6 STEPS TO REDESIGN A BROKEN BUSINESS PROCESS

RESOLVE TO FIX WHAT'S BROKEN

There is something so satisfying about fixing something that is broken. No matter your level of technical prowess or how complex the "something" is, it just feels good to fix things.

However, we're often guilty of tolerating broken things and not taking the initiative to go in and fix them, especially when times get busy. When a broken process or system involves other team members or stakeholders, it gets even trickier.

So how do you even start to tackle redesigning something like that? It's all about baby steps. We've laid out a clear outline of steps to help you start fixing that pesky work process that is giving you grief every day.

1. IDENTIFY THAT SOMETHING IS BROKEN

This might sound obvious, but think about it this way: maybe you know a certain process is terrible, but you just haven't pinpointed which parts aren't working. **Pick a process that's causing you pain.**

Now it's time to play process detective. Find out as much as you can about the history behind this process. Why is it done this way? Maybe your team has tried other ways in the past that haven't worked. Or has it just always been done this way? All of this background information will help you move forward.

You should also identify all the people involved in this process, including the people you need to approve any changes. How flexible is the process? Find out which steps you can change and which you can't.

2. MAP OUT THE PROCESS

Write out each step of the process, including details about each stage and each step within that stage. Who manages each task? Which tools do you use for each step?

Here's an example of how to start, using a real-life, cross-departmental process at Kintone.

Our Customer Stories page is where you can read case studies of our customers and their results with Kintone. This is a map of how we get those published, start to finish.

In addition to the info above, you should also list out "where" (digitally or otherwise) the step actually happens, and where the info is saved. For example, the customer interviews in step one happen on Zoom calls. The recordings are then saved on Kintone in our Customer Stories database app. Next, the customer story is drafted and reviewed in a word processor and then saved again on Kintone. And so on and so forth. These details on the tools and applications used for each step can help you eliminate redundancies later on and streamline your process.

2. MAP OUT THE PROCESS, CONT.

Now that you've mapped it out, which steps are causing issues? Is there a bottleneck? Is the problem caused by the design of the process or the execution of it? Are there extra unnecessary steps?

The goal of this redesign is to streamline, streamline, streamline. Info on the current status should always be accessible to everyone involved without having to email someone about it.

IMPORTANT NOTE: You also want to eliminate data silos by keeping the process in one centralized location (as much as possible anyway). Conversations about the process should also happen in one designated place to keep everything organized and easy to find.

3. REIMAGINE THE DESIGN

If you had a magic wand, what would the ideal version of this process look like? Bring in the other people involved and map out the ideal, cleaned-up version. A diagram is essential, especially if it's a sophisticated process. Are there any steps you can automate or eliminate completely?

For our customer story process, we bypass having to email each other for status updates by having the status clearly labeled for each task in our project tracking app. This means we know who it's assigned to at any given time and what step they're working on. We also set up automatic notifications to let you know when it's your turn to work on it.

Mark any critical control points or areas where there are strict requirements. Where might you experience issues that need some extra buffer time? For example, maybe you need to build in a little extra time to have someone proofread an email before it goes out.

4. LIST OUT THE TOOLS YOU NEED

Once you've drafted the optimal new version of your process, figure out what tools you need to get it implemented. If you already have everything you need, congrats! You can move on to the next step.

If you do need a new tool, program or platform, what are your options? What are the limitations of the tools you have available? What about cost constraints? If you're comparing multiple software solutions, take a look at third party review websites like Capterra or G2 to get real insights into the pros and cons of each.

If you need help convincing your team or manager of the value of this new system or software, show them the "before" and "after" process maps you worked on in steps two and three. Show them how much time you'll save, the steps you were able to cut out. You'll need their buy-in to get your new process to work.

5. IMPLEMENT YOUR NEWLY-DESIGNED PROCESS

Your first implementation of a brand new process will probably not be perfect. And that's fine. "Perfect" is not the goal here. The goal is to land somewhere in the middle between a minimum acceptable state and the ideal result.

If this process affects a lot of end users, try testing it out with a smaller group of people first to work out the kinks. Once you've gotten enough feedback to find that middle ground between "minimum acceptable" and "ideal," launch that bad boy!

Another important task here is to make sure the end users of the process have all the training materials they need to really understand this new process and what their new expectations are. This is an easily forgotten item that can lead to poor adoption of anything new.

6. TEST IT AND KEEP IMPROVING

We firmly believe in the Kaizen Method, a Japanese-made improvement process which is all about incremental change and continuous improvement. As you continue to use this newly implemented process, you will inevitably find new ways to make it better. Automate things where you can, clarify any unclear steps, and fill in any gaps in your training materials.

IN SUMMARY

Process improvement can see overwhelming, but when you tackle one process at a time using clearly defined steps (and clearly defined players), it can make fixing things not only doable, but stressless.

Want to learn how we use Kintone to manage all of our processes? Watch our workflow management video to see how Kintone can help you manage your team's processes and automate the boring stuff.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Want to learn more about broken processes? Check out these resources:

READ: Six Signs Your Project Management Workflow Process Needs a Refresh

READ: Why Projects Fail: Why Weak Communication Kills Projects & How to Solve It

WATCH: Learn How to Create a Culture of Continuous Improvement