STANDARD PROCEDURE

HOW TO SYSTEMISE YOUR BUSINESS, REDUCE YOUR WORKLOAD, INCREASE YOUR PRODUCTIVITY AND BECOME PROFITABLE

TONY BROWN

Standard Procedure

Tony has done a brilliant job of laying out the basics, as well as taking you through the steps required to make sure you create the systems you need to catapult your business to the next level. This is the blueprint you need to grow your business in a smart, manageable way.

— Chris Ducker, ChrisDucker.com

Storytelling is one of the most powerful tools we can employ in order to help others learn - and retain - valuable lessons and info. Tony's storytelling and his ability to bring real-life situations into this book make it a great resource for anyone who is just starting out with creating systems and processes in their business.

— Kate Erickson - EOFire.com

Success does not choose, it is chosen instead. It is your opportunity to grab it with both hands and hold on to it - Tony's book gives you all you need to get your work life organised and effective systems put in place.This is THE way to success."

— Izabela Russell, musicradiocreative.com, NMEU.com

Tony Brown is the man! He has taken the time to carefully craft content that's applicable, and that works. I've been honored to watch this book go from idea to product, and I've witnessed Tony and his brand grow accordingly. His smarts and energy about systems and strategy is second-to-none! GET THIS BOOK! READ THIS BOOK! APPLY THE PRINCIPLES INSIDE! And watch the same effect happen in your world.

— Chris Daniel, The Consultant in Jeans onechrisdaniel.com

If your business relies 100% upon you turning up then you don't own a business, you own a job. There are many aspects that make up a successful business - including great marketing, branding, and customer service - but you need solid systems and processes to ensure that you can deliver great results every time. Fortunately for all of us Tony has created the ultimate guide on how to grow a reliable business, and allow us to spend more time running our business instead of working in it.

— Chris Marr - Award Winning Entrepreneur and Content Marketer - cmauk.co.uk

Throughout the time I've known Tony, he has helped in a myriad of ways to make my business more efficient, more productive and more successful. His advice has changed the way I do business, from simple little process adjustments to fundamental changes to the way I work with clients. Tony is the master of systems and I've no doubt he can transform your business, no matter what stage you're at.

— Colin Gray - thePodcastHost.com

In a volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous world everyone needs anchor points. In this book, Tony takes you way beyond anchor points! He sets out how you can take back control of your life, by systemising your work, reducing your workload, and increasing your productivity and profit. This book clearly and concisely sets out how to work and think smarter. I highly recommend this book.

— John Thurlbeck, John Thurlbeck Consulting - johnthurlbeck.co.uk

Tony has proven that having Business Systems in place can allow you to have the freedom you desire whilst your business continues to run, uninterrupted.

— Mr Matt Young, Making Social Media Work – mrmattyoung.com

For any business to be a success, it must be driven by a great leader whose foundation is built on systems that give them true leverage in order to scale and own a commercial and profitable organisation that works without them. In this book, Tony has laid out those fundamental steps for you to do this in your business now.

— Leon Streete "The Lead Generation Coach", LeonStreete.com

I'll be honest. I was sceptical at first – after all, who knows my business better than I do? But Tony has helped me to identify the areas where I need to create standard procedures, which will only improve the service I deliver to my clients. I cannot thank Tony enough!

— Neal M. Brown, @nmbrown, vitalitycopywriting.com

If you feel overwhelmed by your Business and have never tried business systematisation, you are in the right place. Standard Procedure is accessible, actionable and packed with real life examples. Tony will hold your hand towards a business that works better and grows faster, without you exhausting yourself at it.

— Coralie Sawruk, coraliesawruk.com

If you haven't had holidays in 5 years, in fear that your business explodes in your absence - this book is for you. Tony lays out the basics of creating systems and procedures in your business in a way that is easy to understand and implement. What's more, it's not just for the new kids with techy startups - Tony's experience in systemising traditional business is what makes this approach to remote working unique - and relatable to any small business owner.

— Marta Krasnodebska, movabo.com

Tony has turned time consuming complex business systems into an easy to implement robust formula which will allow you to step away from your business and run it remotely. If you want to create systems to scale your business and have a freedom based lifestyle, look no further. This is exactly what you need.

— Petra Foster, Brand Wealth Strategist. PetraFoster.com

'It's not a lack of working hard holding new business owners back but overwhelm and unfocused work. That's where systems and procedures come in to save the day, transform your business and your life - and Tony will show you exactly how to do it.'

— Kathryn Bryant, Author & Podcast host,
BrilliantLivingHQ.com

Standard Procedure

How To Systemise Your Business
Reduce Your Workload
Increase Your Productivity
and Become Profitable

TONY L BROWN

TONY L BROWN MEDIA LTD

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DEDICATION

To My Wife, Nicola

Thank you for telling me to stop talking about it, and just write it.

That was the most impactful piece of coaching advice I have ever received.

I love you and I plan to spoil you rotten.

To My Children, Shaniah, Jaziah, Zakiah and Naphiah

I love you all very much. But secretly love each one of you more than the other, in one way or another.

You bring me no end of joy and happiness.

I'm so blessed to be your dad.

Mom & Dad

I'm on a mission to repay you for the lifetime of investments you made in me.

I aim to give you the desires of your hearts.

Just give me a moment.

WHY YOU SHOULD READ THIS BOOK

I would like to introduce you to a friend of mine name Lloyd. If you can relate to Lloyd in any way, then there is something in this book for you.

Lloyd is 40 years old, He is married to Pamela. They have been married around 15 years. He is a father of three wonderful children. A 14-year-old daughter, 10-year-old son and a 6-year-old son. Lloyd and Pamela own their home and also have one rental property.

Lloyd is a small business owner and has been running his business for just over 5 years. The business is going pretty well and turns over between £50,000 and £70,000 each year.

Lloyd has worked hard to get the business to that point but recognises the negative impact his business is having on his personal life. Lloyd is busy running the business and wants more time to spend with his family. He feels like he is missing out on his children growing up.

He spends more time working in the business than he does with his family. Yet he started the business to free himself from the 9 - 5 routine so he could have more flexible time to spend with his family.

Lloyd and his family attend church each Sunday and enjoy helping out wherever they can.

Much of the business activity is dependent on Lloyd and if he were to go away for an extended period of time the business will eventually stop working. He has tried employing more people, but seems to spend more time managing them and showing them how the business should run. He feels trapped by his business.

He has also tried working a four-day week, but finds himself having a mountain of tasks to work through when he returns to work.

He often works late into the early hours of the morning, sometimes as late as 2-3 am. He then wakes up tired and sluggish. This has a negative impact on his mental and physical ability. Which then has its impact on his personal and work life.

Something has to change.

Lloyd fears that his business will ruin his marriage and that his children will grow to resent him because of the amount of time he spends running his business.

Lloyd knows that he needs to systemise the business but is unsure where to start. He has heard about the benefits other business owners are seeing from using online tools and automation but he is unsure on how to implement this into his business.

He knows that their is potential to grow the business, and he also wants to explore other new business ideas and opportunities, but he just can't take on any more work.

He wants someone to help him. He wants someone who can relate to what he feels. He wants somebody he can trust. Someone he can talk to not only about business matters but occasionally personal matters.

He wants his business to be able to run and grow without him and to be able to spend more time with his family and not worry about the business.

Lloyd has previously spent money on attending seminars and courses but has seen no real impact or change from doing this. He has never hired a business coach before but he knows and has heard that they are effective. He wants to be able to reassure his wife that any investment in coaching and consultancy will give them a good return on investment.

Lloyd is willing to invest in his personal development. But he is no fool and he's not going to part with his money easily and give it to any scamy Guru-like Internet marketer.

Lloyd enjoys reading and learning and has recently come across audiobooks on podcasts. He has started downloading these onto his mobile device. He has a few self-help audio books and biographies written by some well known entrepreneurs, business owners and investors. But he is still pretty new to the

world of new media, content marketing, digital marketing and online entrepreneurship.

Both Lloyd and Pamela's parents have emigrated and now live abroad. Lloyd would love to have the freedom and flexibility from his business to take the family and spend regular and longer periods of time visiting their parents abroad.

If you can relate to Lloyd in any way, then you must read this book.

FOREWORD

I met Tony in summer 2015, he was a user of Process Street. We connected and I was a guest on his podcast. Since then, we've been working on the Business Systems Explore podcast together, which we launched in spring 2016.

As co-founder and CEO at Process Street, I have a lot of experience in dealing with poor processes in my own company and the pain that causes me, and now I also have the experience of working with thousands of companies from all around the world. I have heard so much from them about the pain caused due to poor processes, and then I have seen how much relief they get and time they recover by implementing effective systems.

I was the youngest CISCO engineer in Australia when I was only 16 years old. I have run multiple internet companies, including an e-commerce store, an affiliate marketing company that I built to over a million dollars in revenue in the first few years, and one failed start-up, and now, Process Street.

I started Process Street because when I was running my affiliate marketing company, I had a team of more than 20 people, three people in the US, an office in India, and a number of remote home-based workers in the Philippines. That setup became a nightmare to manage. I found myself, many mornings, up until

six o'clock handling team enquiries.

That became a huge strain on me and was not the lifestyle I wanted. I needed a solution to fix it. That solution was the start of what Process Street has become.

The concept of building systems--the ability to implement a system via technology or a tool of some sort that can give you back your time--is at the core of what Process Street is.

Maintaining Standard Procedures has helped me most by giving me the ability to get so much more work done than would ever be physically possible without them. Even if I was to work 24 hours a day, seven days a week, I still would not be able to get as much done on my own.

Initially, I implemented Standard Procedures because I got to a point where I couldn't manage the volume of work on my plate, a point where I had no time for myself. It was a breaking point.

Now, Standard Procedures have helped me to achieve way beyond what would be physically possible on my own.

The importance of Standard Procedures varies, depending on where you are in your lifecycle of your business, your career, or your personal life. If you're just starting out as an entrepreneur and you're on your own, standard operating procedures are extremely important to put you in the mindset of scaling your business.

Standard Procedures help you figure out what work you're good at, and which gaps you need to plug. No business is perfect and by figuring that where your gaps are will help you understand who you need to hire and what types of systems you need to put in place in order to get the maximum impact.

To achieve growth in your business, you essentially need two things, systems and people.

If you're trying to scale your business with people, you're going to be much more effective by having systems in place because they allow the people that you hire to be more efficient.

As your business grows into multiple offices or multiple countries, you need to have processes in place to be able to manage that scale or those expansions will never work.

You can never truly scale a business that doesn't run on processes, and by implementing systems to scale, you're also implementing systems to sell. If you can scale your company you can step away from your company. Once your company gets to a point where it is ready to be sold, it's also ready to be stepped away from, and to run virtually on autopilot if you want it to.

This book will help you to develop an understanding of the importance of systems and developing a systems mindset. Not just for business, but also if you're trying to execute any kind of larger project that essentially involves more than yourself. Whether it's managing a school or the local football team.

Whether it's doing a charity project or organising an event. All of those things become more effective and efficient if there are systems in place.

Standard Procedures will ultimately make your business a more valuable asset as well as make you a more valuable individual because you're able to build and create things that are much larger than yourself.

This book will give you a step by step framework for how to build systems in your business, regardless of your starting point.

Vinay Patankar - Co-founder and CEO at Process Street

INTRODUCTION

I was encouraged by a number of writing coaches and other previously published authors to write a book that I want to read. Taking their advice, I never read book introductions.

I don't have patience for fluff. When I get a new book, I want to get straight to the meat.

Tell me the labor story later, just show me the baby.

If you do want to hear my backstory and get to know me more, then at the back of the book I have included the story that led up to this point. I think you'll enjoy it.

So, with that being said … Let's move on.

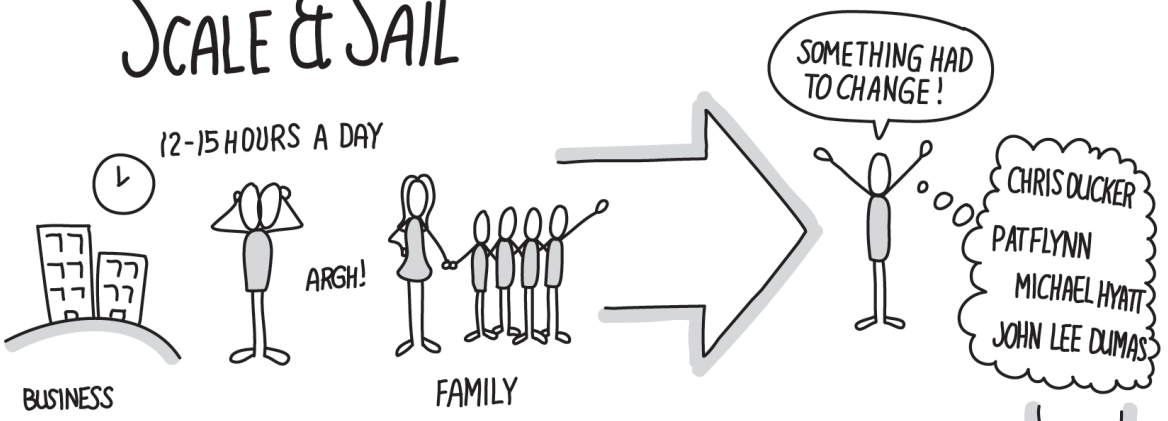
SECTION 1

WHAT, WHY AND WHY NOT?

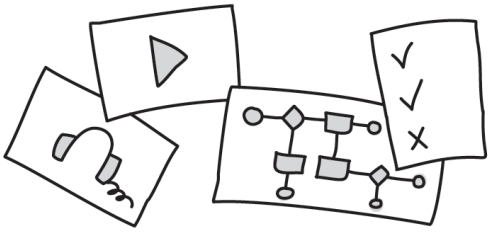
“The successful man will profit from his mistakes and try again in a different way.”

— Dale Carnegie

SCALE & SAIL

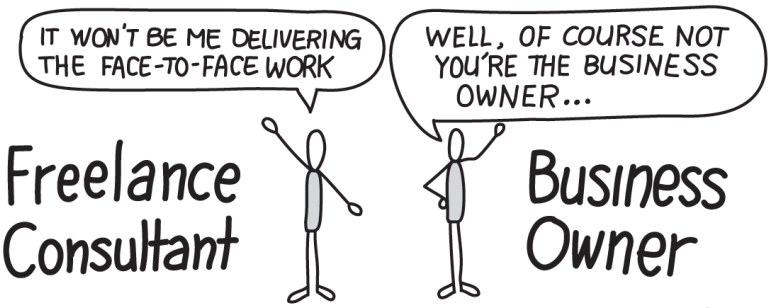


By developing my own series of systems, I would be able to step away from my business and even run it remotely.



SOPs AND VIRTUAL TEAMS

TURNING POINT:



SCALABILITY

Chapter 1

SCALE AND SAIL

Making a transition from being a full-time employee to a self-employed business owner was one of the scariest things I have done to date.

I could write a whole book about the internal battle I went through during that transition. Yet, once I'd made the transition and taken off the golden handcuffs, I was 100 percent focused on making my business work. Even so, this created a dilemma.

One of the main reasons I wanted to leave work was to be able to have more freedom and flexibility to spend quality time with my family. At the time of making my transition, my wife Nicola and I had been married for twelve years and we had four children.

I love my family and enjoy spending time with them. Being able to work for myself, on my own terms, would allow me to have more time to do that.

Yet, I found that the free and flexible time that I hoped for was becoming consumed by all the tasks I needed to do to make my business work. I found myself spending 12 to 15 hours a day working both in and on my business and this was becoming the norm.

Although I was working from home, I was absent more than ever, as I was in the office longer than I was when I was in my corporate job. I'm sure you can imagine the frustration. In fact, because you've picked up this book and are reading it, I know you know the frustration.

Out The Rat Race, Into Rat The Trap

I was working hard to get my business up and running and to get it to a level of sustainability and profitability. As time went on, I began to recognise the negative impact my business was having on my personal life and my family. I was spending more time working in my business than I was with my family. Yet, I started the business to have more flexible time to spend with my family.

Yes, I was able to enjoy breakfast, lunch and dinner every day with my family, which was a wonderful blessing. Yet, I wanted more. I felt trapped by my business and I began to feel anxious.

Would I make enough money to cover all our overheads?

Would I be able to provide for my family?

Have I made the right decision?

Have I done the right thing?

This anxiety caused me to work harder. I was often working into the early hours, trying to get things done. I would go to bed

exhausted and unable to sleep as I could not stop thinking about work/my business.

What tasks do I need to do next?

What tasks are still incomplete?

What tasks are still on my To Do list?

Who do I need to contact?

After a night of little sleep, I would wake up tired and sluggish. This would have a negative impact on my mental and physical ability, which then had an impact on my personal and work life.

I began to fear that the business that I had created would, in time, ruin my marriage. I feared that my children would grow to resent me because I was spending so much time building and running the business.

Something Had To Change.

As a family, we love to travel and go on holiday together – even if it is just a simple road trip to the coast or a day out in the country. We love sharing those family experiences. What family doesn't? But I was struggling to find the time to make this happen.

I also knew that there was a lot of potential to grow my business and explore other areas of business. But with my current

workload, I was unable to take on anything else.

I'd heard countless success stories from online entrepreneurs and internet marketers. All sharing the benefits that they enjoy from automating elements of their business and having Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) in place which allowed other people to deliver elements of their business for them. People such as:

Chris Ducker

Virtual CEO, best selling author, podcaster, and speaker (and now a virtual mentor of mine), Chris was living like most entrepreneurs, working 14-hour days, six days a week, spending very little time with his family and working 'in' his business, instead of 'on' it way too much. After hitting the burn out phase, Chris made a radical change to his approach to business. He now deploys a huge team of virtual assistants to handle almost every moving part of his business empire. Chris has become the go-to guy in the area of "New Business and online entrepreneurship". He has built a massive global audience, whom he serves a regular stream of online content, which he has branded as "Value Bombs".

Chris only works an average of 6 hours a day, his workweek no longer includes Friday and he gets to spend lots of time with his wife and three children.

Pat Flynn

A thought leader in the areas of online entrepreneurship, digital marketing and lifestyle businesses. The creator of the Smart Passive Income Brand, which includes a successful blog, podcast and a Web TV show. He is a renowned speaker and author and has also created many spin-off products, including the Smart Podcast Player.

In his December 2015 income report, a monthly blog post in which he shares how much money he has made, Pat revealed that he had made a total Net profit of $71,757.47 that month. Not bad at all.

Michael Hyatt

The former Chairman and CEO of Thomas Nelson Publishers, the seventh largest trade book publishing company in the U.S. Now the author of eight books, including New York Times, Wall Street Journal and USA Today bestseller *Platform: Get Noticed in a Noisy World*. The founder of the online course "5 Days to Your Best Year Ever" and online membership community "Platform University", Michael also has a successful blog and podcast which you can find at www.michaelhyatt.com

John Lee Dumas

A former officer in the US Army who served for seven more years, including a 13-month tour of duty in Iraq. John is now

the founder & host of Entrepreneur On Fire, a top-ranked business podcast where he interviews today's most inspiring Entrepreneurs, seven days a week.

John has created an online empire, including the EOFire Blog and Podcast, 2 membership communities with nearly 2500 members in total and a successful speaking career as an exclusive high ticket single person event.

John has become the flagship success story of what you can achieve online, earning a total Net profit of $2,950,579 in 2015, with an average monthly profit of $245,000.

Standard Operating Procedures

What do these guys have in common? They have all developed and implemented Standard Operating Procedures and built virtual teams to help build their businesses.

Those Standard Operating Procedures consist of checklists, detailed workflows, video walkthroughs, audio explanations, screencasts, infographics, quality assurance check sheets and anything else that would ensure that the tasks they delegate are executed to the same standard as if they would have delivered it themselves, if not better.

And all without them having to stand over their employee's shoulders and guide them through every stage of the process.

This demonstrated to me that by developing and implementing my own series of systems, I would be able to have processes in

place which would allow me to step away from my business and even run it remotely.

The Turning Point

In early 2014, I successfully secured a contract to work with a group of students in a secondary school with the aim of supporting them to make better progress, achieve better results and ultimately recognise and reach their potential. The school required me to be on-hand throughout the school day for two days a week to offer group and one-to-one coaching to the students. Immediately, I knew that I could not commit that much time to one client.

I knew that my being out of the office for two full days a week would significantly impact the other areas of my business. During the negotiations with the client, I mentioned to them that it would not be me delivering the face-to-face work. I was pleasantly surprised by the response I received. She looked at me somewhat confused and said,

“Well, of course not. We wouldn’t expect you to. You’re the business owner. You’ve got other things you need to be working on.”

I tried to maintain a shrewd businessman look on my face. Yet, internally, I was jumping around like a happy child who had been given access to the sweetie cupboard with no restraints. I left that meeting, headed back home and immediately started developing a series of standard procedures to enable my staff

team to work effectively and achieve the same results that I would have worked to achieve. I created worksheets, exercise sheets, checklists, standard requirements and, put a handbook together for my staff to work through with those students.

That day, I made the transition from a freelance consultant to a business owner. That was the beginning of my freedom journey. Ever since that day, in early 2014, I've never delivered any face-to-face work in my youth engagement agency because I've had to. I've only delivered face-to-face work because I've chosen to.

Did It Work?

You're probably wondering, was the project successful? Well, I can tell you that our initial contract was for one term, approximately 10 weeks. We ended up delivering in that school for over a year and went on to deliver a series of different workshops to a range of different student groups, seeing great results each time.

My contribution to the project was to ensure that the staff knew which days they were working, what time they needed to be on site and meet with the clients near the end of each term to evaluate and review the work we were delivering. It was a wonderful feeling and I've never looked back since.

Knowing that for every hour I have a member of staff out in the field delivering to a client that they are generating an income for my business was fulfilling. I quickly realised that my job

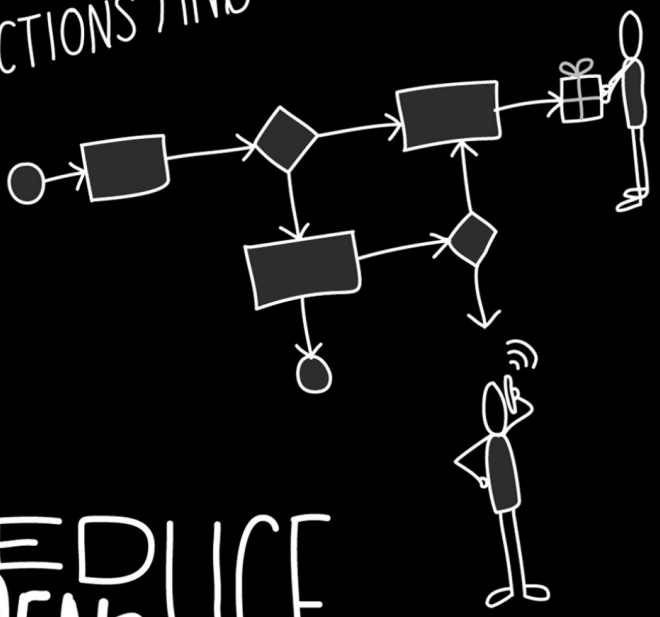
now is to get more staff delivering on more contracts. The more hours they work, the more money we earn. The key word here is scalability.

“Focus on being productive, instead of busy”

— Tim Ferris

I HAVEN'T HAD A HOLIDAY FOR 5 YEARS

LOOK AT YOUR KEY FUNCTIONS AND EXPLORE WAYS TO SYSTEMIZE



REDUCE DEPENDENCY

ON YOU BEING AVAILABLE

Chapter 2

I HAVEN'T HAD A HOLIDAY FOR 5 YEARS

One of the main reasons I've chosen to write this book is because I have spoken to a lot of small business entrepreneurs who are trapped by the business they have created.

While attending a business networking event, I got speaking to another business owner who had been in business for about 15 years. During our conversation, he said something that grabbed my attention.

He said, "I haven't had a holiday in over 5 years."

I responded, "Wow, 5 years, why not?"

He went on to tell me that he is too busy running his business to take a holiday. He told me that, "If I was to leave, the business will all fall apart as there is no one who could run it in my absence."

I thought to myself, "You poor guy."

I told him that I'd recently come back from touring Jamaica for eight weeks with my family, and I ran my business remotely while we were traveling. He gave me a look of disbelief. So I shared a bit of my story with him.

We didn't have much time left at the end of the event and I wanted to give him as much insight and information as I could because I felt somewhat sorry for him. I could see his frustration. I could see the upset and read the pain in his face. "I haven't had a holiday in over 5 years."

I dedicate this chapter to that gentleman.

These are the lessons learned from running my business remotely.

It's Not As Hard To Do As It May Seem

When you hear about people running their businesses remotely, most of the time they are online businesses. E-commerce stores or services that are delivered via the web. The business I had built was a traditional, hands-on business delivered by people.

I started Youth Work Toolbox in 2012. We are a youth engagement agency who provide staff to organisations who want to engage with young people more effectively. The business is based on a traditional employment agency model.

We have a small pool of youth workers and volunteers who are deployed to deliver a range of youth interventions and activities to our clients. When I started the business, I developed it so that it could be run remotely. My main aim was to work from home, yet I knew that we also wanted the flexibility to be able to travel as a family.

I developed and implemented a few key standard procedures which ensured that I didn't need to be around as much for the business to run. I employed an administrative assistant to help handle the inflow of general business enquiries and other admin tasks.

I would get a lot of phone calls, queries and emails, that I would handle and respond to. I knew that if we were going to be out the country, I would not be able to respond to them as quickly as I would like to. Or as quickly as the staff and clients were used to.

So I hired Leanne, my general virtual assistant.

The Virtual Assistant (VA)

When I first heard the term VA being used by other entrepreneurs, I thought they were referring to an app or a piece of software.

I've since learnt that a virtual assistant (VA), is a self-employed freelancer who can provide a range of professional, administrative, technical, or creative support to clients remotely, usually from a home office.

Job roles and tasks can vary among general administration, web development, graphic design, customer support, online marketing, social media management, bookkeeping and accountancy, research, content creation and promotion.

Because the VA is an independent contractor rather than an employee, you, as the client, are not responsible for any employee-related expenses, such as taxes, insurance or other benefits that are usually associated with having a direct employee.

Also, because the VA works remotely, you don't have the logistical problem of providing office space, equipment or supplies. So all you pay for is the work carried out by the VA, which can be an agreed hourly rate or a project by project agreement.

To communicate and manage my VA (which has now grown into a team of VAs) I make use of online tools such as Slack, Skype, Trello and even the mobile phone instant messaging app, WhatsApp.

My Initial VA Arrangement

I initially employed my current General VA, Leanne on a five hours a week basis to handle any incoming queries from both staff and clients. At the time of writing, Leanne is still working with me and she now has a 30 hour per week contract.

About eight weeks before we left the country, I spent some time training and preparing Leanne for the role. I provided her with

some checklists, workflows, and other documents, and delegated a few tasks to get her used to the organisation, the business we do, the nature of the calls and emails we get.

As time got closer to us leaving, I increased her contract to 10 hours per week. Having Leanne in place relieved me of my concern of not being able to respond to staff and client enquiries.

The current contract we were delivering on was quite a high profile project, with a number of senior managers from a range of government and non-government organisations as stakeholders. I was worried that if I wasn't around and I didn't attend the meetings, it would impact on our brand and on our reputation around the table in the eyes of those stakeholders.

What's The Worst That Can Happen?

I almost allowed my fear of things going wrong in the project to prevent us from taking the trip. I discussed the matter with Nicola, and we came to the conclusion, "What's the worst that can happen?"

A partner meeting gets called and I don't attend or Leanne doesn't reply to an enquiry in the same way or timeframe as I would.

It's not the end of the world—and it's not unforgivable. As long as we deliver on our contractual obligations—provide a range of youth work interventions and activities to young people

in a specific area and provide the partnership board with the necessary quarterly management reports—then there was nothing to fear.

The good news is, there was no drama. For the eight weeks we were away, nothing came up. There were no additional meetings, emergency phone calls, and no issues raised that Leanne couldn't handle.

While we were away, we were able to secure two new contracts from one of our existing clients, and a client for a new social media marketing agency that I'd only just launched. This worked out pretty well for us, as securing those three contracts gave us a nice financial cushion to come back home to.

Systemising Your Business Is Not As Hard As You Think It Might Be.

By developing and implementing a few standard procedures, you can significantly reduce the number of business functions that are dependent on you being available, which will reduce the amount of time you need to spend working in the business.

Take time to look at the key functions required to keep your business running. Once you have identified them, and documented them, explore ways you can systemise them.

Put procedures in place that will allow you to delegate work to somebody else, or even automate the process. In return, this

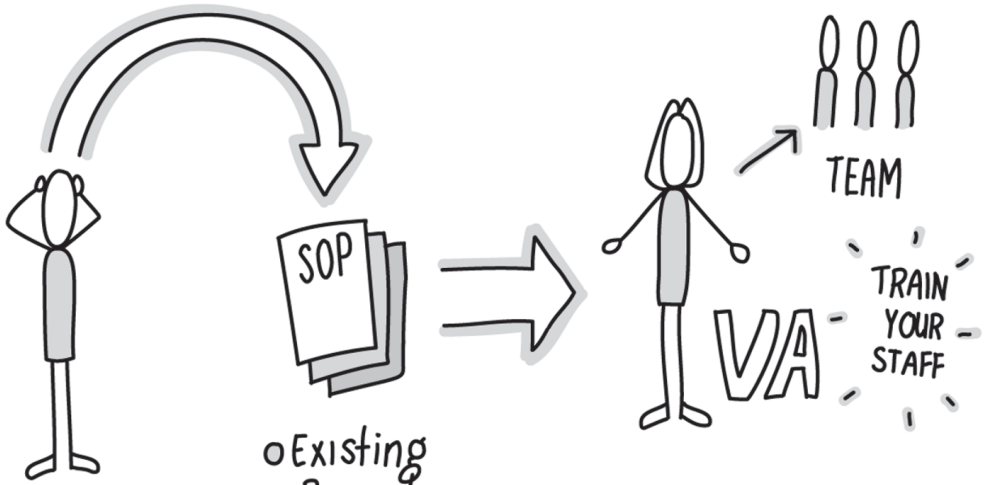
will give you the time you need to do other things.

To access the worksheet related to this chapter visit: www.tonylbrown.com/spbookbonus.

"If you don't drive your business, you will be driven out of business."

— B. C. Forbes

Your Business is a Series of Systems

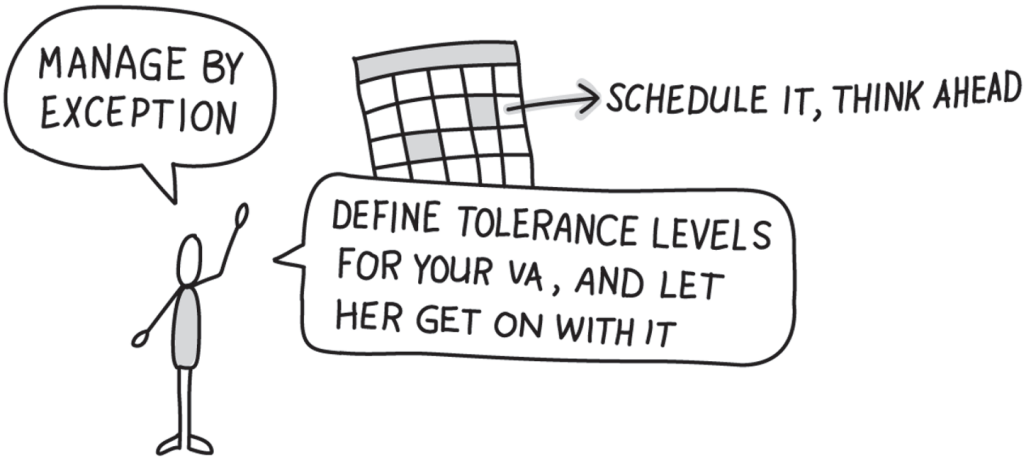


- Existing Procedures
- Scenario's

IF {THIS} THEN {THAT}

TRAIN YOUR CLIENTS TO NOT EXPECT TO SEE YOU FOR A WHILE...

PHONE & SKYPE CALLS



Chapter 3

LESSONS FOR LOCATION FREEDOM

A Business Is A Series Of Systems.

Your business systems are the cogs in the machine that make your business work.

If you think about a car, the engine is a series of systems all working together to make the car work. Consider the human body. It's a very complex machine, but it's a series of systems all working together to allow the body to function. Your business is exactly the same, it's a series of systems.

In preparing to go away, I had to undertake the process of documenting all the standard procedures for a newly appointed admin assistant. Now, a lot of the procedures already existed, but they were not documented, they were in my head. I would carry them out when required and never took the time to document them.

Gaps In The System

There were also business functions that my wife, Nicola, who is also my finance director, would do throughout the month,

specifically related to payroll. We had a payroll procedure and other such things in place, but we never had them thoroughly documented anywhere. She would just carry them out. If we had to delegate those tasks to somebody else we would still have to be very much around to guide them through the process.

We had to go through a process of documenting these standard procedures to be able to delegate to Leanne. A few of them we knew off the top of our heads, so that process was pretty straightforward. Others, we had to develop from scratch as they were based on "What If's". We had to consider the response and desired course of action we would want Leanne to take to a number of different potential situation that may arise. We had to go through those scenarios and create a process of "If this, then that."

If a member of the staff calls and is unable to attend a session, then what do we want to happen? If a client calls and is requesting specific information, then what should happen? Now what would previously happen, is that I would consider the options on the fly, make a decision and respond. But for this to work, we had to map out what should happen in each of these scenarios.

We'll cover the actual process of developing systems in section 2. I will take you through the entire process from the initial brainstorming all the way through to implementation.

I can't emphasise enough the importance of having documented systems and processes that govern your business activity. Once

you can document every process for every function in your business and document it in a way that someone who has never done the job before can follow that procedure and complete the task to the required standard, then you've hit the nail on the head and you're ready to go.

Train Your Clients

You can create a system to train your clients to not expect to see you for a while. Now I know "Training your clients" is not language some people are comfortable using.

When I started Youth Work Toolbox, my intention was to be a virtual company.

We work from home, and unless it's absolutely necessary, I very rarely leave the house.

It's not because I'm a recluse. It's because we're very family-orientated. I've got four children. I'm married and I want to be here at home with the family. If I do need to have a face-to-face meeting, then very often we'll meet at a local art gallery or a café somewhere or I'll go to the office of the client.

We hold a lot of meetings on Skype. Whenever possible, I would try to arrange a meeting via phone call, conference call or Skype. The intention here is to get the client used to communicating with me like that, communicating with me remotely, so that when you are working remotely, it's not a big transition.

They become accustomed to not seeing you or to your contacting them via email or sending them a Skype message. They are not suddenly going to think, "Well, where's Tony gone? How come I haven't seen him for 3, 4 weeks? What's going on? Why has he suddenly started only sending me emails?"

You can train your clients to not expect to see you for a while.

Now, a few weeks before we were scheduled to fly out, I sent emails out to all my clients and introduced them to Leanne. I shared with them our new communications protocol that we developed and that this is now the procedure. Leanne would now be the first point of contact for business enquiries.

Rather than them emailing me, I made them aware that now they must contact Leanne. If Leanne can't handle it, she would then escalate it up to me. And that worked fine. It was great. There were no issues. None of the clients asked any questions. It was business as usual.

Great Escalation Saves A Nation

In the project management world there is a management principle referred to as "Manage by Exception". If you're not familiar with the PRINCE2 project management method then you will most likely not have heard this term before. Yet, once I've explained the method, it is likely that you will recognise that you have used this approach many times before.

The Manage by Exception principle provides each management level with a system to manage and control the lower management level so that they don't need to be bothered by small issues that arise. When used thoroughly, the project management board will include what are called tolerances, which are a set percentage increase or decrease related to project cost, timeframe or other variables.

For example, the cost of the project is projected to increase by 10% or the timeframe is likely to increase by 20 percent. Those percentages are called Tolerance. If you have a project of developing a new website, you delegate the role of Project Manager to your general Virtual Assistant. The other team members and freelancers contributing to the project will report to them.

If everything is going fine, you won't hear from the Project Manager except for the regular updates you've agreed upon during each stage and at the end of the stage. Unless there is an exception above the agreed tolerance level. If the problem is small and it remains within the tolerances e.g., the costs increase by only 2 percent, then the Project Manager can handle it and doesn't have to alert you and take up your time.

This is great as it empowers the Project Manager to just get on with the task, and take the necessary action that they believe is appropriate. Rather than having to keep checking with you.

Train Your Staff

Similar to the last point, you can also train your staff to not expect to see you on a regular basis. Within most traditional businesses, team members and managers are usually based in the same building and sometimes in the same room or office. Also, most recruitment and training of staff is done in person.

Yet, I knew that this would not suit the business model I was developing. I did not want to be tied to a fixed location or have to travel to an office every day. Nor did I want to spend my time interviewing people. In my past corporate job, I have spent 3 full days—and I mean FULL DAYS: 9:00 am-9:00 pm—conducting staff interviews, and being out of the office for that amount of time, causing a backlog of work for me to return to.

Virtual Recruitment

What I have implemented has allowed our entire staff recruitment process to take place online, and not just for my virtual staff member, but also for our youth work staff.

All our staff interviews are conducted via Skype. We'll have a video call and conduct the interview process as though the person was in the same room as us. Given that it's the year 2016 at the time of writing this, this should not be such a big deal, but I'm still surprised at how many businesses are still not making the best use of the online tools available.

Make Use Of The Tools Available

I've mentioned Skype a few times already as it is one of the tools that has played a big part in making our business model work.

I've been using Skype in our business for a long time. It has become part of our communications protocol. Not only is being able to make Skype calls to clients, both existing and potential, very cost efficient, but also having a Skype landline number with a local area code, that we can divert to another number, anywhere in the world, that is a big bonus.

Calls can be diverted to a mobile phone while you're in another country or they can be diverted to a team member elsewhere. And the cost of this is very reasonable.

The benefit of conducting this process online is that we can get interviews done much quicker and cheaper than if we conducted them in person. The candidate doesn't have to worry about traveling and parking, and the risk of getting caught in traffic or being late.

For us, we don't need to incur the cost of hiring a venue or a room, and going through the process of setting the room up, making sure everything looks proper and presentable, having refreshments available and having to manage the arrival of candidates. In previous recruitment drives I have managed, these things can become a logistical nightmare.

With an online video interview, each candidate gets a timeslot. They will be contacted a few minutes before that time to check to see if they're ready and then we call them. I know for some staff, being interviewed via a video link can feel strange, but it's worked well and I've had no complaint about the process to date. It did feel risky at first, but you have to go with what you believe to be right for your business. That's the process we've adopted and embedded, and that's what we're running with.

Staff Enquiries

Previously, I would receive a lot of general low-level enquiries that would end up consuming my time, or just taking my focus away from other tasks I should be handling. I would get calls, text messages, emails about low-level minor issues such as I can't find the timesheet or I can't access Google Drive or my timesheet is not adding up correctly or where is the session taking place this evening?

As with my clients, I sent a staff newsletter around a few weeks before we left the country. In it I included a section introducing Leanne to the team, and explaining the new communications protocol and procedure. This made the staff aware that Leanne would now be the main point of contact for general enquiries and if she can't deal with your enquiries then she would escalate it up to me.

I did make it clear to the staff that if there were any health and safety concerns or anything related to safeguarding children

and young people, then that should come directly to me. But as for everything else, shoot over to Leanne in the first instance.

It took a while for some members of the staff to catch on as they had become so used to contacting me. When I did get those calls, the first thing I said to them is "Have you called Leanne?"

Think Ahead

During the planning stages of Youth Work Toolbox, location independence was something that was at the forefront of my mind. When making decisions about buying office equipment and other resources, I had to keep in mind the fact that I wanted to be able to move around easily, without having to drag a ton of equipment with me.

I was always thinking about it. What if we want to move? What about when we're on the road? What about when we fly?

I don't even like carrying a load of suitcases with us on holiday, but when you've got four children, traveling light becomes a real challenge. I was sure that I didn't want to be carrying around big, bulky pieces of equipment.

For our main office computer, I bought a Mac mini, which is about 20cm by 20cm square and approximately 3.5cm in height. I know I could carry this with me anywhere. It was powerful enough to handle all of my multimedia needs, and could be hooked up to monitors and TVs with a HDMI cable, whether in

a hotel room or my parents' TV room. The mini keyboard and trackpad meant I had full functionality on-the-go.

I bought a small, hardbacked suitcase on wheels and simply slipped the Mac mini in there with my wireless keyboard, trackpad, a USB camera, and other bits and pieces. I was able to carry the case on the flight with me.

We both have iPads which we use mainly for consuming media, and they were great for catching up on the occasional email and social media updates.

We more or less had everything we needed to run the business in one small carry on suitcase.

Other Things To Consider

You need to be aware that when you go to another location, home or abroad, you may, and probably will, encounter internet speed and connection problems. I have even encountered unforgivable internet services at major hotel chains here in the UK.

Three's A Crowd

Once I got my workstation set up at my parents' house in Jamaica, I did a preliminary test run. There were some initial connection problems, but once I got online, it all seemed to work fine.

Yet, as time went on I found that the Internet kept on disconnecting. What I realised was if two or more other devices

were trying to log on to that wireless box at the same time it would overwhelm the router and it would log off one of the devices. It was first come, first served. Whoever was logged on first, they were getting the connection. I had to make an agreement with everyone in the house that while I was working, everyone would have to turn off the wireless on their devices.

Once I overcame the connection hurdle, the next mountain to climb was the slow internet speed. If you're like me, I'm sure you've become accustomed to having access to your superfast broadband connection. I totally take mine for granted.

Super Slow Internet

My entire family, and there are 6 of us, can all be surfing, streaming and downloading, and we never notice any significant impact on the speed of the Internet. In Jamaica though, it was a different matter. For general emails and browsing the speed wasn't that noticeable. It was obvious that it was slower than what I'm used to back home, but it wasn't really a big issue.

Yet, on one occasion I tried to upload a short video blog to my YouTube channel and it was at that moment I realised we had a problem. The video was probably only about five or six minutes long of standard quality. We're not talking high definition here. I make no exaggeration, it took almost 12 hours to upload that short video.

I started the upload in the evening and I must have sat there for about two hours as it was processing and uploading. It got to the

point where I decided to go to bed and leave it to upload.

When I woke up the next morning and checked and it was still processing, I could not believe it! Back home, I could upload multiple videos in a few minutes. In fact, I can have multiple videos all uploading at the same time, and it'll all be done in less than 10 minutes.

You may not be planning to tour the Caribbean for eight weeks, but I want to encourage you to take the time to develop and implement standard procedures which will allow you to leave your business for a significant amount of time without it grinding to a halt.

Put standard procedures in place so that your business is not dependent on you turning up every day to be on hand to make things happen. It's not as hard as you think it might be.

Questions:

As long as you think ahead and plan ahead it's very possible that your business can run without you.

What actions can you take to begin to get your customers or clients used to not seeing you as regularly as they currently do?

What actions can you take to begin to get your employees used to not seeing you as regularly as they currently do?

What tools and apps (both free and paid) could you make use of right now to help you be more mobile friendly and location

independent?

What business functions could you quickly and easily delegate or automate to remove you from the workflow?

To access the worksheet related to this chapter visit: www.tonylbrown.com/spbookbonus.

NOW WHAT?

How Can I Help You Implement the Steps in this Book?

Hire Tony Brown As Your Business Systems Strategist

Tony is passionate about helping as many small business owners and entrepreneurs as possible experience the many benefits that come from developing and implementing a standard procedure in their business. Through his coaching services, Tony will support and guide you through the process of systemising your business, identifying and addressing your most immediate needs and then helping you to set goals. Holding you accountable in regular one-to-one coaching sessions to ensure you stay focused on achieving the results you want. Visit www.TonyLBrown.com/Products and book your initial consultation session to see if Tony can help you achieve your business goals.

Book Tony Brown As A Keynote Speaker/Trainer

Tony is a confident, inspiring and engaging conference speaker. By booking Tony to speak at your event, you will get a professional and competent communicator on subjects relevant to small business and entrepreneurship, such as business systemisation, productivity, reducing your workload, working remotely, managing a virtual team and Content Marketing.

Tony is also an accomplished training workshop facilitator, who enjoys nothing more than meeting with groups, other small business owners and entrepreneurs, and getting the post-it notes, flipchart paper and pens out, and having a solution-focused mastermind session. Visit www.TonyLBrown.com/speaking and check Tony's availability for your event.

Join The Onward Business Mastermind Community

The Onward Business Mastermind Community is a members-only community designed to give you the inspiration, training and resources you need to build, implement and improve your business. With access to our active online community, live monthly Q&A mastermind calls, expert advice, tutorials, interviews with entrepreneurial thought leaders, templates, check sheets and resources, you'll have everything you need to take your business to the next level. We only open registration twice a year. So if you're interested in joining the community, visit www.Onwardbmc.com to add your name to the waiting list, so you don't miss the next opportunity to join.

Listen To The Standard Procedure Podcast

Standard Procedure is my weekly podcast, where small business entrepreneurs can find practical, actionable and easy to consume information, advice, insights, resources and inspiration to help you develop systems, processes and strategies to reduce your workload, be more productive and gain more free and flexible time to do the things you want to do. By subscribing to the

podcast, you will automatically get every episode for free as soon as they become available. The easiest way to access the shows is by using a podcast application on your iPhone or Android phone. These applications make discovering, subscribing and listening to podcasts so much easier. The biggest advantage is that you don't have to load iTunes on your computer, subscribe, and then manually sync to your phone. Visit www.tonylbrown.com/podcast or go to iTunes and search for Standard Procedure Tony L Brown.

Listen To The Business Systems Explored Podcast

Business Systems Explored is a weekly podcast that Tony co-hosts with Vinay Patankar, CEO of Process Street. They interview tech startup executives, entrepreneurs, marketers, and thought leaders to do a deep dive exploration of the mechanics behind their business.

Listen to hear cutting edge, practical information, insights, methods to help you build and refine your business systems. Visit www.BusinessSystemsExplored.com or go to iTunes and search for Business Systems Explored.

ABOUT TONY BROWN

Tony Brown is a Business Systems Strategist, Coach, Author, Speaker and Trainer. He also blogs and podcasts at TonyLBrown.com. Tony's goal is to help small business entrepreneurs to document and systemise their workflows, reduce their workload, increase their productivity and profitability. How? By helping them to create, implement and refine Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).

Tony's corporate background is in local government senior management. Specifically in the youth and community sector. During the latter part of his "9 to 5," Tony was able to successfully lead and coach a team of around 30 staff members for over 5 years through a time of massive budget cuts, service restructures and job losses, working in a city made up of some of the most deprived communities in Europe. During this time he learnt a thing or two about problem solving, overcoming adversity and getting things done. The keys to his success were twofold: systemisation and equipping people.

In 2012 he began to intentionally work towards building his own business to a point where he was able to walk away from his corporate job and go full-time self-employed. In 2013 - one year later - he did just that. In addition, he was also able to employ a small team of staff to help scale the business. And he was able

to do all this in just 12 months. His youth engagement agency "Youth Work Toolbox LTD" now provides professional training and casual staffing to organisations who want to engage with young people effectively. He worked hard to achieve all of this while balancing a busy family life with his wife of 14 years, Nicola and their four children.

In Early 2014, Tony was invited to attend the UK Houses of Parliament to be a part of a Select Committee Panel to explore "How to Nurture and Develop Entrepreneurship and Enterprising Behaviour Amongst Young People." Now, Tony is on a mission to help other business owners and entrepreneurs to systemise their business operations and create more free and flexible time to spend with the ones they love the most.

An entrepreneur at heart, in 2015 Tony established "Onward" Business Mastermind Community. His aim is to create a community where like-minded entrepreneurs connect to plan and prepare for business success. Onward is made up of an exclusive weekly mastermind group, an online community and support forum and a series of live, in-person events. Tony's goal is to create the world's largest business mastermind community of over 1 million active members. Visit www.Onwardbmc.com for more information.