

7 Steps to Start Your Systems Development

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What is your greatest challenge in setting up systems?

We regularly ask our clients this question and the answer we get is pretty consistent, “I don’t know where to start.”

It's no surprise that you don't. You were never taught where to start.

We see the project of systems development paralyzing many small business owners; but it needn't be as mysterious as many make it.

E-Myth breaks a business down into seven major areas, or centers, of Management Attention.

- Leadership
- Money
- Management
- Client Fulfillment
- Lead Conversion
- Lead Generation
- Marketing

Each area – taken in isolation – is a comprehensive combination of little systems that work together.

There are two key points I will address in this article. One is how to approach the scope of the systems development project. The other is *how to actually begin it*.

Astute Awareness

My new client, Barbara, came to our call with a declaration, “I need a financial system.”

I had a few questions for her, but the first one was, “Says who?”

In other words, I wanted to check to see if her Technician, Manager, or Entrepreneur was taking the lead on this call. After all, this can make a big difference.

Each of those characters has a particular point of view and basic approach to thinking about and dealing with issues. None are either right or wrong, but what occurs as extremely relevant from one point of view is not the same for the others.

Their perceptions are different. And perception shapes reality.

Thoughts, actions and focus of attention will shift depending on which “hat” you’re wearing.

Have you ever seen one of those Magic Eye books or images? They’re pictures that, when you first look at them, are normal-appearing two-dimensional, colorful renderings of, say, a field of flowers.

But when you hold the page up to your nose and focus your eyes as if you are looking *through* the page, and slowly extend your arms, continuing to focus *through* (instead of at) the picture, a shift occurs.

Instead of the field of flowers, a three-dimensional image appears. Suddenly you’re looking at a labyrinth! Surprisingly, as long as you hold on to that longer view, you can actually move your eyes and follow the maze around the corners within the tall hedges!

As with any optical illusion, until you learn the trick, you can only see one way.

Much of what I do as an E-Myth Coach is to challenge my client’s ability to see three-dimensionally, strengthening their astute vision.

In the context of beginning your system development, it is a similar process of forcing your brain to see things differently, and it begins with that acute awareness that the Technician, the Manager and the Entrepreneurial mindsets operate in distinctly different dimensions.

If you try to analyze a problem from only one of these perspectives, you can easily end up paralyzed.

So, which perspective is required when thinking about the *development* of the financial management system?

All three have a part to play, but only *one* could effectively do the system development *work*.

Barbara the Entrepreneur says she needs a financial system because she doesn’t have what she needs when she wants it.

Barbara the Technician would be most sensitive to the smallest parts; but her nose is too close to the page.

Barbara the Manager, however, has the objectivity, curiosity, analytical focus, and *patience* to investigate and create a plan to design what’s needed to produce the required results.

I wanted the Manager to take the lead on this call.

Where do we start?

To build any major system in your business, start at the top with the ultimate result you’re seeking and begin to deconstruct the mechanism.

Ask what we call the *repeating question*: “What do I need in order to get *this result*?”

Keep asking until you get to the smallest parts. This is the managerial work.

Then, once you've identified those parts, create those systems and work your way back up. This is the tactical work.

It might help to imagine the trunk of a tree, with your repeating question leading you out along a network of branches that in turn lead to networks of smaller branches.

As you get out there on those skinniest branches, you're getting down to the simplest parts of your larger system. You're identifying the smallest essential components that contribute to the larger result you're after.

What you find out there on those skinniest branches are what we call "end systems."

Maybe it doesn't seem very dramatic to begin your financial system development by making sure you have a system for, say, capturing and recording your source documents, but only with that and a dozen other routine and mundane essential "end systems" in place will you end up with a complete and robust financial system.

Having the little parts in place provides the nourishment that supports the larger ultimate results.

As Barbara switched to her Manager's hat, she was getting excited at the prospect of reliable, timely, and excuse-free financial reports.

Finally, she knew where to start: at the end.

7 Steps for System Development:

Now that you know where to start, you can continue the process by implementing these easy steps.

1. Get to know the different voices of your Technician, Manager and Entrepreneur.
2. Recognize how your perception is altered, attention shifts, and priorities are reordered by which hat you are wearing.
3. Identify a system you think you need.
4. Using a spread sheet, mind map, white board or blank sheet of paper – whatever you use to capture and save your thoughts – start with the name of that major system at the center (or the trunk).
5. Keep asking, (patience here) capturing the progressively smaller components with each of your responses.
6. Arrange all of your captured responses in their logical, linear order – largest to smallest.
7. Start your system development by designing from the bottom up.

Your "end systems" will dependably feed each next larger assembly until you've reached the top!