

Your Employee Assistance Program is a support service that can help you take the first step toward change.

Systems and Processes to Make Work Run Smoothly

Are your schedules being met, or are you consistently missing deadlines? Are your products being produced more efficiently, or is rework a common practice? Is testing time being reduced, or is it taking longer? Are problems from the field decreasing, or are they on the rise?

Out-of-control projects abound at organizations worldwide. This can often be remedied by having adequate systems and procedures to deal with them. Remember though, that processes don't do the work; people do. The people that follow the systems and processes must be responsible for defining and implementing them. Integrating the employee into the process—and vice versa—is the first step toward making work run smoothly.

Tips and Tools You Can Use

Good managers recognize problems, seize opportunities and build on success. When taking on projects, excellent managers empower their employees and oversee the plan to achieve a desired result.

Project management. Project management can be seen as a linked chain of measured achievements:

- Begin at the end—the final result is the definition of success
- Define the end result in terms that can be measured
- Create a work breakdown structure and allocate tasks
- Monitor and track progress
- Fine-tune the process as needed
- Evaluate the results or perform a “post mortem”

Good managers incorporate frequent, shorter-term goals that aid in motivating employees and measuring progress. All team members should participate in determining and setting milestones.

Establishing milestones provides:

- Shared goals among all members of the team
- Emphasis on responsibility to and dependence upon fellow team members
- New, informed viewpoints on others' work
- Highlighting of problems for discussion by the team and management
- Tangible results that senior management can recognize as progress
- Tangible results the team can celebrate, both in short-term goals and in long-term projects
- An excellent opportunity for quality assurance and review

Achieving systems and processes that allow work to run smoothly involves establishing standards of quality and success. Employees are more likely to maintain high quality work when they are part of a process that determines standards to be used. Quality benchmarks for staff can provide:

- Satisfaction in terms of the expectations of customers
- Greater product reliability
- Empowerment of employees as decision-makers and action-takers
- Long-term success rather than just short-term gains

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- Mutual coaching. All problems are owned by the team and, therefore, solved by the team
- Statistical quality control. If you can't measure improvement, it probably isn't there
- Clarity of purpose in the form of a clear, simple stated objective

Having clear, understandable systems and processes in place makes achieving and measuring productivity easier. It is also beneficial to moral and worker confidence, as it includes clear goals and expectations that can be understood and achieved by working together.