A GUIDE TO BUSINESS SYSTEMS & AUTOMATION

FOR BLOGGERS & ENTREPRENEURS

Contents

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Introduction

On December 1, 1913, something wonderful happened to your business. Odds are pretty good you weren't alive then, and your blog or online business was certainly not around. Yet something happened that day that would provide you the opportunity to save time and money building your online business or running your blog in the 21st century.

Innovator and automaker Henry Ford turned the building of automobiles into a series of specialist jobs. No longer did one or two people have several tasks when building an automobile. Each individual did one thing and one thing only, and all of these people were positioned on an assembly line. The assembly line method of building automobiles dramatically reduced the amount of time it took to manufacture a car from start to finish.

Using the old way, a vehicle was built in about 12 to 13 hours. The Henry Ford assembly line method dropped that production time to just 2 hours and 30 minutes. That is a savings of 9.5 hours, meaning that this automated method could crank out 5 automobiles in the time it used to take to assemble just one. Now the automated assembly line method of production is used in a wide range of businesses.

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Automating Your Business Like Henry Ford Did

Though it has been more than 100 years since Ford develop the assembly line method for building vehicles, that same type of business system and mentality can produce major results for you. There are software suites, websites, applications and freelance specialists which provide assembly line-like business systems and automated processes which can reduce how much time you put into your business, while increasing your productivity.

That is exactly what you'll discover in this report on putting assembly line efficiency to work for your blog or small business.

You are going to discover what business systems are, how to profit from the time-saving efficiency of outsourcing, automated processes to improve client communication and your customer experience, and ways to create content more efficiently.

From marketing, project management and product development to any and every other area of your business, you will discover ways to work less, save time and create more free time, while simultaneously making your business run more efficiently and productively.

Let's get started by defining business systems, and taking a look at the basics of automation and outsourcing.

What Are Business Systems?

You probably have several systems at work in your life, whether you know it or not. You have a specific formula you follow when you get up most mornings, a routine or automated process that delivers an intended result. You have worked over the years to discover which is the most efficient method for doing certain things. This leads to efficiency in managing your time.

Systems like this also create more mental freedom.

Since you already have a process that you follow, and that you know is successful for delivering whatever result you're looking for, you don't have to spend any mental energy thinking about what you're doing. These processes become unconscious and automatic habits that maximize your time investment, while simultaneously erasing the stress that comes from learning how to do something new.

You already know what process or system works for you, so you just keep on unconsciously and automatically benefiting from the process.

This is what a business system is. It is a method or procedure, a process or system of automation that is used in a particular instance to provide a very specific result.

Let's look at 3 simple and basic ways you can put automated systems to work in your business for more efficiency and productivity.

1 – Streamlining

2 – Outsourcing

3 – Automation

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1 – Try This Proven Streamlining Exercise

Henry Ford streamlined the automobile creation process. He took out things that didn't work, erased meaningless activities, and gave each employee along an assembly line just one simple task to perform. Because of this, because an individual only had to perfect one type of task, each step in the process became quicker and the product became better. This is what you want to do with your business.

Get out a sheet of paper.

Write down everything you do concerning your small business or blog. Don't leave anything out. Write down every single thing you need done, even if it is as simple as thinking about your business. Now assign a time value for each of these activities. How long do you work at the different aspects of your business? What you are probably looking at is an impossible situation if you try to do all of these things yourself.

You have more activities and tasks than there are hours in a day or week. This is why you need to streamline your activities. Go through this list you just created and circle those things you personally must be doing. Be very honest with yourself and work this down to a number of hours which is doable for your particular situation. This is streamlining at its very basic level.

This is the way Fortune 500 companies are made, because the person at the top only spends his or her energy and time on those things that are absolutely essential for them to be involved in. What are you going to do with all of those other activities which must be done, but not necessarily by you? You are going to learn to outsource.

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2 – From Streamlining to Outsourcing

You are currently outsourcing tasks all the time, you just don't think of this process as outsourcing. When you give your children tasks to help out around the house because you don't have enough time to do everything, you are outsourcing. However, you can't simply hand someone a list of things to do and walk away. Outsourcing only works if you have effective follow-up, a good reward system in place, and everybody is compensated properly for their time and efforts.

Take out the streamlined activities list you just created. Look at those actions, tasks and processes you don't need to be doing. Then head over to the following 7 websites where you will find talented and diverse professionals and freelancers to handle these jobs.

- Fiverr.com

- Upwork.com

- Freelancer.com

- Linkedin.com/ProFinder

- Toptal.com

- PeoplePerHour.com

- Guru.com

These websites specialize in matching the perfect virtual employee with the task you are trying to outsource. There are freelancers located around the world that can handle your social media tasks, email inbox management, customer follow-up and other necessary but time-consuming business activities. In many cases, you will be surprised at how little you have to invest to see some real results in your business.

3 – Creating Automated Business Systems

The word automation has "automatic" as its base. When you automate something, it becomes automatic. It follows an A, B, C process, a step by step formula or recipe. How can you automate running your business? Look at the tasks which you have assigned to freelancers. Perhaps you have enlisted the aid of a social media expert from Fiverr.com. You want her to make a total of 20 posts and updates to your Twitter, Facebook and Instagram accounts each week.

To outsource this properly, you need an automatic and easy to follow process. The automated business system for handling the social media side of your business may look like this:

     1 – Brainstorm ideas for this week's 20 social media posts.

     2 – Email Fiverr freelancer this week's topics.

     3 – Give freelancer a set schedule for when you want posts and updates to go out each day.

     4 – Have your virtual assistant provide the URLs of the posts and updates at a set time every day.

     5 – Approve work and release pay to your freelancer every Friday.

This is a simple but extremely effective way for minimizing the mental and physical time and energy you spend to get the social media side of your business handled. The human brain loves order and discipline. This way you are not reinventing the wheel every week, scrambling around trying to figure out how you are going to work with your freelancer to produce the necessary social media interaction you are looking for.

Once you and the freelancer you choose work through this system a few times, it becomes extremely effective for producing a predictable set of results. Create these types of automated systems for all of the tasks you discovered in the streamlining process that you need someone else to be doing other than you.

Now let's look at some automatic communication business systems that can help you reduce returns, produce additional sales and improve the customer experience.

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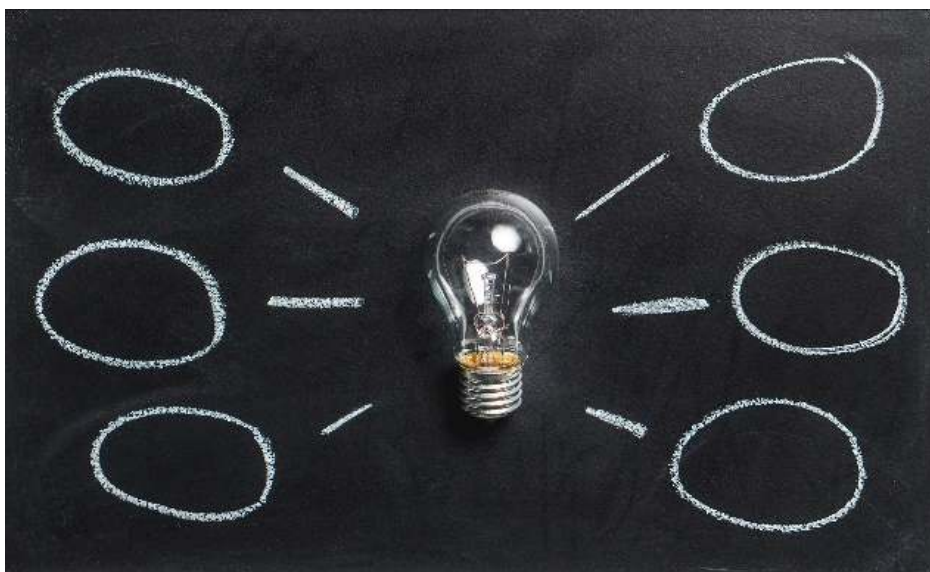
Client Communication

Call it customer service, client retention or whatever you want, taking care of your customers is essential if your blog, small business or online company is going to succeed. You don't have the money that a huge corporation does to spend on improving the experience your customers have. You probably don't have the time necessary either, which is why you performed the streamlining exercise earlier.

In almost every case, as a small business owner, you don't need to be involved with the day to day interaction with clients. Here are a few proven practices and methods for dealing with clients and customers that can work in any business or market.

Email Autoresponders

An email autoresponder sequence is nothing more than a series of emails. When someone purchases a product from you, clicks on a link on your Facebook page, or joins your email list, the delivery of a series of emails is triggered. These emails are created one time and then go out automatically. Companies like AWeber provide software for a nominal fee that lets you create sequences of emails so you benefit from "set and forget" interaction with your prospects and customers.

Virtual Help Desk

There are call centers located around the world which can answer phone calls from your prospective customers and current clients. If you cannot afford to enter into a contract with a call center, there are freelancers who have 800 numbers they use to interact with your prospects and clients on your behalf. This is another process you can automate with a freelancer or virtual assistant, so you can spend your time on more important matters.

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How-To Videos

How-to videos are powerful. These types of explainer videos show exactly how to use your products and services. This leaves nothing to question. How-to videos work great before the sale and after the sale. They can dramatically reduce customer frustration and returns, and show your clients and customers you really do care about helping them get the most out of the product they purchased from you.

After-Sale Follow-Ups

This can take place in the form of an email or a telephone call. Virtual freelancers around the world can receive a notification every time a sale is made, and then immediately follow up with that customer. That follow-up could be a canned email response or an in-depth back-and-forth conversation. As part of the email autoresponder sequence mentioned earlier, this after-sale follow-up could be a simple Thank You email letting your customer know you appreciate the purchase, and will be more than happy to answer any questions he or she might have.

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Content Creation

Whether you have a small blog or a website with tons of traffic, you need content. You have to have blog posts, videos and other pieces of content to interact with your prospects and customers. In the olden days of the Internet, not that long ago really, a blogger or small business owner online would create his or her own content. If you went through the streamlining exercise, you probably noticed that this is something that may be better for someone else to do rather than you.

Maybe you don't write that well, or just despise having to go through the brainstorming and writing process. For whatever reason, maybe you are not too good at making videos. In either case, content creation can be something you automate and outsource. The following tools will help you create content development business systems for improved efficiency and productivity in your business.

Editorial Calendar

An editorial calendar lets you lay out everything that needs to be done in your business each week and month. Here are a few popular editorial calendar applications and websites.

- AirTable.com

- Todoist.com

- CoSchedule

- Loose Stitch

- Google Docs

- WordPress Editorial Calendar

- Kapost

- Content DJ

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Repurposing/Editing Blog Posts

If you're having a hard time coming up with blog post or article ideas, look at your most popular posts. What are the topics and keyword phrases in those posts? Use that information to quickly churn out some new content that has a good chance to be popular, since it addresses the same questions and concerns as your popular content. Turn this into a business system by automating the process with a virtual assistant, or scheduling this activity for yourself in your editorial calendar.

Hire a Writer or Image, Video Creator

Copywriters, content providers, video creation specialists and other content producers love what they do. If you dread the content creation process, it is very easy to outsource and automate this aspect of your business.

Stock Image Sites

There is no need to spend hours creating your own images. Don't waste time scouring the Internet for royalty free images you can use on your blog. The following 11 websites offer free and paid imagery that is free of royalties.

- New Old Stock

- StockSnap.io

- PixaBay

- Fancy Crave

- Picography

- Negative Space

- Gratisography

- UnSplash

- FoodiesFeed

- FreeStocks.org

- Startup Stock Photos

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Content Upgrades

It used to be that online businesses and blogs offered the same list-building opt-in bribe across their site. It didn't matter what topic was being discussed in a particular article, webpage or blog post, the same-old, same-old list-building incentive was offered.

Content upgrades automatically and dramatically improve your opt-in rate and help you build your list faster, because these are giveaways and freebies which are directly related to the material on a particular page or post.

If someone is reading an article on your site about the top 10 sunglasses to wear while playing sports, create a free resource, top 10 list or other piece of content that is related to that topic. You could even give away a free pair of sunglass cords to everyone that signs up to your email list.

When you create a free, list-building piece of content that is directly related to the information discussed on a blog post or webpage, this is called a content upgrade. This keeps your readers engaged, and is a simple way to grow your email list quickly.

Product Creation

Eventually, your business is going to need to sell a product. If you are an online marketer or blogger, this probably means an information product. If you are creating a product for the first time, this may seem like a daunting process. However, there are a few automated business systems and processes which take all the headaches and wasted time out of product creation. Here are a few proven product development business systems that can work across all types of businesses.

Creating Video Products

Did you know that most of the content consumed online is video? You will always need text-based products and content. However, there is also a place for video-based product creation. What would you pay more for, a 10-video series or an e-book that explains the same process? Video has much more perceived value than text-based content. The following 12 companies and websites make video production a snap, effectively automating the process for you.

- Content Samurai

- ScreenCast-O-matic

- Kizoa

- Masher

- Video Scribe

- PowToon

- StupeFlix

- VideoCrisp

- MakeWebVideo

- AniMoto

- WeVideo

- Wideo

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Audio and Video Transcription

GoTranscript.com, SpeechPad.com and TranscriptionPuppy.com are 3 popular transcription services. These companies and others will watch your video or listen to your audio file and turn it into a text file. This makes for easy, hands-off product creation. The freelancing websites mentioned earlier also offer access to talented, experienced transcription specialists.

FAQs Exploration

Have you ever thought of turning to your most frequently asked questions to help you make a product? What are the questions your prospects and clients ask the most frequently? Take the top 10 of these questions and use them to create chapter titles. Add an introduction and a conclusion, and you have an effective and speedy process for creating an information product or e-book.

The Amazon E-Book "Sneak Peek" Method

Head over to the largest retail website in the world, Amazon. Search the Kindle store for the best-selling e-books related to the topic of the product you want to create. When you see some e-books with high customer satisfaction ratings and reviews, hover your mouse over the "Look Inside" icon on the book's cover photo.

This provides a glimpse into the foreword, introduction, table of contents and the first few pages of that e-book. This is a very simple way to find out what type of content your market wants you to talk about. Never plagiarize. Don't simply copy and paste those chapter titles or topics. Take this information and use it as the basis for creating the product you know you already have a built-in audience for.

Hire a Copywriter

Hiring a writer is the simplest and possibly the smartest way to get an information product or e-book created, depending on your situation. Browse freelancing websites for "_____ copywriter", and fill in the blank with your topic or niche. You may be surprised at the quality of the work you receive without having to spend a lot of money.

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Marketing & Promotion

You may have the best product in your niche. You may have assembled the greatest customer service team ever seen in your industry. The value of your products or services can be extremely high. All those wonderful business attributes could be in place, but if you do not promote and market your company properly, no one will know you exist. The following tools help small business owners and bloggers automate necessary promotion and marketing tasks and activities.

Automate Ads

How about automating your digital advertising tasks? This is what Automate Ads does, providing a one-stop control panel that gives you access to all your digital advertising accounts on one screen. No longer do you have to jump from one advertising platform to another to create and track your marketing ads and promotional advertisements.

SEO Meta in 1 Click

This browser extension works as a search engine optimization specialist. Once you download and activate the extension, it works through your headers, links, images and other on-page components and tells you exactly what you need to do to improve your content so the search engines reward you with lots of free traffic.

Buffer

With the click of the Buffer Button, your content is immediately sent to all your social media sites. Buffer also offers other free and paid social media marketing services and features. Here are a few more popular automated social media tools and applications.

- Infogr.am

- Click to Tweet

- Tint

- Hoot Suite

- Share as Image

- WordStream's Facebook Advertising Opportunity Calculator

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HubSpot

HubSpot is one of the most well-known inbound marketing specialists on the web. They can automate your lead generation process, and help you promote your content.

UnBounce

This company helps create landing pages that improve your conversion rates. They also provide tools for tracking your landing page performance, so you can tweak and test different designs. Marketing and promoting your blog or business means maximizing the performance of your landing pages and squeeze pages, and UnBounce automates this process for you.

SumoMe

SumoMe provides automatically appearing pop-ups that help you promote your business and grow your email list. You can set these pop-ups to appear after a person has been on your website for a certain amount of time, and you can customize the experience so these pop-ups only show up on particular pages or blog posts.

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Project Management

Once you have several systems at play in your business, and are managing several different elements and team members, it may be time to hire a project manager to oversee the projects. Then, instead of YOU personally organizing all the different elements that go into bringing a project together, you'll only have one person to communicate with – the project manager.

Go back to the list of the top freelancing websites mentioned earlier in this report. You may also wish to Google *"top 10 freelancing sites", "best virtual assistant sites"* or some other similar terms. Once you have chosen a particular website that provides capable freelancers and virtual assistants, search for "project management" on that site. You are now looking at a list of people which provide project management services.

This is a simple way to reach affordable but talented virtual employees that have a lot of experience (maybe more than you) at managing projects.

You can alternately turn to the following 7 project management websites and applications – you can start using these even before you hire a project manager. Then, when you're ready, your project manager can take over.

1. BaseCamp

2. Asana

3. WorkFlowMax

4. MavenLink

5. Wrike

6. Trello

7. SmartSheet

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BaseCamp is easy to use and you can interact with a number of virtual assistants and real-world staff members. It is one of the most popular project management tools online. The same is true for Asana, and neither of those websites requires an investment or fee from your virtual assistants. MavenLink allows you to collaborate with several different clients or team members, and comes equipped with 40 report templates to help you manage the efficiency of your projects.

The rest of the 7 project management tools just listed offer different features and project tracking capabilities. Give each one a test drive to find out which particular interface and system works best for you.

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Conclusion

Businesses big and small can benefit from automation. When you streamline your processes, outsource intelligently, and put formulas and automated systems into place in your business, you become highly efficient. The software suites, websites and tools mentioned in this report can all help you automate areas of your business so you and your staff work more efficiently.

Take a lesson from Henry Ford.

He found a way to "create" an extra 9.5 hours during the automobile production process. He was virtually creating time. You can do the same thing using the tools and best practices covered in this automation report for blogs and small businesses.

The key is getting started. Don't wait another minute. Don't park this empowering report on your hard drive and let it collect dust. Put this information to use today, and you can see more free time, productivity and profits in your business.

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