

EVERYTHING HAS A PROCESS PART 1

HOW TO IDENTIFY YOURS

Whether your firm handles corporate litigation, contracts, criminal defense, or any other type of law, one thing is true: There is a process to everything you do. And any time there is a process, there are ways to improve upon that process. Change simply for the sake of change isn't ever a good thing. Still, when you implement changes to make your teams' jobs easier, help a function to operate more smoothly, eliminate unnecessary activities, and ultimately improve your bottom line... well, then that's change for the better!

Processes can be large or small. Some have thousands of activities and moving parts to track, while others might involve as few as one to five easy steps. Whether your process is simple or complex, the best process improvements start with identifying the current process.

Process mapping can be both time-consuming and confusing, but these tips make it easier:

INCLUDE THE RIGHT PEOPLE

Managers and attorneys may think they know what their people are doing, but most of the time, they don't. Focusing on subject matter experts will ensure that you accurately map the current state, and that you capture all minor (or major) details, while at the same time safeguarding that your project has buy-in from those impacted.

MAKE IT FUN

Process mapping can be tedious. It sometimes helps to get started by gathering your team in a room and giving everyone markers and sticky notes to put on the wall or whiteboard.

SELECT THE BEST TOOL FOR YOUR TEAM

Vendors have created dozens of process mapping tools. The product suitable for you is the simplest one containing the details you need. Others may need to read and interpret it later, so consider the ease of that transition. Examples of tools we've used effectively are detailed Word outlines, Excel spreadsheets, and visual diagramming products such as [Microsoft Visio](#), [Lucidchart](#), [OmniGraffle](#), and [yEd Graph Editor](#).

MORE IS BETTER

No detail is too small to document. You should map out not only the standard process as it happens most of the time, but also include deviations and what path you take when a deviation occurs.

BE CONSISTENT

Although there may be different groups of people involved in mapping out the various pieces of your process, the map will become very confusing if there is no standard. To avoid that, ensure that the mapping is handled consistently, including the flowchart technique and how you identify tasks. Avoid non-standard abbreviations for brevity's sake. Instead, consider verb-noun tasks such as "Draft the Agreement" or "Attend Court Hearing."