



HOW-TO GUIDE:

4 Ways to Run an Efficient Small Business

Boost your team's productivity and eliminate time-wasting tasks.



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Running a business is not for the faint of heart. While some offices overflow with energy and coast with minimal problems, others are full of administrative bumps and clients who take more time to pay than you planned.

Make no mistake, your business's ability to run efficiently depends on its ability to reduce hiccups, avoid business flow disruptions, remain organized and eliminate day-to-day manual tasks.

This guide will help you uncover ways your business can simplify your processes and save time, which should put you back on the path toward effortless growth.



Thryv user Michael Lynn,
3D Print Everything

PROBLEM

01



Low Team Morale and Productivity

While not immediately obvious as a place you can improve efficiencies, morale is one of the top areas that can affect your business's operations.

You already know your business needs a high rate of productivity to be successful, and that falls on your staff's shoulders. They're the backbone of your business. When they aren't feeling their best at work, the business will suffer.

You cannot afford to ignore any dip in morale, especially when it's within your control.

Issues That Can Damage Employee Temperament

- **Unreasonably long hours:** Overtime will occur occasionally. It helps employees fatten their paychecks while the business avoids hiring staff for a temporary issue. Unfortunately, too much overtime will leave your employees overworked and underperforming.
- **Unclear or unrealistic expectations:** If you've got a stack of paperwork or a laundry list of administrative tasks for your staff that's above and beyond serving your clients, you're sending them down the dangerous path toward burnout.
- **Lack of trust:** Your staff should trust you to have their backs. If they don't, you've met the biggest destroyer of morale. Lack of trust can look like putting too many people on one client's project. Not only are they not empowered to grow, but they're also tripping over one another's work, further creating unnecessary roadblocks.

When there's a lack of work-wellness, employee engagement sinks. And when your employees would rather be anywhere other than your establishment, it shows in their work ethic. From distracted mistakes to less-than-stellar customer service, you could end up with a sour staff.

That is exactly why it's important to keep an eye on how your team members feel while they're at work.

Signs of Declining Employee Morale

- Defensive or negative staff attitudes
- Tardiness
- Zero initiative
- Low productivity
- Poor performance
- Higher turnover rate
- Lack of attendance
- No desire to learn the business

Solution

Build Efficient Workflows

Your staff has enough on their hands. If you want to help them get their work done as efficiently as possible while maintaining morale, you might need to look at the processes they're using. While your methods of running the business may have worked for you, your staff might feel differently.

Ask them what they feel could be improved. Get their thoughts and ideas. Consider automated workflow solutions that could reduce manual processes and increase effectiveness.



3 Tips to Reduce Busywork

Take a look at your staff's day-to-day activities and ask yourself where you can trim the fat. Here are three places to start.

- **Appointment scheduling.** Allow clients to book their appointments online. It saves your front office staff hours going back and forth on phone calls. Better still, you can connect online appointment data with your email and text communication tools to automatically send appointment reminders.
- **Documentation.** Is collecting intake documents taking hours out of your receptionists' day? Free them. Use automation to save them time and effort. When clients book services online your email system can send welcome emails that ask them to fill out the necessary paperwork and submit any necessary files.

By digitally collecting this information your staff can electronically tag them, which aids in the electronic search. Right there you can eliminate hours of manually labeling and filing physical documents.

- **Shared information.** Some e-documentation systems allow for note taking, which means your staff can resolve any questions or concerns without having to call in for backup. Or at minimum, take in the concerns from your extra-attention clients so you have all their questions upfront.

Allowing them to interact with clients is a great way to empower your staff and encourage their professional growth. Remember, a supported staff is a happy staff and less likely to become burned out.

PROBLEM
02

Inaccurate Online Business Listings

Can you imagine how often you'd want to pull your hair out if a customer called for directions every time they were interested in your business? Now think about the volume of customers that you'd lose out on by not having information available online.

Potential customers who can't find your address, phone number, website or service list will give up on your business and seek out your competition. Conflicting information about your business is just as bad.

Imagine a client storming in, demanding an apology because they stopped by last night at 6 p.m. for an emergency tooth extraction and the doors were locked. Your website says your office is open until 9 p.m.

Your staff can explain that the practice is operating on summer hours and currently closes at 5 p.m., but that's not going to go over well in this particular scenario.

Search engines, like Google, send crawlers throughout the internet to seek information about your business and website. When the crawlers find information about your business in various places online, and that information matches, the crawlers send signals to the search result pages that the information is consistent and can be trusted in searches.

This information gets put to high use when potential clients search using purposeful phrases like the following.



Family attorneys near me



Dentists open now



Spas that do dermaplaning



Emergency vet 24 hours



But if your local listings aren't up-to-date, accurate and consistent, the chances of being found and chosen by prospective clients decrease.

Solution

Treat Annual Listing Updates as Sacred

When it comes to your core information, you can't afford to have missing and inconsistent information. How else will customers find and fall in love with your business?

It's time to treat online listings as a strategic initiative unto itself, not a housekeeping matter. Each year, review (or assign someone to review) your business listings and make bulk updates. Timing it to certain annual events, such as a holiday or a yearly task, helps you remember and set aside the time. (It's just like changing your smoke alarm batteries when we move our clocks twice a year.)

Giving the task the time and space to get it right ensures potential customers get consistent, accurate information no matter where they look for you.

How to Update Your Online Listings

- Search your business on the search engine and claim the listing
- Update the information and fill in any missing data
- Add the services you offer
- Repeat for each business location on each of the listing platforms
- Review annually, or seasonally if your operations (e.g., location hours) change

You don't have time to copy and paste information to every listing site. With Thryv, upload your business's information once and watch it populate to over 40 top listing sites.

How to Ensure Your Information Is Found

You know having listings is important. Make sure you cover all those bases first. The goal is to boost your business's authority. If you've checked off the big-name listing publishers, like Google, Yelp, Yahoo! and TripAdvisor, it's time to look at the lesser-known listing publishers. You may not know them, but Google does — and it trusts the information on those sites.

And if you're looking to really stand out online, use the extra time you've gained to do market research, find your gaps, uncover your competitive edge and include it in your listing.

Conducting a Competitive Analysis

- 01 Identify your competitors.** You can search online for services similar to yours or ask your customers who they've used before.
- 02 Examine their online presence.** Discover where you can outperform but also take note of anything they do that you don't.
- 03 Become their customer.** Watch their social feeds, subscribe to their emails and check out their customer service to gain a deeper perspective. Be sure to document your findings.
- 04 Investigate their reviews.** What are the good and bad points being made? Use their shortcomings to fuel your productivity.
- 05 Improve, rinse and repeat.** These findings should reveal at least one item in your business you can enhance. Definitely make those changes. But keep in mind this is not a one-and-done thing. Make a habit of conducting an in-depth competitive analysis at least annually.

PROBLEM
03



Too Many Apps to Operate

If you want to be the best, make sure all your bases are covered — easy-to-use scheduling, smooth customer communication, secure document storage, endless payment options, email marketing, social media postings. With every need comes a new app or software to fill it. You know you need to adapt and operate more effectively, but at what cost?

Unfortunately, the attempt to adapt and improve by adding software is exactly how businesses end up with 40 to 60 applications and a knotted infrastructure. And while we applaud the dedication to improving the business, we can't ignore the fact that business owners are digging themselves into a deep, dark, tech-tangled hole.

When your business has too many apps and you can't form a well-informed picture of your business, the result is poor planning and misspent resources.

If you don't break the cycle of subtraction by addition, you'll head into a downward spiral of application overload. Think of the margin leakage you've already experienced.

How to Spot a Knotted Infrastructure

A knotted Infrastructure refers to a tangled map of applications providing different solutions that may overlap, contradict and improperly integrate with one another.

A tangled web of applications only creates more problems. When you have a wealth of data moving across dozens of platforms, it becomes nearly impossible to track operational performance.

Not to mention, the wasted time logging in and bouncing between windows to get a full picture. And we haven't even touched on the increased possibilities for human error.

Signs of a Knotted Infrastructure



Lack of
Visibility



Increased Manual
Workloads



Data
Inconsistencies



Lost or Unaccounted
Time

“

68% of surveyed workers average more than **30 minutes** per day navigating from app to app.

~Slack

”

Solution

Find All-in-one Tools

It's time to untangle the knot. It can take some work, but arriving at a single, end-to-end business operations system provides better data visibility, reduces shuffling between various tech products and allows faster, more-nimble adjustments where necessary.

How to Untangle the Knot

01 List your current software/apps

You may know you have multiple programs for business operations, but perhaps you didn't realise just how many. Take note of which features you use within each software.

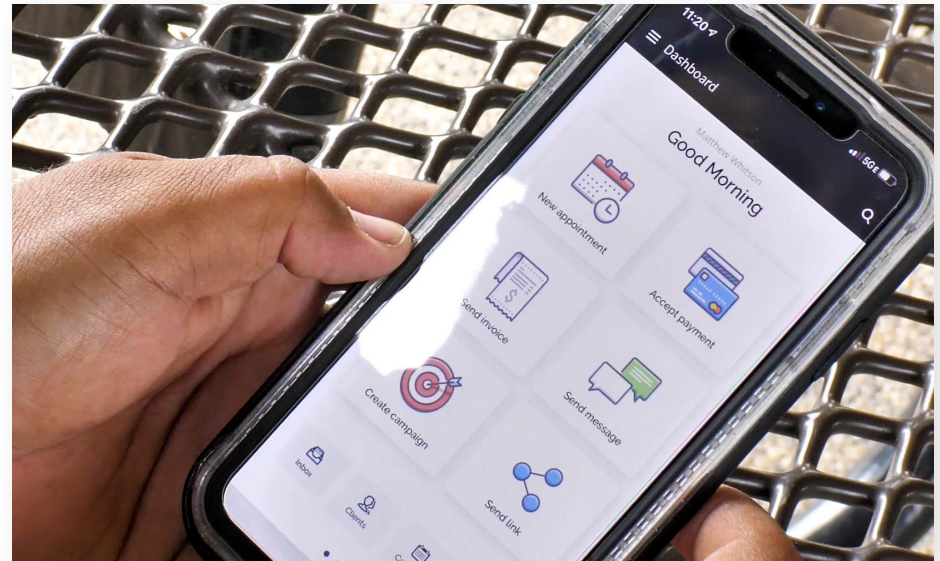
You may be surprised to learn you're paying for a software subscription just to use a single feature. Identifying this wasteful behavior is important to improving your margins.

02 List the features

You've listed the features you use within each software, now it's time to look at what they offer. Is there redundancy and overlaps? Discovering you've been using multiple platforms that perform the same functions can make you smack your forehead in shame. Highlight multiple programs that serve the same purpose. You'll need this later.

03 List your integrations

Which tool is linked to other tools? This goes for anything from accounting software to social accounts. By now you should see the crazy web unraveling before you.



04 Research all-in-ones

This next step requires a bit of research but luckily, you've already done some legwork. Go back to steps 1 and 2 and ask yourself these questions.

- Which platforms essentially have the same features?
- What needed features aren't listed?
- Can a tool providing those features integrate with what you have?

If no one software on your list is addressing 90% of your needs, start researching end-to-end software that benefits your service industry. While no software can have it all, fortunately some come dangerously close.

05 Create your new plan

It's time to create your new process. Find software systems that offer the closest alignment to what your company needs. Move current data to the all-in-one software you've chosen. Integrate where needed and let go of excess platforms. The goal is to have the lightest weight integration possible.



Disorganised Staff and Scheduling

Getting clients on the books is a front-of-mind goal. If your staff isn't careful, and your system for managing appointments and tasks isn't organised, your business can run into staffing issues.

Staffing issues can leave your talented team looking incapable. Whether clients are waiting too long because there aren't enough hands, or they can see employees twiddling their thumbs with nothing to do, neither looks good.

While these seem like small issues that can go without correction, implementing software can resolve them. And the considerable micro problems stemming from them.

Solution

Add Scheduling Software

When you manually manage appointments, you unknowingly sabotage your business. Both in the image you present to clients and prospects, and in employee morale. (See Problem #1) Clients shouldn't become accustomed to witnessing frantic page flipping or mouse clicking in search of their appointment — or have that be the reason it slipped through the cracks.

How to Simplify Scheduling

Implementing calendar software can make for a less overwhelming view. Be sure the software you choose offers easy-to-read visuals. Software isn't helpful if your staff needs the Rosetta Stone to decipher what's on their docket in the weeks to come.

Using a calendar that properly lays out appointment blocks also leaves room for superior planning. Your staff will be able to identify large client requests well in advance — giving them time to prepare. That saves time and prevents stress.

An accurate advanced view also provides the opportunity to block off time for administrative tasks that need attention. Or to analyze how well time is being used.

By having the time to step back and look at how time is spent, other opportunities for improvement and automation will reveal themselves.

Get Your Time Back

Running a business isn't easy. There are always tasks and initiatives that take much longer and are much more complicated than you expect. But some of those challenges don't have to be.

The software industry has made enough progress that multiple options exist to help you improve efficiencies. You no longer have to accept the cumbersome nature of certain business processes. Gone are the days of lost appointments. Of error-prone client documentation. Of over- and understaffing.

Yet, technology can get a bit messy if the strategy is to add random programs to satisfy every issue. By taking thoughtful stock of your business's stumbling blocks, you can find your way to more elegant, holistic technology solutions.



Make the Most Out of Your Time

Efficiency is all about achieving maximum productivity with a minimum wasted effort so, why not let software do the boring — but necessary — work for you?

You don't have time to dig for listing sites, and then copy and paste information between them all. That's why Thryv is a game changer when it comes to getting your business found online. With Thryv, you'll upload your business's information once and watch it populate to more than 40 top listing sites.

When it's time to make changes to your hours, address or any other important information, change it once on your Thryv dashboard. That's it. Thryv spreads the word.

Thryv provides a secure, easy-to-use platform that automates tasks and allows clients to put their customers at the center of their business.

Our software offers Customer Relationship Management (CRM), Search Engine Optimisation, Marketing, online invoices & receipts, text messaging, email marketing, print and social media management. This automation provides the edge local businesses need to better succeed in their market.

We do it all in a convenient client experience management app that allows small business owners to get the job, manage the job and get credit all from the palm of their hand.

To learn more, visit Thryv.com.au



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