Guide: Process management

Identifying a process and then documenting it can be more complex than you think.

This guide and templates are designed to help you identify processes and document them.

What could be a process?

Your business may have many processes which need to be documented to help form your systems manual.

The first step is identifying what each process is.

Most processes fall into the following categories…

How to use something

Some processes are essentially instructions for how to use a piece of machinery, hardware or tool.

They may form part of a larger process, but these instructions are complex enough to require a separate document.

Yes/No decision: Is this 'process' really just instructions for how to use a 'thing'?

Yes = Write a basic instructional procedure.

Self-contained

Some processes are small enough that they are completely self-contained and only need a short procedure written.

For example, how to answer the phone, or how to do the banking.

Yes/No decision: Is this process short and succinct, with less than 10 steps?

Yes = Write a basic instructional procedure

Conditional

Some processes may be conditional upon an event, in which case they are simply a decision tree which ends with a choice of procedures.

For example, a sales procedure may list the steps required to make a sales visit to a prospective client and end with a quoting procedure, an ordering procedure or a monthly follow up procedure depending on the outcome of the visit.

Yes/No decision: Does this process lead onto more than one possible outcome?

Yes = Plan your procedures — how many will you need?

Complex

Many processes will be need to be made up of many different individual procedures, and will generally be a combination of the above.

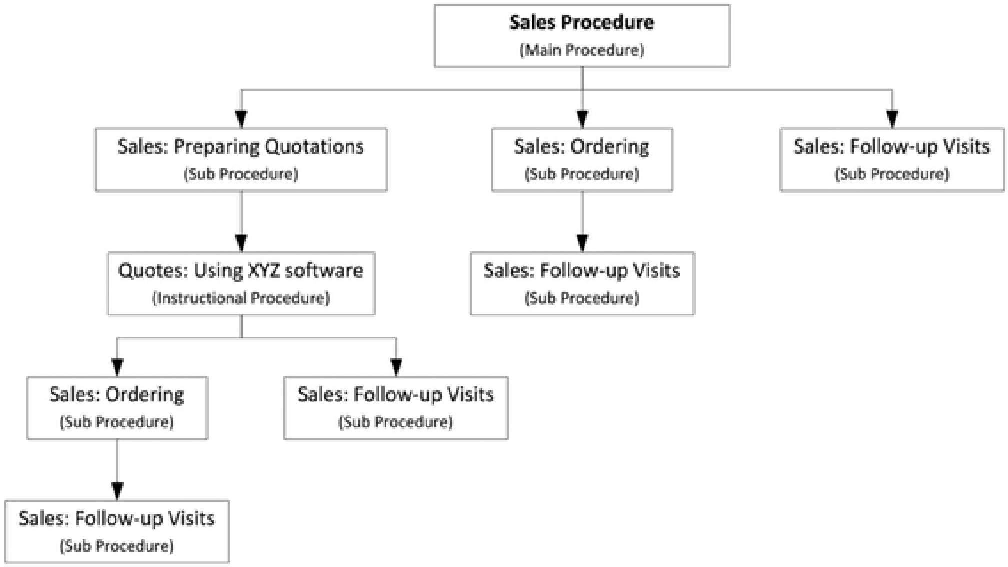
Start with the basic instructional procedures, then write down the larger process that they are part of.

Again, if this is part of an even bigger process, develop that last.

You may have multiple half-finished procedures while you are writing them and working out how they fit together, so focus on one subject area at a time.

How complex procedures hang together

Example Procedure structure



Commentary

In this example, we see a complex sales procedure.

The main procedure pulls together all the procedures involved in the sales process from start to finish.

- The sales procedure covers how to conduct a sales visit, including calling the customer and making the appointment and anything the salesperson may need to take with them (such as a checklist)
- Depending on the outcome of the visit, the salesperson may need to prepare a quote, place an order, or simply add the customer to the follow-up schedule
- If a quote is required, the salesperson may need to use a software tool to prepare the quote. This may lead on to placing an order, or again simply adding the customer to the follow-up schedule
- If the customer places an order on the spot, the salesperson will need to place the order — this process may include handling back orders and returns. Again they will want to follow up the customer later
- The follow-up process may include adding the client to a follow-up schedule, possibly in a CRM software package, and preparing regular reports

You can see that putting together a systems manual can be complex and involve much planning and input from all parties involved.

The good thing is that procedures can always be revisited and updated.

Procedures and Tools

A procedure will often direct a team member to additional tools to help them perform the task involved.

The procedure is the written form of the overall process, and while it is crucial to write down all the steps involved, sometimes it can be more helpful to break some steps into tools.

If you are using your procedures electronically it can be a good idea to link your procedures to your tools.

See the examples at the end of this guide.

Some common tools…

Checklist

A checklist is a document which lists crucial steps or things of note and provides tick boxes to check off that everything is done.

Checklists often also include a space for the team member and their manager to sign off that all tasks are done, so that it can be filed against the client.

Uses of a checklist:

- To ensure all tasks are complete
- To check that all documents are together e.g. for a sales kit or a client file
- As a mnemonic device so that a team member remembers to do/say everything they need to

Script

A script is a document to help guide a team member as to what to say to a customer or business associate in a certain situation.

Scripts are a great tool for inexperienced team members, or a situation where the entire team needs to take the same stance on something.

Uses of script:

- To help a team member with difficult phone situations e.g. debtor phone calls
- To ensure all team members are on the same page e.g. company policy in a certain situation e.g. "sorry madam, we don't discount, as we believe we offer the best deal around"
- To ensure things are done in the same way e.g. a phone answering script
- To guide a new team member through their induction period

Remember that scripts are best memorised or used over the phone. Never read off a script when standing in front of a customer!

Example

An example is simply a document which provides an example of something e.g. an email to send to a client or even a screen shot or copy of what something should look like.

This may sound basic, but examples can be invaluable when a team member is stuck and you are not available to help.

Form letters

Form letters are absolutely indispensable. It's a good idea to build up a folder of commonly used letters so that you and your team don't have to reinvent the wheel each time.

Common letters:

- Introductory letters to new clients
- Sales and marketing letters
- Cover letters
- Official letters

Many businesses will have their most legal, official letters on file, but consider building up a library of form letters simply for time-saving purposes.

Forms

Most businesses already keep copies of their various forms on file.

Consider linking them to your electronic procedures.

Example Tools

Procedure Template

Procedure Name

Procedure to do XYZ Task

Responsibility of:

- Person involved 1
- Person involved 2

Steps:

1. First step involved	Link to tool
2. Second step ▪ Use bullets to list any additional notes ▪ NB: bullets help notes stand out	
3. Sometimes you may need to link to another procedure	Procedure
4. Sometimes you may need to offer a choice, and link more than one thing ▪ It might be a letter ▪ It might be an email	Letter Example
5. Sometimes you may be talking about something in a particular place ▪ In the cupboard under the stairs ▪ Use the key in Mary's top drawer	
6.	
Section Heading – Divide a complex procedure into sections	
7.	
8.	

Checklist Template

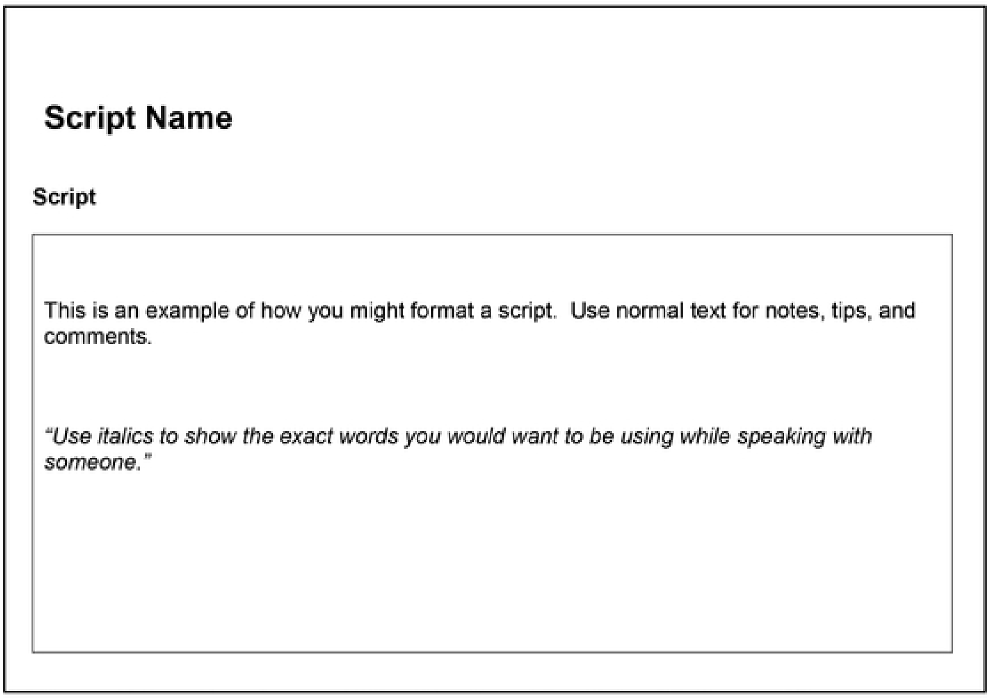
Checklist Name

Sub Heading

		✓
1.	Task to be done	☐
2.	Next task ▪ Use bullets for things to note	☐
3.		☐
4.		☐
5.		☐
6.		☐
7.		☐
8.		☐
9.		☐
10.		☐
11.		☐
12.		☐

Completed by:	____________	Date:	____________
Checked by:	____________	Date:	____________

Script Template



Script Name

Script

This is an example of how you might format a script. Use normal text for notes, tips, and comments.

"Use italics to show the exact words you would want to be using while speaking with someone."

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