

DEVELOPMENT



Make EA life easier with simple systems

Marianne Page shares her top tips on developing simple, logical and repeatable systems



THE EXPERT

Marianne is passionate about implementing simple, logical and repeatable business systems and works with business owners who are victims of their own rapid success and unable to extricate themselves from working in their business in order to work on it. She supplies them with a powerful blueprint for scale, growth and personal freedom.

Business is a team sport and, like in any other team, it's so important that you and your boss collaborate and communicate effectively. Here are some simple, logical and repeatable processes you can put in place to ensure it's a smooth ride.

Destination

Every team needs to know where they're headed; a destination that keeps them focused and ensures they're on track even when there are blocks and diversions. So, have you ever actually sat down with your boss and discussed what the big goal is?

If not, have the conversation, and say how much more focused and driven you'd be if you knew what the destination was, and were inspired by it. Then book in the regular pitstops you'll need to check that you're still on track and striving towards the same end goal.

Values

When you have your destination, the next thing you need is a compass – what I'm talking about here are your values. These are the principals that

are important to you both about working with someone, which guide all of your behaviour, actions and decision-making. Maybe you value open and honest communication, mutual respect, trust and confidentiality, plus a sense of fun? Share these aspects with your boss and, between you, agree your team values and how they'll show up in your day-to-day work together.

Systems mean simplicity

Once you've agreed your end goal, it's time to work towards achieving it – and that's about making life easier. We all want an easier life; a more structured, planned and consistent way of working and, of course, the ability to avoid problems because you saw them coming rather than have to fix them – the desired sixth sense of every EA. Well, that's the sort of life you get from having systems in every area of your work.

So, take some time to review everything. Whether it's your personal system for getting yourself up and out to work or your work-based system for diary management, presentation

☛ preparation or report development, ensure each and every system makes life easier for you and the boss. And how can you tell if a certain system actually is making life easier? It'll be simple, logical and repeatable:

■ *Simple.* It must be easy to understand. So many people over-complicate systems and add unnecessary bells and whistles they imagine will make the system better but they don't; they just complicate things. Systems can grow arms and legs and become complex over time, too, if they're not regularly reviewed.

And, on a personal level, we may become bored with doing things the easiest way and decide to spice things up – but remember, simple is good. And anyone can follow a simple, straightforward system.

■ *Logical.* Let's be honest; we can all do things that seem perfectly logical to us at the time but, in fact, are completely illogical and don't quite work. Likewise, for a system to be effective, it has to be logical. This means it has to be reasonable and make sense to anyone who might be asked to use it, not just to you. So it has to make perfect sense to your PA holiday cover, for example.

The best way to achieve a logical system is to ask why – and the first why should always be asking why the process exists in the first place. It may well be a robust system that gets you from A to B, but double check that B is really exactly where you need to be going and if so, that this is the best system to get you there. And be sure it's the right system for you and your manager, in that it's something that makes life easier.

If it is the right system, check each step – and keep asking why in the same way as above, to check your logic at every stage.

■ *Repeatable (and recorded).* How many times have you gone back to do something that you've done before, and you've forgotten how you did it? And, despite the hassle involved in figuring it out all over again, you still don't record how you did it to make life easier for yourself the next time – we've all been there. Of course, you wouldn't create a system for something that you're going to do only once but if it is something you'll repeat – even once a year – it's worth developing.

So, in summary, having an agreed destination, working to those values, following your route map and having systems that ensure the basics simply happen every day, frees you and your mind to concentrate on achieving that big goal. ☛

mariannepage.co.uk

ADVICE

The importance of how-to guides

When you want to learn how to do something, what do you do? Most likely Google it and find step-by-step videos, whether it's boiling the perfect egg or mounting a shelf on the wall. Of course, with these examples, you'll end up with hundreds of different ways to do each task, courtesy of the plethora of YouTube videos.

But when I'm talking about systems, I'm talking about having a uniform and consistent way of doing something. For example, there's only one way – the right way – to cook McDonald's French fries as that's what gives them their famous consistency.

Similarly, you should have one correct (and simple, logical and repeatable) way of doing every task in your role. Like the French fries, everyone can easily follow the right method and achieve consistency. And for that, you need how-tos.



Systems every EA needs...

- Budget management
- Bookkeeping
- Communication, both up and down
- Filing, on and offline
- Event management
- Time management (meeting and presentation booking, travel booking, etc.)
- Personnel management
- And, because each of you and your companies are unique, set aside time to highlight specific systems that suit your particular business needs.