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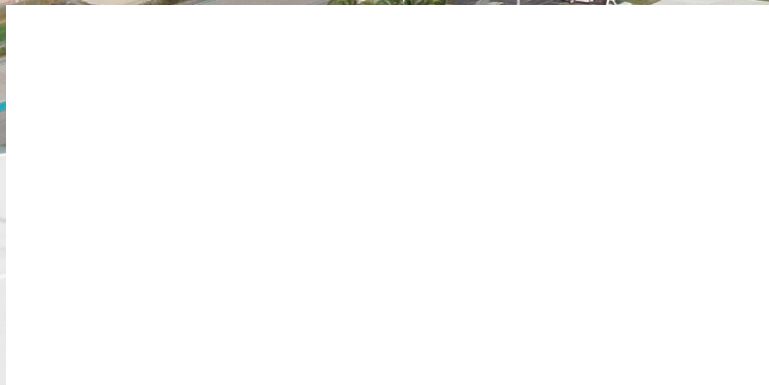
PRO RESOURCES

Where 5 pros turn to learn,
grow and be more profitable



Strategize now for
a strong Q3 and Q4

Using a systematic approach
to address challenges



Systematic continuous improvement

Better for business by being better for employees

At a time when having enough talent on hand is an issue for many in the industry, it's important for business owners to reduce challenges that might drive existing talent to consider leaving. Key to that, of course, is getting a clear understanding of exactly what those challenges are and finding a systematic way to continually address them.

According to management consultant Les Landes of Landes & Associates, "Far too many businesses address problems—like lack of both knowledge-sharing and collaboration on the job—as one-off issues, and only give them attention when something goes wrong. They tend to be reactive and focus on simply getting back to work instead of recognizing the value and opportunity for systematically and continually improving operations at every level."

Questioning the norm, creating opportunities

Through his more than 25 years of helping organizations run more efficiently and effectively, Landes has come to recognize that employees—at companies big and small—desire the same things.

"Employees value two things: 1) being heard and taken seriously about issues affecting them or their team; and 2) having some control over the decisions and actions that affect their lives in the workplace."

He says the most effective way to address these needs is to implement a process for regularly soliciting ideas from employees. One of the processes he recommends is a short, routine, weekly huddle for employees in small groups to meet for the sole purpose of submitting their ideas for improvements in work practices and processes. "You're not looking for big ideas, like 'we need to change our business model,' but rather small ideas that improve operational efficiency. It could be as simple as relocating a table where tools are kept or creating defined bins and spaces for tools. If it contributes to efficiency, it's worth doing. And if you implement those types of small changes consistently, soon you've made a big impact on operations and, more importantly, you've engaged your employees in improving their own jobs and the business."

Landes notes that while some businesses start with weekly meetings, they often end up just holding them twice or even just once a month. "I wouldn't recommend



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less than one per month," he cautions, "as you lose momentum, and it stops being a systematic process."

"Another systematic method to consider is mapping out a detailed plan for fixing a broken process. You have to figure out all the steps, assign the tasks to the appropriate individuals, and then hold them accountable in a way that's constructive, not punitive. The great part about accountability in this case is that when people are involved in initiating a change, they're excited to make it happen. So, holding people accountable isn't about riding them to do the task as much as it is making sure they're able to execute, and supporting them if help is needed."

"It's the very best thing I've ever done for my company."

As the owner of iAutoAgent.com in Chesterfield, MO, Jay Grosman is all about creating efficiencies and building morale. In 2021, he implemented a systematic continuous improvement effort with Landes' help. By his own reckoning, "It's the very best thing I've ever done for my company."

"We implemented weekly huddles in 2021 and have never missed one," he says. "In addition to helping us implement good ideas, it's provided a huge boost to employee morale. We work together to solve problems that plague us all and people really enjoy taking ownership of their ideas. From developing a process for ensuring how thank-you notes go out to resolving an issue related to accessing the building—which was a BIG problem, it works for us on so many levels."

Grosman appreciates how business owners might roll their eyes at adding another meeting to the weekly to-do list but notes, "This was a game-changer for my company, and it was so simple. Once you commit to it and get employees onboard, it's something you not only look forward to, but really benefit from doing."

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