



## Improving Business Systems and Processes



**Although I'm not a huge fan of what is marketed today as 'reality' television, there is a lot to be learned from some of the business-themed reality shows on cable television channels.**

We've learned over the years, as this genre of entertainment has grown in popularity, there is not a lot of reality involved in most of these shows. Like all entertainment venues, drama, surprise, emotion, scripting and editing are all pulled together to produce a product that will attract viewers and paid advertisers.

**The premise of these shows is: a business is struggling and deeply in debt.** An expert in the industry - a bar, restaurant or salon expert - comes in and turns the business around in short order. Some of the episodes of these shows are so staged as to be considered fake, but that doesn't mean there aren't still business lessons to be learned, regardless. Having watched a number of these series, like Bar Rescue, Restaurant Stakeout, Restaurant: Impossible, and Tabatha's Salon Take Over, certain business concepts -- or lack of them -- seem to repeat themselves over and over. Weak, or complete lack of management; business systems; untrained, inadequate employees; lack of brand and other marketing issues; as well as lack of technology and automation to help the businesses run smoothly, are seen often, regardless of the program name.

- **Weak Management and Systems:** Far too many of these businesses are owned and managed by someone with no experience in their particular field. They dreamed of owning such an establishment and suddenly had enough money to buy a place. They seldom have the knowledge of the new industry they are entering, much less know what is needed for any chance of success. No systems are in place to handle basic necessities like pricing, accessing necessary products and materials or the hiring and management of good employees. Without strong processes and systems in place, odds of a business succeeding diminish.
- **Employee/Staffing issues:** Often, even long term, loyal employees are not a good fit for the success of a business. They can become complacent and set in their ways, adding nothing of value to running the business smoothly and successfully. Just having the best employees is not enough if you don't have them working in appropriate areas of the business. To ensure long term standardization within your business, employee rules, policies and training need to be put in place.
- **Brand issues:** Too many of the businesses featured on these shows have absolutely no branding. No competitive analysis was ever done to understand who they are competing against or how many direct competitors they have. Without knowing who in your area offers basically the same products or services and how they offer them, a business can be flying by the seat of their pants. Nothing makes them 'unique' or 'different' from others. Their facilities, products, menus, and services have nothing at all tying them together. Whether your differentiator is cost, style, customer base, unique products or services, it needs to tie together elements that will make your firm stand out. If customers can find the same thing at dozens of locations, why do they need to buy from you? It will come down to a price war, and no one wants to be put in that position unless that is their primary business strategy.
- **Technology/automation:** Keeping up with technology that can automate some or all of the systems in your company is critical today. Accurate productivity supports higher profitability as more 'units' can be processed and sold in less time. Whether those units are well-prepared dinners in a restaurant, tasty beverages in a bar or cosmetic procedures or products in a beauty salon, pricing and availability are a must. Order-taking computer systems are as important in scheduling hair appointments as they are in processing dinner and drink orders. Keeping track of inventory at the same time assures you have sufficient

materials on hand. Hastily scribbled orders on notepads can result in costly mistakes coming out from the kitchen or from the bar. Point of Sale systems can eliminate the chance for error and loss of money.



**Don't let your business get to the point where you need one of these reality show experts to come in and attempt an overnight turn around.** Pick one or two of the areas listed above and work on making it stronger in your own business. If you don't have an employee policy manual, it's time to get on written. The same goes for employee training. If there is technology that will help your business run smoother and more profitably, invest in it. It will pay for itself faster than you might imagine.

**Declare 'make my business stronger and more profitable' as a strategy for 2014.** Decide what your objectives are, then add tactics that you can work on over a period of time. Actionable management strategy is not difficult to implement. Your reality can become awesome with a little effort and investment in your business.

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## ***VISUALIZE -- ANALYZE -- STRATEGIZE***

### ***Your Way to Success***

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