

# AN INTRODUCTION TO SYSTEMIZATION

## FOR PRINTERS & CONVERTERS



A guide to  
Systemization and  
how it will change  
your print business

An **MIS** partner that will help you beat the competition and lead the way.

# CHAPTER 1

## An introduction to Systemization and how it will change your business

This guide to Systemization is for any print company owner or C-suite executive who is:

- » Feeling stressed, overworked and fed up with having to do everything themselves.
- » Looking to free themselves up from the business or maybe retire.
- » Looking to increase the valuation of the business.
- » Considering to sell their print business or pass it on to new management.

### What exactly is Systemization?

Systemization is about creating a System that replaces yourself – your knowledge, your experience and your specific requirements for how you want things done in your business. The System is basically a set of interrelated procedures and processes that you have formalized in some way and trained your employees to follow.

# HOW WILL SYSTEMIZATION HELP ME?

In an ideal world, you want your business to run like a finely-tuned, well-oiled machine - whether you're there or not. To make this happen, you cannot be in a position where you're performing any roles other than that of the leader. And you'll never achieve this if you're encountering any of these problems:

- » Nobody seems to understand how to do something exactly right, not like you do.
- » You see something being done and know you could have done it quicker yourself.
- » You've implemented improvements to processes before, but everyone always just goes back to the way it was before.
- » You see projects/jobs/campaigns starting from scratch time and time again, when you've already delivered similar before. And nobody seems to have learned anything from last time, or tried to improve on it.

The solution to all these problems is to Systemize all the different aspects of your business, so that everyone knows exactly what they're supposed to do and how to do it, whether you're there or not.

# WHO BENEFITS FROM SYSTEMIZATION AND HOW?

## Business owners / executives benefit by:

- » **Increasing the value of your business** – A well run business with proven procedures and processes, will be more attractive to investors.
- » **Removing reliance on you** – Investors will be much more interested in buying businesses that run effectively without their owner around.
- » **Having a way to continually improve your business** – You will regularly examine your business' procedures and processes to make constant improvements.
- » **Removing reliance on key personnel** – When you have Systems in place for every department and role, you no longer need to worry about losing key members of your team. While their loss may be felt, your business will not suffer and the transition to a new employee will be smoother and quicker.
- » **Being able to automate easier** – If your business processes are written down in step-by-step format, it's much easier to work out how to automate that process, and what software you need to do it.
- » **Helping you drive innovation** – By establishing a set way of doing something satisfactorily, you can then look at discovering a better way of doing it.
- » **Letting you focus on the work you love** – As you'll see later, Systemizing your business allows you to pass on the jobs you dislike doing, and keep the ones you enjoy.
- » **Creating competitive advantage** – Your System becomes your 'secret sauce' – something your competitors don't have.
- » **Giving you the ability to grow without chaos** – A System is scalable, so once you have everything running smoothly in your business, you can more easily scale without causing chaos.

## Employees benefit by:

- » **Being given the tools they need to do the job** – Expecting employees to work to your standards and expectations is unfair if they don't know exactly what those standards and expectations are.
- » **Reducing any friction with co-workers** – Systemization will help everyone stay on the same page and remove any conflict between employees with different ideas on how to do things.
- » **Having more autonomy** – This might sound counter-intuitive, but as you'll see later on in this eBook, part of the Systemization process is to clearly define your company's mission and vision and ensure that everyone is working towards it. Knowing this information helps employees make important decisions on behalf of the company, because they know exactly what the business is working towards.

## Customers benefit by:

- » **Getting a better quality product/service** – A System allows you to provide a guarantee on the quality of your products and services, every time.
- » **Getting a consistent experience** – When the System is followed, services and products are produced and delivered in exactly the same way as the time before, and the next time.

# YOUR END GOAL

## - the Turnkey Business

A Turnkey Business is one that a new owner could walk into, 'turn the key', and get started. They know exactly what to produce or sell, what materials they need to order, who their customers are, and how to attract them. That's because the business has been Systemized and has a set of procedures and processes for every single facet of operations. It's how the franchise model works and why a franchise is such an attractive prospect for people who want to become business owners without the uncertainty that comes with a new start-up. Each of the policies, procedures and processes in a Turnkey Business have not only been tried and tested, but they've also been improved upon. That's a very reassuring concept for a new business owner.

So that's your end goal for your Systemization program – to turn your company into a Turnkey Business. While you may not want to sell your business, or turn it into a franchise, you should approach this project as if you did. Once your

business is running smoothly via the System, using the procedures that have been continually improved upon, you will be able to take a step back from it, and know that it will continue to run smoothly even when you're not there.

***“Pretend that the business you own - or want to own - is the prototype, or will be the prototype, for 5,000 more just like it.”***

- Michael Gerber, e-Myth Revisited

# THE BEST EXAMPLE OF A TURNKEY BUSINESS

McDonalds calls itself “the most successful small business in the world” and that’s because it consists of nearly 40,000 franchise businesses, all independently run by the same tried and tested System that the McDonalds brothers and Ray Kroc created back in the 1950s.



The reason it's so successful is down to its System, which ensures that every McDonalds branch has the same training, customer service and success as the next.



Ray Kroc put a lot of time and effort into perfecting that System, because he understood the financial opportunity in creating something that worked for every single franchisee, no matter what their background or qualifications. Now the McDonalds Corporation is not in business to sell hamburgers and fries; it's in business to sell its System to franchisees.

THE  
FOUNDER



If you haven't watched the movie 'The Founder' yet, which is all about how Ray Kroc Systemized McDonalds, you definitely should – such a great movie and much more interesting than it sounds!

# CHAPTER 2

## How to Systemize your business

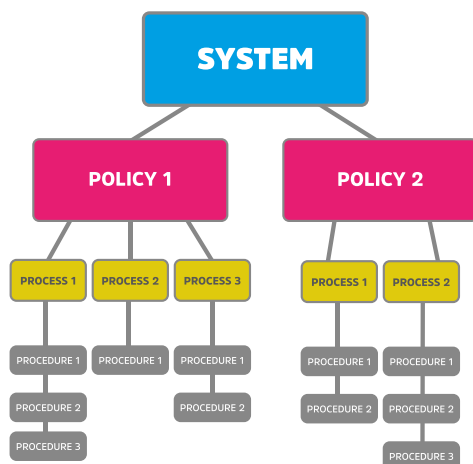
First, let's answer a common question - what exactly is a System?

***“A System is a set of things, actions, ideas, and information that interact with each other, and in so doing, alter other Systems.”*** -

Michael Gerber, e-Myth Revisited

Notice that this definition does not mention anything formal about processes or policies. That's because Systems are all around us, bad and good, intentional or otherwise. Your own business will have Systems in place already, even if you've never created a single policy or procedure! The Systems still exist. The problem is – they might not be very good Systems, in fact they might actually be very bad ones. Systems that are continually repeating behavior and actions that have a negative impact on your business.

But don't worry - this will be rectified when you embark on your Systemization project. In doing so, you will intentionally set down these “things, actions and ideas and information” into a formal program set of Policies, Processes and Procedures, that you will then work to continually improve.





# WAIT – WON'T THIS REMOVE ALL AUTONOMY FOR MY EMPLOYEES?

No, absolutely not. It's the employees that run the System, not the other way around. No one is expected to blindly follow the procedures handed out to them – quite the opposite! Everyone in a Systemized business is responsible for trying to make the System better, for highlighting errors in the System and coming up with ways to improve it, and for innovating new ways to continuously improve the System and everything contained within it.

***“Systems run the business and people run the system.”***

– Michael Gerber, e-Myth Revisited

What's more, a System will also provide freedom for employees in a strategic sense. Because an employee who knows little about their company's purpose and strategic objectives will struggle



to make important decisions, not knowing whether or not their decision will delight or upset their employer. Whereas an employee who knows exactly what the right thing to do is for the company, will be able to make important decisions very easily. And this is partly what the Systemization process does – it allows you to share your company's mission and vision with your employees, and gets them on board with what you're trying to achieve.

# STARTING YOUR SYSTEMIZATION PROJECT

## Step 1 – Define your Strategic Objective

Ever heard the phrase, “Start with the end in mind”?? Before you delve into creating your company’s policies and procedures, you need to take a huge step back and start at the top/beginning. You first need to set down in black and white what the strategic objective of your business is i.e. what you want to achieve by running it.

For example, are you looking to sell the business at some point? Are you looking to grow sales without causing chaos? Are you looking to reduce stress for yourself and your employees?

If you’re the owner, you can get personal here.

This is not about your company’s purpose or mission (that comes next), it’s about your reason for starting or buying the business and what you need to happen in order to live the life you want, now and in retirement.

To arrive at this objective, ask yourself these questions:

» How much money do I need to live the life I want?

» How much money will I need for my retirement, so I can be free from working and continue to live the life I want?

» What timeline do I need to work to? For example, “I want to

Once you have this figured out, you need to carry out some financial analysis to ensure that your business can actually help you achieve these goals. Assuming that it can, you should put these financial goals down in paper along with your timeline, and refer to it often to ensure you’re meeting those goals.

Either way...

Whether you’re the owner or an executive responsible for continuous improvement and business growth, knowing what your strategic objective is, will help you with the next step.

## Step 2 – Defining your Mission and Vision

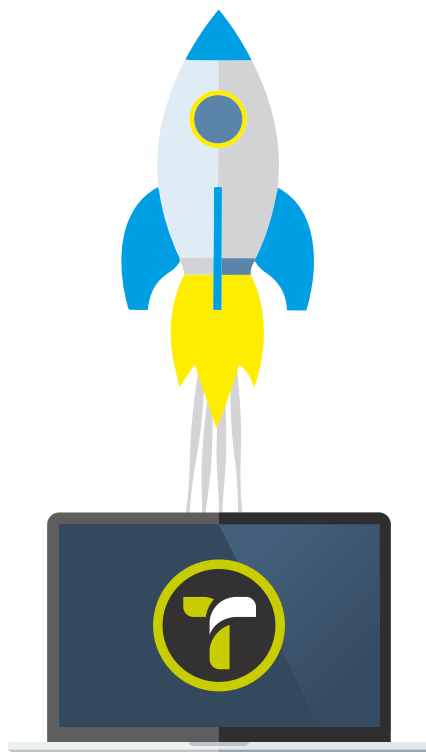
The Mission and Vision are often confused, but they are quite different.

Your Mission is all about your company's purpose - the reason why your business exists to those you serve. At Tharstern, ours is:

***“To guide our customers through the technological evolution of the printing industries”.***

Even though our business is developing MIS software, that's not what gets us out of bed in the morning – helping our customers understand the latest technologies, and doing cool things with it, is actually what motivates us to come to work every day.

Your Vision, on the other hand, is about the future. It's a statement about what you eventually want to achieve for your employees, customers, products/services and brand. We have a three-pronged Vision at Tharstern that incorporates all these things:



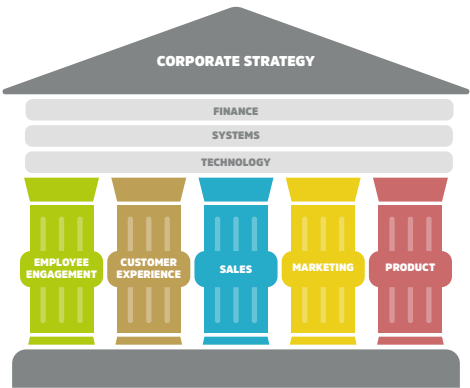
- » To create a united team of passionate people who enjoy coming to work and delighting our customers.
- » To continue to improve our MIS and introduce a cloud-based version of class leading quality and usability.
- » To be a global market leader that's recognized as a modern and energetic software company and the partner of choice for innovators.

# Step 3 – Define your corporate strategy

Now you have a clearly defined objective, purpose and vision for your business, you can use those to create your corporate strategy and the individual strategies that make this up. At Tharstern, we use the term ‘pillars’ instead of strategies, to represent how the individual pillars support the overarching corporate strategy.

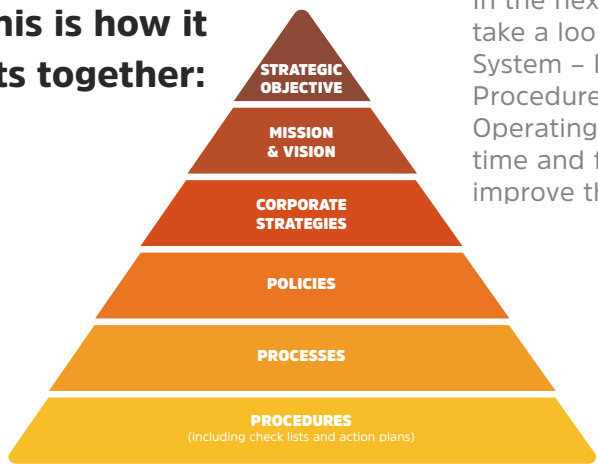
At Tharstern, our pillars are focused on key areas of our business:

- » Employee Engagement
- » Customer Experience
- » Sales & Marketing
- » Customer Success
- » Product



As you can see from the diagram above, we also have some strategies that sit over the top of the individual pillars: Finance, Systems and Technology, because these are all-encompassing. Which strategies you choose to develop are entirely down to your company and should feed into your Strategic Objective, Mission and Vision.

## This is how it fits together:



In the next chapter we’re going to take a look at the last 3 items in your System – Policies, Processes and Procedures, which will make up your Operating Manual and give you more time and freedom to Systemize and improve the rest of your business.

# CHAPTER 3

## Working on your business, not in it.

### How to find the time to work on Systemizing your business

So you're sold on the benefits of Systemizing your business and creating a set of Policies, Processes and Procedures that your employees will use to manage your business. But how on earth are you going to be able to remove yourself from all the different roles and responsibilities you carry out currently and find the time to do all the work required?

It's worth pointing out here that Systemization is a long-term project and it definitely isn't going to be easy. Certainly at the beginning, when you're putting together your Vision, Mission and Corporate Strategies, you will have to steal time wherever you can to work on this program. But the good news is that once you're done with this first part, things will slowly start to get a bit easier! Because now you can start working on your Operating Manual, which is the first step towards removing yourself from all the other roles that you deliver, other than that of the Leader. This is the first step towards creating more time for you to work on your business, and not just in it.

### The reason why you don't have time to work on your business right now

The problem with most business owners is that they tend to get involved in every facet of their company and take on many different roles. This is often because they think they're the only ones who will do it right, or do it as quickly.

This is not because they think their employees are incompetent – this is because the owner has a certain ideal in his head about how something should be done, or has certain knowledge about how to get it done more quickly, and he hasn't passed this information onto their employees. Inevitably, the employees (who unfortunately cannot read minds) don't get it quite right.

So the owner does all these things themselves to make sure they're done to their ideal standard. Not only is this exhausting for the owner, but it also causes a major problem – they are so busy 'doing' that they don't have time to work on improving their business.

## The problem with entrepreneurs

In Michael Gerber's book 'E-Myth Revisited' he goes into this issue in detail, and explains what he believes the problem is for most business owners. According to Gerber, there are 3 types of people in a business:

- » **The Entrepreneur who is a visionary that craves both control and change.**
- » **The Manager who supplies order and structure.**
- » **The Technician who carries out the work of the business.**

Many businesses are apparently started when a Technician has an 'aha' moment, and thinks, "I know how to carry out the work of this business better than my manager, and better than the boss, so why shouldn't I be in charge?" and decide to start their own business. The difference between an Entrepreneur and a Technician starting a business is that the Entrepreneur hires people to deliver his vision, while the Technician ends up doing the work themselves. The real problem here is that there is not enough time in the day, after delivering the work of the Technician and the Manager, to be the Entrepreneur – to work 'on' their

business. That, according to Gerber, is why so many small businesses fail.

## How to remove yourself from working in your business

Your main objective is to rid yourselves of all the tasks and responsibilities you have now, and pass them on to someone else, so you can work on turning your business into a finely-tuned, well-oiled machine.

But you're never going to feel comfortable passing those important jobs on to someone else, until you give that person the tools they need to do it exactly how you want them to. To do these, you need to give your employees an Operating Manual.

## The 3 items you need to create your Operating Manual

### 1. Policies

The overall guidelines your employees must follow e.g.:

- » **Health and safety policies**
- » **Refund policies**

## 2. Processes

The flows of activity that describe how something should be carried out e.g.:

- » **Your artwork approval process**
- » **Press cleaning and maintenance process**

## 3. Procedures

The detailed instructions of steps e.g.:

- » **A checklist of information to collect from a customer for an RFQ**
- » **A checklist for jobs to ensure all specifications are correct before going to press**

## How to get started creating your Operating Manual

The best way to get started on your Operating Manual, is to create Processes and Procedures for all your own roles and responsibilities. That way you can pass them on to someone else, freeing up your time to work on your overarching policies and Systemize the rest of the business.

## Here's how you do that:

1. Make a list of all the tasks you carry out in your business.
2. Choose one of those tasks.
3. Draw a workflow diagram that describes the overall Process for this task.
4. Create a Procedure that very clearly lays out how you go about completing that task, step by step. Within each step you should include rich detail to guide your employees and make sure no mistakes are made. A Process can have more than one Procedure associated with it.
5. Follow your Process and Procedures, each time you carry out the task in the future and improve it until you're happy.
6. Train an employee to follow the Process and Procedures and check in with them from time to time to make sure it's working well. If you don't have a suitable employee to pass it on to, you'll need to consider hiring someone. This will certainly be the case if there is only yourself carrying out all the activities for a particular function e.g. marketing or financial.
7. Do the same with all your other tasks until your only responsibilities are those of being a leader.

# IF YOU'RE JUST STARTING OUT OR HAVE A SMALL BUSINESS, START WITH AN EMPLOYEE CHART

If you're a very small business, you may even be performing a few roles. In this case, you need to map out your ideal company structure, which should be based on the Mission, Vision and Primary Objective you set out earlier. It's important not to create this structure based on the people in the business, the structure needs to be based on the necessary functions required to achieve your Vision.

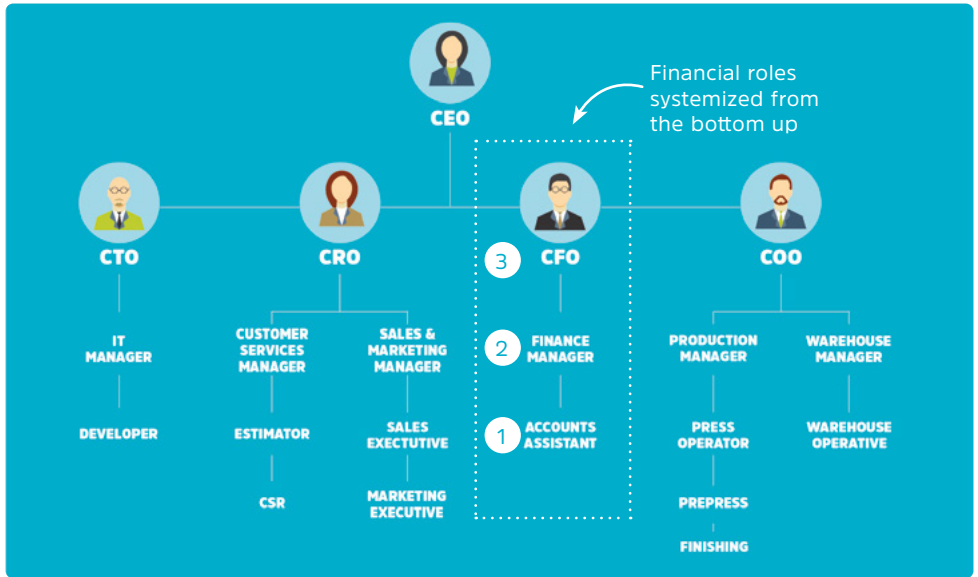
Once you've done this, you may notice that there are positions unfilled, or positions that you yourself are currently filling. In either case, you now need to write your name next to those positions, and get to work Systemizing them. Work from the bottom up, removing yourself from each role as you Systemize it and then fill it with a new recruit. It's recommended that you choose new recruits who are eager to learn and stick to your company's System, not someone who wants to do things their own way, because this will cause your System to fail.

Of course you may not have the skills or experience to decide how a role is best performed, in which case you might want to outsource this work and learn from third party experts, or recruit someone who does have the experience, and who wants to work with you on Systemizing your business.

If you were fulfilling all the financial roles in addition to your own, you would start with the Accounts Assistant role, creating a job description and relevant processes and procedures and then perfecting these until you're happy.

Then you would recruit someone to follow these processes and carry out all the activities in their job description. Next you move on to the Finance Manager role and do the same with this. Once you've recruited someone for that role, you tackle the CFO role, and so on.





The example employee structure diagram above illustrates what we mean by this.

Once you've removed yourself from the other roles you were filling, you will have much more time to work on Systemizing the rest of your print business.

Your next job is to do what you did with your own roles, for everyone else's roles in the company. Working with each employee in turn, you will collaborate on the creation and then refinement of all the processes and procedures required to carry out their responsibilities.

## Do you have to remove yourself from ALL jobs? Even those you love?

No, absolutely not, you're the boss after all. One of the great things about Systemization is that you can get rid of the tasks you particularly dislike doing, and focus on the work that you love! It does, however, make good business sense to look at those jobs you want to keep doing from a financial point of view – work out your hourly rate and the value of the roles you are carrying out, and if it's a big difference, you might want to reconsider and pay someone with a lower hourly rate than yourself to do these roles.

## The Compound Effect of Systemization

When you start out, you'll probably want to tackle the areas of the business that are causing the most issues - maybe achieve one of Google's big-impact moonshots. And you'll no doubt get great satisfaction from seeing these being addressed. But don't view the smaller issues as any less important.

In Darren Hardy's book 'The Compound Effect' he highlights how small incremental changes can actually bring about the best results. He uses the 2007 - 2017 British Cycling Team as a fantastic example of this, a team who had what is widely regarded as the most successful run in cycling history thanks to their Manager's belief in marginal gains. Their manager was Dave Brailsford, former Performance Director at British Cycling, and his mission was to win both Olympic medals and the Tour de France. He achieved both, and a lot quicker than he was targeted too. His approach was to consider every single element of cycle racing as an opportunity for improvement, no matter how small. He believed that if you could improve each of them by even just 1% then they would

significantly improve performance overall - he wasn't wrong.

He created strategies for every element that would affect performance - minimizing dust accumulating in the team truck, bringing in a sleep coach to ensure good sleep quality and taking their own mattresses on tour. Each cyclist was taught how to properly wash their hands by a surgeon, they even banned shaking hands at the Olympics to avoid illnesses. All these changes taken in isolation created small gains, but together they made a huge difference. His squad won track cycling medals at Beijing and London and have now won Tour de France numerous times.

So while you should definitely aim for the high-impact moonshot projects, don't neglect to tackle the smaller issues too. After all, for every hour you spend building a System, it will create many more hours you didn't have before. And for every hour you spend improving a System, it will increase the value of your business. Maybe that will only happen 1% or even 0.1% at a time, but over the long term, this will make a big difference.

***“It is estimated that you and every person in your business spends at least 40% of each workday performing recurring tasks. If you build Systems to perform many of those tasks, you can either eliminate direct involvement or at least cut the time demand on you by half. Almost everything you do can be turned into a System. How you write and publish a blog can become a System. How you create, edit, publish and promote a video can become a System. How you prepare for meetings, set up conference calls, process emails, manage social media—almost everything can be Systemized. The more you do, the more time you manufacture. It’s magic!”***

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Darren Hardy, author of The Compound Effect

# CHAPTER 4

## Continuous improvement of your System and how to stop “System Busters”

So you've got your System in place and everyone in the company has a job description and processes for how to carry out their job in a way that fits in with the corporate Vision and Mission. Congratulations – you're well on your way to achieving financial freedom. But you're not done yet. Systemization is a long-term project without an end, and you must now work on the continuous refinement of your policies, procedures and processes, and experiment with new ways to improve each of them.

So how do you do this? According to Michael Gerber in 'E-Myth Revisited', continuous improvement of your System happens through a cycle of “Innovation, Quantification, and Orchestration.”

Let's look at these steps in more detail:



### Step one – Innovation

Innovation is the first step in the process and is about finding a better way to do things, whether that's by creating a new policy, process or procedure or improving an existing one. It doesn't have to be the 'best' way, it might take you years of experiments to arrive at that, but that's okay – simply by thinking about what the best way to do something is, will help you create a 'better' way. That's powerful enough in itself.

This 6 step process from emyth.com is a great way to tackle the innovation part of the process, and we've summarized it here (with some of our own thoughts thrown in):

1. Identify a frustration that you or others are consistently encountering. Write down what your frustration is in these terms "What's bothering me is..." An example of this might be "What's bothering me is that Sam is always accepting incorrect artwork which costs us money".
2. If your frustration is focused on a person (either yourself or someone else) then you need to restate it as a Systems-directed problem, so it deals with the actual cause of the frustration. The school of thought here is that there aren't any problems caused by people - they're always caused by either a broken System or a lack of one. So "What's bothering me is that Sam is always accepting incorrect artwork which costs us money" turns into "What's bothering me is that there is no process in place to check if customer artwork is correct".
3. You now need to determine the underlying root cause. Ask yourself these questions:
  - How does this frustration specifically impact my department/business?
  - How often does it occur?
  - Who is involved?
  - What are specific examples of this frustration?
  - What does this frustration cost? (Lost hours, wasted time, materials, frustrated customers)
  - What results aren't being achieved that need to be?





4. Determine the impact of the frustration by considering the answers to the above questions and then working out whether or not this is something you really want to fix. This is a great way to avoid kneejerk reactions to issues that aren't actually that big of a problem – a customer complaint for example. A complaint might create a sense of urgency among everyone to make sure that the issue being complained about never happens again, but if it's only a one-off incident that's highly unlikely to occur in the future, you'd be wasting valuable company resources doing that. So don't skip this step – it's important! However, if the issue is something you feel is important, then determine whether this is a low, medium or high priority, so you know whether to tackle this next or put it on the backburner until you've covered all your high priority issues.

5. Identify the missing or broken areas of your System that have caused the issue. This is where you translate your frustration into a System related one by completing this sentence: "The real problem is the absence of a [name of policy, process or procedure] that will [specify the desired results]". In our example above, this would read: "The real problem is the absence of an artwork preflighting process that will automatically identify incorrect artwork and either fix it or flag it to an operator".



6. You can now design, test and implement the new process. To do this you'll need to outline the elements of the process including: who is accountable, what the main steps are, what forms and documents are needed, and when it will be implemented.

## Step two – Quantification

Quantification is key because it helps you work out if your policies, processes and procedures are successful or if it needs further innovation. Without some metrics to measure where you started and where you are now, you would never otherwise know that, and your efforts will have been in vain. This is how you go about Quantifying the policies, processes and procedures in your System:

1. Work out what the business activities are that relate to this new policy, process or procedure and the frustration behind it originally. You can then identify the related results that need to be quantified.
2. Devise a system for collecting the necessary data, preferably through automation so you are not wasting time on manual collection.
3. Now you can create a baseline for your metrics, so you can compare the results of future changes to see whether or not they have been successful. A baseline is also very useful for reporting on your Systemization efforts and seeing the overall benefits over a longer period of time.
4. Use your baseline data to create a management report template that you can use going forward to report on the effectiveness of future innovation experiments. Your report should include a comparison between the most recent results and the baseline.
5. Finally, you must ensure that you continuously review and improve the report on a regular basis. It's important that you don't let it stagnate and become irrelevant or unused.



## Step three - Orchestration

Orchestration is all about documenting, implementing and delivering training on your System.

This part requires a fair bit of tenacity and a strong commitment to your vision. That's because you'll need to regularly communicate with your employees to drive the new System through the business, constantly reinforcing the company Vision and how the System will help deliver it.

Here's how to share the System with the rest of the company:

- » Create or amend any documents associated with the new System.
- » Distribute the new System to all relevant employees.
- » Deliver training to anyone who will use the System.
- » You now need to hold people accountable for using the new System, and deal with those who aren't. Everyone needs to know how important the System is to your company, so it's important that you address any issues with employees not adhering to it.
- » Continually analyze the management report discussed above and look for new ways to innovate and improve each aspect of the System.





# Who should take part in the Continuous Improvement projects?

For your project to succeed, it's imperative you have the right group of people involved. At Tharstern we believe there are 3 main people you need in your project team.



## The Visionary

The person with the overall vision for the Systemization project.

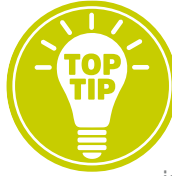
## The Executor

This member of the team will drive the project forward, executing the vision communicated by the Visionary and driving change. This needs to be someone who understands the business, and also understands the concept of Systemization.



## The Technicians

The people that will be using the System.



Typically, when putting teams together for software implementation and optimization projects, we recommend choosing just one group of people who will stay the same throughout.

But with Systemization projects, there is one crucial difference – the team members should change dependent on the department and roles that are affected by the area of the System you are working to create or improve.

You'll get much better buy-in to your System if the people involved in the continuous improvement experiments are the ones who will be carrying them out.



# KICKING OFF YOUR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

The first thing each project team needs to do when it's first assembled is to hold a 'Project Kick-off' meeting. Ask members to prepare for the meeting by identifying some frustrations they are experiencing in their own roles or areas of the System they think need improving.

Here's an agenda of what should be discussed during the meeting:



- » **Talk about the overall purpose of the Systemization initiative and why you are all there.**
- » **Identify what success will look like (what's your main goal, how will you know when you're winning).**
- » **Ask everyone to present their frustrations or opportunities for improvement.**
- » **Go through steps 1-3 above – Innovation, Quantification and Orchestration.**
- » **To keep momentum going, it's important to hold these meetings regularly, so add them into diaries months in advance, making it clear that attendance is mandatory and that you won't accept any excuses for not attending!**

# System Busters and how to stop them

In his book 'Systems Busters: How to Stop Them in Your Business' Philip Paul Beyer describes a System Buster as "Any event that causes chaos in – or 'busts' our System of operation". In the ISO 9001 world of quality assurance, they are called 'Non-Conformances', but they are essentially the same.

According to Beyer, there are two different types of System Busters:

1. Personal Error – where a person fails to adhere to the System.
2. System Error – where a new event occurs that has never occurred before, and so is not dealt with by the System.

In either event, you should ensure that the System Buster is reported somehow, so it can be investigated and the System fixed. If you operated to ISO9001 you would do this by creating a Non-Conformance Report, which includes:

- » **The Problem Statement – who, what, why, where, when**
- » **The policy, procedure or process that was not conformed to.**

» **An investigation of the problem, repeatedly asking 'why?' until you reach the core issue.**

» **The solution – how this will be fixed and monitored.**

Beyer adopts a similar approach using an online form he calls the 'System Buster' form. The person who catches the event submits the form to management, stating what the non-conformance was (the first two bullet points above). It's then Management's job to come up with the third and fourth bullet points, investigating the issue to find out whether it was a Personal Error or a System Error, and how to fix the issue.

For Systems issues, the resolution is an amendment to the System, which is simple enough. For Personal Errors, it gets a little more complicated. This is where you need to speak to the person responsible for the non-conformance and restate your vision for the System and what you are trying to achieve, in an attempt to get them on board and enthused about it. But you will of course have to give this situation its own policy, process and procedures, detailing what happens from a HR point of view if an employee continues to ignore the System and do their own thing.

# CHAPTER 5

## How to digitize your Systems using software technology

One of the best ways you can carry out the 'Innovation' part of your Continuous Improvement program, is to use technology to automate manual processes and procedures, particularly ones that are very cumbersome and labor-intensive.

Let's take the sales process as an example here. You could automate many sales processes by investing in a modern CRM application that allows you to automatically track leads and clients and communicate regularly with both. They will also let you create automated workflows triggered by events that take place in your CRM. For example, when a contact's lifecycle is updated to indicate they are now a customer, it can trigger a sequence of events that includes: sending an email to the new customer, updating segmented marketing lists, or creating new clients folders on Google Drive.



### **Connecting your System together through automation**

Once you've digitized your processes using technology, you can then connect these different processes together to save even more time. So for example, maybe you've digitized the job creation process within your printing company, and you've also digitized the artwork approval process. Now it's time to connect these two areas of your System together using technology.

Many software applications offer some form of integration these days, either built into the application, through an API or via third party middleware such as Zapier or automate.io. So the technology is definitely out there to achieve this!

Tools such as Slack, Constant Contact and Trello allow you to set certain triggers such as emailing new subscribers a specific welcome email. But you can also integrate all these accounts together, so that for example, you get a Slack message to notify you that someone replied to your sales email, which then also adds a task to your Trello board. These are the sort of disparate processes that you should be thinking about innovating through automation and integration.

***“MIS software is the most important system in a manufacturing /service company.”***  
- Philip Paul Beyer

## **Your MIS solution is one of the most powerful tools you’ve got to digitize your Systems**

An MIS solution is the most important piece of software a printing company can implement to help with Systemization. It will sit at the heart of your business, allowing you to digitize processes throughout the whole company, including:

- » **The initial customer engagement**
- » **Working out an estimate**
- » **Creating a quote**
- » **Creating a job**
- » **Purchasing**
- » **Stock management**
- » **Scheduling**
- » **Invoicing**
- » **Delivery**
- » **And more.**



There's also another reason why an MIS is such a powerful tool for Systemization - the *raison d'être* for an MIS System is to provide Management Information about your business, and this is extremely useful for your Continuous Improvement Program. You can use your MIS to measure and then report on all the different areas of your business, and use this data to identify areas and processes you want to improve, digitize and automate.

## Digitization of your System is a long-term project

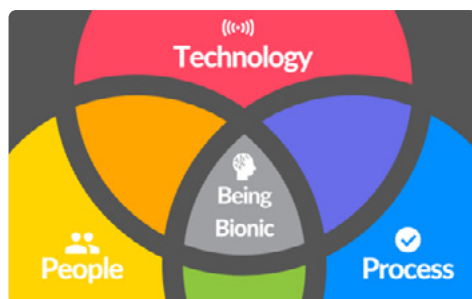
We said it in the last chapter, but it's worth repeating here - while for some projects that you digitize and automate you might see noticeable and dramatic improvements right away, that's definitely not always the case. So keep in mind that this is an investment in your business which will pay off as your business grows. Some processes will take a more significant input of time or resources—and there may be a learning curve, such as using new software or tools.

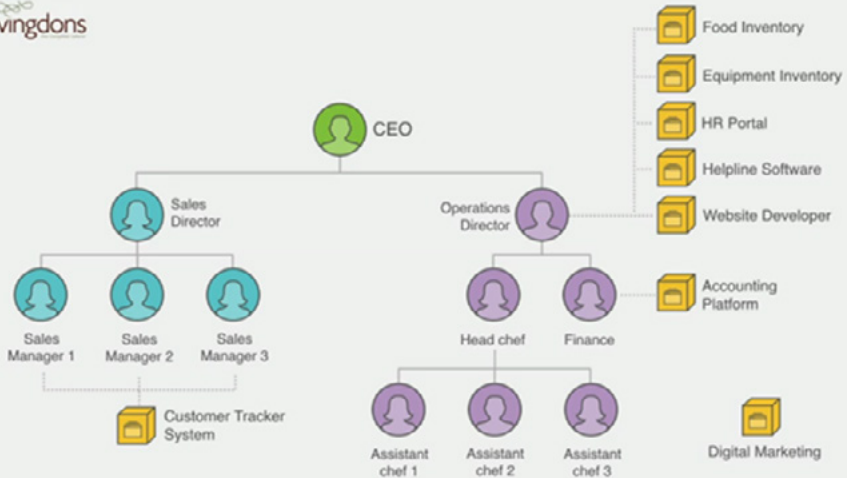
While going through the process of digitizing your Systems, you

should thoroughly document every step of your process and share the documents with any relevant team members. And as your business grows, be sure to revisit this documentation and update any manuals you've created.

## Make technology part of your System

At Tharstern we believe that the key to navigating the technological evolution of the printing industry, lies in being a Bionic Business - one that's made up of both 'technology' and 'humans' in equal parts. There's also a third part to this formula that acts as a glue to bind these two areas together, and that's 'process'. If this part is left out, the whole thing falls down - you need to have processes in place to ensure that people learn how to collaborate and work well with technology.





The best way we've heard of doing this, comes from a brilliant TED Talk by Nadjia Yousif, MD & Partner at The Boston Consulting Group.

She suggests a simple change that has a big impact - start treating your technology like an employee and include it in your organizational chart.

Doing this raises questions such as...

- » **Is that technology reporting to the right person? Maybe it should be the responsibility of someone who actually uses it? Or is more tech-savvy?**
- » **Is there any piece of technology that isn't reporting to anyone?**

» **Do this person and this platform work well together? Does the person know what they're doing, or do they require more training?**

» **Is anyone overloaded with responsibility for too much technology? Should some of these solutions be passed over to a new line manager?**

Those employees who have software solutions reporting to them should treat that technology like they would an employee and proactively manage them, scheduling performance reviews and organizing training.

Scan here to watch the full TED Talk >>



## A working example of all the above

We'd like to leave you with an example of how you could use technology to digitize and then connect disparate processes and procedures together.

### Step 1

Digitize the estimating and ordering processes for your less complex, more common jobs by implementing a web-to-print system such as those from Vpress, Flex4 or XMPie. Now orders can be placed by the customers themselves using an online portal.

### Step 2

Digitize the optimization process by implementing imposition and ganging software such as IMP or Metrix.

### Step 3

Integrate the new web-to-print solution, with your MIS solution.

### Step 4

Integrate your MIS solution with the new imposition and ganging software.

At the end of these four steps, you will have created an automated process where orders are placed online, processed by the MIS and then optimized for production, all without any human intervention. This is a great example of how Systemization and automation can be combined to streamline repetitive tasks, freeing up your people to run the System and continuously improve it.





# A final word

You might think all of this seems like a lot of hard work, and in our experience, that's not too far from the truth. There is a lot you will need to do to Systemize your business, and we at Tharstern are still working on this – we know that we are not yet a Turnkey business and that there is still plenty of opportunities for us to improve our System. And that's what we'll continue to do!

The good news is that, according to Philip Paul Beyer, once that System is up and running, it's pretty easy to maintain. So we know it will be worth the time and hard work.

We wish you the best of luck in your Systemization journey.



An **MIS** partner that will help you beat the competition and lead the way.