

Supplement B: Ensuring reliable deliveries

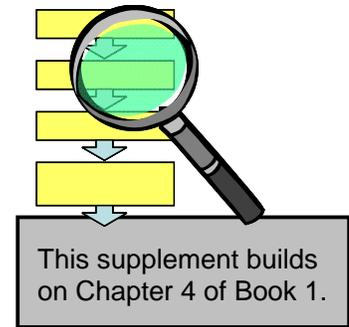
There are literally millions of different ways of producing the products you produce, or providing the services you provide. Some ways differ only in very small details, for instance whether you pack biscuits one layer at a time or one column at a time – while others may be much more important, such as whether you clean an office top-down or bottom-up.

Some differences will have only a very slight effect on how well or how quickly you work, but some will have a major influence on the quality of your work and the costs you incur – and these in turn can affect your achievement of your USP (see *Supplement A*). Some ways of working will make you successful, and some will lose you business and money. Some of the best ways of working you may already use, but some you have yet to discover!

And this discovery and use of ‘better’ ways will help not only to make your business successful, but to keep it successful. Achieving this, depends on answering four questions, which lie at the heart of this chapter:

1. What do we currently do? What are the steps we take to produce/deliver our USP?
2. How consistently do we do it?
3. How can we become more consistent?
4. How can we do it better?

What do we mean by ‘consistent’? Consistent means reliable, dependable, predictable and practiced. It is the quality that God looked for in Bezalel and Oholiab (Ex 31:11b) and it is important because it means that you do things the same (intended) way each time. There is little point in finding the best way to do a task if you cannot rely on that way being used when the task is done. And of course the more we do something (*particularly the right thing*) in the same way, the better we get at doing it!



Exercise B1:

How well do you actually know what you do? Without physically moving to try it out, answer the following questions:

When you take money, do you do it with your right or left hand?

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When you cross your arms, does your right or left forearm go on top?

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When you walk, do you start off with your right foot or your left?

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...and do you swing your right arm with your right leg or your left leg?

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How sure are you on your answers?
Try it out for real to see.

What do we currently do?

Even though you will not currently know all of the best ways to do your work, this does not mean that what you do currently is bad. On the contrary, much of what you do currently is likely to be reasonably good – after all, you ARE in business. But do you actually know what you do? Have you ever sat down and thought it all out? Or do you (and your people) simply do what seems to be the right thing to do at the time? And if so, what is that? (The ability to change things at short notice is very important to most businesses, but so is knowing what is the best way to make a change – what is likely to be successful, and what is not)

The thing is, if we cannot be clear on what we do currently, we will find it very difficult to know what we already do that is good. And even if we find a better way, and decide to use it, how will we know whether we are actually using it or not? *(Particularly if we use other people to do the work.)*

So our start point has to be to note down what we actually do now. You may have already done this *(for instance, if you have worked through Workbook 1: Setting-up Your Own Business)*, and if so, please use the notes you created then. But if you are starting from scratch, then you might find the questions below will help you to think things through:

1. How does your work start – what causes it to begin? (Is it you, or perhaps a customer, or someone else?)
2. What do you do first? How do you begin your work? What do you have to do by way of preparation or set-up in order to do the job properly?
3. How does the work then continue? What do you do next, step-by-step? (It may help to actually work through a job, either for real or mimed, and note down each step as you do it – the exercise on the previous page shows how much of our memory is physical memory; memory that is released when we physically do things)
4. Are there any points at which you have to make important decisions about how to continue? When do

Examples of answers to the questions on the left from an office cleaning company:

1. Some jobs start when the customer phones, and some at a regular date
2. We load the van with all of the cleaning equipment & check we have enough detergent and polish.
3. Remove items from floor
Assemble equipment
Vacuum carpets
Mop and polish hard floors
Return items to floor
Repack equipment
4. Heavy items on floor or where surface is damaged

and not foolishly ignore it. (You may like to note that Jesus' previous story, reported by Matthew in verses 1 to 12 of Chapter 25 seems to have a similar message.)



So, yes we are all different, praise be to God, but there are some things that we all need to do in the same way if we are all to be successful. Your challenge lies in working out what those things are.

To do this, look back over your list of what you do currently, and note down those things that are most important to make sure that work is done to a high quality and low cost. Note down what is important about how those things need to be done if you are to keep your customers satisfied without spending too much time or money in doing so.

Then, when you have your list of what is important, and how they need to be done, your next step is to understand how often they get done in the 'right' way. If you work on your own, this is relatively easy – you can think back over your last few pieces of work and decide for yourself about how consistent you are on these things.

However, if you work with others, then understanding how consistently things are done can be a bit more difficult. The mistake most people make is to try to combine "understanding what is going on" with "improving what is going on" – they think that it will save time in the long run, but our experience is that most of the time it does quite



the opposite – when people try to combine the two things, they often end up being shown "what they want to see", and being told "what they want to hear",

and in this way they lose the opportunity to see and hear "what really happens" – what takes place when they are not there to keep an eye on it.

Exercise B3: Cost and Quality

Use the exercise below to help you think through how you can use your process to manage cost and quality:

Which actions in our process most affect quality/USP?	How should they be done to keep quality high?
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Which actions in our process most affect costs?	How should they be done to keep costs low?
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How could misunderstandings or carelessness lead to mistakes in these?

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How often do you think this happens in practice?

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How do you know?

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We recommend that you start by deciding that you just want to understand how consistently things are done, and feel free to explain this to your people. Say that you have identified a number of important tasks, and you are interested in learning about how they are currently done so that you can see what works well and where we need to improve. Promise them that there will be no criticism of any who tell the truth – because you appreciate that they also want to see things improve. (*Does God punish you for being honest with Him about your sins and shortcomings?*) Then you can either discuss with them how they currently do those tasks, or watch them in action.

Encouraging Honesty and Openness:

It is true that there will still be a tendency to tell you what you want to hear, and to show you what you want to see – but the better you are at simply wanting to understand, and the more that they believe that to be true, the more likely it is that you will get an accurate picture of what happens. And where people do things differently from what you are expecting, continue to try to simply understand – ask them why they do things that way – and not show any sense of dissatisfaction or disappointment. (*After all, they may actually have found a better way!*)

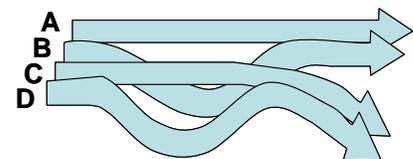
At the end of this exercise, you should have a clear picture of what happens, how consistent it is with what should happen, and the reasons why. And you can now begin to work to improve things.

How can we become more consistent?

And the first step in this is to get everybody doing the same thing (at least where that thing is important). With some of your important tasks, you may have found that everybody is already doing the same thing, but with other important tasks there may well be big differences in how they are done, and that is a problem for you.

Because, if on each of the important tasks that you have looked at, there is a 'best' way to do them, and doing them in that 'best' way affects cost and quality, then every time they are done differently from that 'best' way, it must create additional expense for your business, or the risk of dissatisfying some of your customers.

So, when you know the best way, how can you get people to be more consistent? Well the temptation is simply to **tell** them that they **have** to do it that way – and sometimes **telling them**



If arrow A is a picture of the best way (*getting to the right result by the cheapest route*), then the other options must be:
 B: right result, more cost
 C: poorer result, same cost
 D: poorer result, more cost

...and if among a number of different ways of doing the task, you cannot tell which way is the 'best' then simply work out which produces the best quality result in the quickest time.

works! But more often, if they are doing something simply because they have been **told to do it** that way, then over time things tend to drift back to how they were.

But if your people: **really believe** that it is the 'best' way; are **clear** on what the 'best' way is; are **confident** that they can do it the 'best' way; and feel **appreciated** for doing it the 'best' way, then it is likely that they will do it that way whether you are watching them or not. So the key to becoming more consistent, is to:

1. Take time to make sure your people can **see why** the 'best' way is better than the way they are currently doing it – make clear to them what it means for costs, quality and our USP, and why we need to be consistent.
2. Find a way to **explain clearly** (perhaps in writing or through a picture) how the task should be done, and how they can check whether it has been done correctly
3. Provide them with any training, tools and equipment that they need in order to do it the 'best' way, so that they can be **confident** that they can do it right
4. Make sure that those people who do the task properly are **rewarded** for doing so, and that those people who are not doing the task properly are not.



See ... now if you had done it the way I told you to...



Please keep it in mind, however, that not everybody may be capable, even with training, of doing all things. For some, the 'best' way may simply be beyond their abilities (*even with training*). If this is the case, then you may need to consider adjusting people's work into different roles – with some people doing the more skilled parts of the work, and others supporting them by doing more routine tasks that are better suited to their abilities.

How can we do it better?

When you were looking into how consistently tasks were done (previous page), and you were talking to your people, or watching what they were doing, did you see anybody

actually doing things better than you had originally planned? It is quite likely that occasionally you will have done, maybe only in some small aspect, but it would be rare not to have seen somebody doing something a bit better.

God made us in His image, and since He is the great creator, He made us creative (*all of us, you and your people*) – able to think up new ideas and see new ways of doing things. Sadly, we often use this skill to become lazy, but sometimes we use it to produce something better, with a bit of flair. And sometimes, even when we are being lazy, it works its way out in doing things quicker or more cheaply. As people work with the jobs you have given them, they are in the best place to spot better or easier ways to do them, and it would be good to give them the chance to make use of this God-given gift, but to make use of it in a way that means everybody can benefit from it.

So how can we do this, and yet still keep a consistent approach?

Well, firstly, we need to make sure that it is talked about before it happens. By giving your people the opportunity to talk about their ideas, you can agree on the ideas that would be good to 'try-out' and you can agree on a 'safe' job where you can practice them and see how well they work (perhaps for a week or two). And if they work well, you can make this new way THE way for everyone to use, and train everybody in doing it. This has a number of advantages:

1. You maintain consistency until something has been shown to be better
2. When something different really is better, everybody gets to use it and your business benefits more
3. People with good ideas can feel proud that



Exercise B4: Creativity

Can you think back to times when you were given a job to do, and could see a better way to do it:

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Think of the jobs in your own business: what ideas do you have to do them better?

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And what ideas do your people have?

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When was the last time you asked them?

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Could you ask them more often?

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What do you think would be the result?

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