

EVERYTHING HAS A PROCESS PART 2

HOW TO IMPROVE YOURS

Once you have identified a process in your firm, you can take steps to improve upon that process. Remember, your processes may vary based on the circumstances of each matter, but there is still a process you follow in everything you do. The hard part is figuring out whether what you're doing is efficient or not, and making improvements that will help your firm be more efficient.

Take for example the process of scheduling hearings. In some jurisdictions, hearings must be coordinated with opposing counsel, witnesses, and account for the court's availability. If your staff member contacts opposing counsel to select a date prior to checking the court's calendar, then it's possible that the effort to coordinate will have been in vain. Most would check the court's calendar before trying to coordinate, keeping in mind that if it takes too long to get agreement from the other side, they might have to re-check the court calendar multiple times. Scheduling hearings is oftentimes a simple process, but it's clear that there are easy ways and hard ways to work even this simple process.

Process improvement may include minor changes to the steps taken in the process. Processes can also be completely re-engineered, which might involve changing up the entire process. The goal is to do more with less, so changes to the people doing the work, the work being done, and the technology used to do the work should all be considered.

These tips may help you process improve more effectively:

LOOK AT THE BIG PICTURE

The view from 10,000 feet can sometimes reveal issues right off the bat.

EVALUATE ISSUES IN SMALLER PIECES

Once you have identified an issue, mapping out the process including every single step that is being taken, by who, when, and what else is being affected can reveal simple potential solutions

LOOK AT THE ISSUES FROM EVERY ANGLE

Don't limit yourself to looking at the steps taken and how you can change them. Consider whether you have the right people handling each step, whether you are fully exploiting your technology to be efficient, and whether automation can be implemented to make the functions easier.

USE AVAILABLE TECHNOLOGY

Don't be afraid to automate processes.

BE OPEN TO CHANGE

In order to improve, change will be necessary. Without change, things stay the same, and nothing gets better.

Finally, remember that change isn't easy — there will be bumps in the road. Making changes may result in different problems cropping up, or they may reveal issues that no one even knew existed. People may rebel, and you may lose people who can't or don't want to keep up with the changes, but if the changes you are making are for the greater good, you will find that your firm and your processes are stronger in the end.