible

Email, web conferences and the telephone are three simple and inexpensive ways to reach out to more customers, suppliers and stakeholders without incurring significant travel or marketing expenses. Transaction-processing systems (purchasing, accounts payable) reduce the amount of paper used as documents are sent electronically. These electronic processes are usually quicker and result in immediate value for the organization.

3. Use common processes

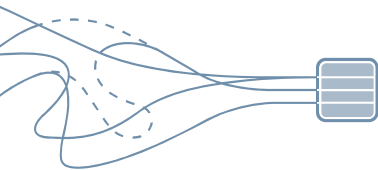
Ensure that everyone in the organization is following the same process when doing the same thing. These processes should come from a central directive body and compliance should be monitored. Using common processes ensures clarity with suppliers and customers and helps to set a common expectation of service levels.

4. Document employee responsibilities and accountabilities

Everyone in the organization should know their role and their accountability towards the success of the company. Ambiguity in job descriptions leads to duplicate work and important activities being missed.

5. Solicit employee, supplier and customer feedback

The best way to retain good employees is to have them involved in the development of the business. Customers know what they want better than anyone and suppliers can tell you what their preferences are around billing, delivery, etc. If you are not soliciting feedback from these three groups (and acting upon that feedback) then you are destined for failure.



6. Encourage taking educated risks

Without risk, there is generally little reward, so create a culture within your organization that encourages calculated risks. Give employees the freedom to make mistakes so that they can learn from them, but include a structure so that the organization learns from and improves on its mistakes.

7. Repeat steps 1-6 constantly

Keep reviewing the way the business is run and make adjustments. Industries change, economies change, the global marketplace changes, so your business needs to constantly review if it is doing everything it can to run efficiently and maximize the customer experience.

Organizations must be flexible enough to adjust to changes in the business environment, but also consistent in the ways the business operates. Customers and suppliers should be receiving a consistent message from the organization and this can be achieved with a clear definition of roles and responsibilities, a culture that encourages continuous improvement and standardization in the way things are done.