

## 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, but when changes are implemented 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 keep track of, while others might be very simply involving as few as one to five easy steps. Whether your process is simple or complex, the best process improvement starts with an identification of the current process.

Process mapping can be both time consuming and confusing, but these tips may 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 really don't. Focusing on subject matter experts will help to ensure that you are accurately mapping out the current state and that minor (or major) details, aren't missed, while at the same time ensuring that your project has buy-in from those who will be impacted.

### MAKE IT FUN

Process mapping can be very tedious, and sometimes it helps to get started by getting your team into a room and giving everyone markers and sticky notes to put up on the wall or whiteboard.

### SELECT THE BEST TOOL FOR YOUR TEAM

There are multiple process mapping tools out there, and what is right for you is what is the simplest, while allowing you to include all the detail you need. Others may need to read and interpret it later, so be sure to consider ease of that transition. Examples of tools that we have seen used effectively are detailed Word outlines, Excel spreadsheets, and visual diagramming products such as Microsoft Visio, Lucidchart, and yEd Graph Editor.

### MORE IS BETTER

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

### BE CONSISTENT

Although there may be different groups of people involved in mapping out the various pieces of your process, if there is no standard, the map will become very confusing. To avoid that, ensure that the mapping is handled consistently, including the flowchart technique as well as the way tasks are identified. Stay away from non-standard abbreviations for the sake of being brief, and instead consider Verb-Noun tasks such as Draft the Agreement or Attend the Hearing.