Build your Business into a Machine

Executive Summary: Without solid processes and controls in place, too many decisions can be left in the hands of employees who approach things in very different ways. The end result is that executive management has no consistency in the data presented to them. Lockdown processes to establish consistency – turn certain aspects of your company into a machine.

When you're not a machine. When controls are loose in your organization, and you're not a machine, misleading and untimely information can contaminate your organization. Three problems come to mind:
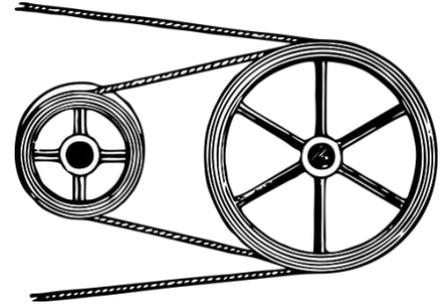
- The rogue go rogue – those that had no discipline in your organization before, continue to do whatever they want. Usually, that means not giving other team members (above or below them on the organizational chart) timely or valuable information. If other team members need timecards reviewed by Tuesdays at 9:00 am, and one cog in the wheel delays this by a day, it puts off the entire process downstream with the payroll clerk, the controller, the bank's direct deposit department, and then the change order team who's doing Force Account Fridays (a term a friend of mine coined for processing extra work orders on Fridays every week)!
- Bad data provided – if no one defines what data is needed and when and how it is to be laid out, it simply does not accomplish the intended goal downstream of these information users. As an example, if someone needs to know the number of calendar days the schedule is delayed, and this information is provided in workdays or as a hard calendar date, that may not be helpful.
- Consistency issues – a failure to be consistent sends an ambiguous message to the Company and to the Client. If RFIs are cut by that project manager in Excel, and this project engineer in a website-based program, and yet a third via plain 'ol email, this prohibits global tracking by your home office and communicates to our Clients and employees that there are numerous ways to do this. This lack of consistency can make management's job very difficult and a Company can lose its bearing.

Scott Jennings, P.E., is the President of SJ Construction Consulting, LLC (808) 271-5150. He recently owned and operated a heavy/civil construction company and now provides cost estimating, litigation support, and efficiency advice to contractors. He is also the founder of Runjob Software, Inc. **Download our QR scanner app: runjobsoftware.com/mobile/**

When you are a machine. When processes are in place and followed, everyone knows when things are due and what the deliverable will look like. Your fellow team members at your Company can get their job done if your job is done correctly and timely. The best things about running like a machine are that you'll have control of your Company and the subs, suppliers, bankers, and surety will all know what's going on and be able to extend their exclusive services and deals to you!

The problem with this is that those that enjoy anarchy and often go rogue, will fight you every step of the way. They're not team members and, as such, should be dealt with appropriately.

We're too small, so this doesn't apply to me. Nope. I'm not buyin' it. There's not much of an excuse for being too small. Unless you are a one (wo)man team providing documents to yourself, there's room to start implementing processes. You don't have to write all one hundred processes today and then run them all starting tomorrow. It's an evolving change within your organization – maybe try one a month or one a quarter.

My story. I didn't do this as well as I should have. I hired people that I thought were competent, but they were competent in their own way. They had their own systems in place before they worked for me. It's like an all-star basketball team – each of the players on their own may be great, but if they've never worked as a team, they fail.

More specifically, we had differently looking paper going out to our clients – RFIs and submittals, et cetera, all looked different. Moreover, the logs showing the various statuses were in different places on different laptops and/or servers. Runjob Software was born out of this need I had. I just wanted one central location for information and a consistent face to the client.

Scott Jennings, P.E., is the President of SJ Construction Consulting, LLC (808) 271-5150. He recently owned and operated a heavy/civil construction company and now provides cost estimating, litigation support, and efficiency advice to contractors. He is also the founder of Runjob Software, Inc. **Download our QR scanner app: runjobsoftware.com/mobile/**