



# How Internal Efficiencies Translate To Superior Service

BY: KRISTIN KERR, BUSINESS ANALYST, A.I.M. MUTUAL

**WE'VE ALL** heard the phrase, "I have an idea, but it's silly." Yet it's these small ideas that often amount to significant efficiencies within a company.

Let's face it. Adapting to change can be difficult, but we can ease concerns by onboarding staff early in the process and learning how their roles may impact important decisions. Giving a voice to employees to influence change also adds deeper value to their positions, which, in turn, translates to superior service. A deeper understanding of the "why" of company decision-making can be a big motivator.

## Watch And Listen

The first step in initiating an internal efficiency is through observation. Call a brief team meeting and distribute idea cards to jump-start a discussion. Once you've gathered some ideas, set words into actions. Get your hands dirty. Spend a day or even a few hours with your employees and you'll gain valuable insight into their processes. Ask questions, refrain from judgment, and most importantly, listen. Find out what pains them most about their jobs, whether it is a process or technology, and use that as a starting point in creating a solution. In many situations, frustrations result from lack of training, which can easily be remedied.

## Putting Concept Into Practice

Once changes have been identified, the next logical step is to act upon them. It is the responsibility of leadership to create an integrated vision of how these changes impact the organization. To avoid a silo mentality, it is also important that when procedures change, those changes

are communicated through all affected departments. By unifying departments during a process change, the team works together more efficiently and has a better understanding of its impact on the company as a whole. When an employee has a total view of his or her relationship with the company and all departments work toward achieving a common goal, service levels rise.

One of the best ways to increase operational efficiencies is to keep employees motivated. A happier employee is more likely to go the extra mile for a client. There are several ways this can be accomplished. One of the best ways to motivate is through appreciation. Appreciation can be in the form of a compliment on a job well done, positive constructive feedback, or through incentive programs to encourage that extra effort. Another way to motivate is to communicate better and set a good example of a positive attitude. If you show excitement over change, your employees are more likely to be on board to achieve these goals.

Automation, another way to promote efficiencies, is a word that can be worrisome to many. Common misconceptions are that it eliminates jobs or reduces one-on-one interaction with clients. However, true automation is not about minimizing human-to-human interaction. In a world of instant gratification, automation is a must for client satisfaction. As an efficiency, automation can preemptively address a client's needs in real time. For example, simple requests for a policy number or contact information can be handled via automated messaging services, which frees up a customer service representative to handle more complex

questions and provide more in-depth, personalized service to their clients.

## Don't Forget to Follow Up

The last step in executing a procedural efficiency is often a forgotten one. After a process or procedure has changed and employees are trained, it is important to check in periodically. This ensures the momentum continues and no one slips back to old habits. Change is a collaborative effort which requires periodic revision. This is another opportune time to ask your employees questions and determine how the new efficiency is improving their quality of work. Documentation and process guides should also be created to memorialize procedures and educate incoming staff. A business analyst on staff can facilitate the process.

Engaging employees in efficiencies gives them the confidence to promote change and grow within their roles. Leaders should remain transparent in guiding change. This boosts morale and, ultimately, service standards inside and outside the organization. 

## Kristin Kerr

*Kristin Kerr, Business Analyst for A.I.M. Mutual, brings ten years of industry experience to the role. Previously, she was a Senior Claim Representative, handling workers' compensation insurance claims in Massachusetts. She recently completed classes in Agile Project Management, Business Analytics, and Change Management. Kristin holds a B.S. degree in Business Administration and Marketing from Merrimack College.*

