How to Fix the Bottlenecks In Your Content Workflow

Using Project Management Techniques to Streamline Your Process

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Types of Bottlenecks

- **Built-in Bottleneck**: A delay that happens because of a flaw in the process.
- **Planned Bottlenecks**: A delay that can be anticipated and avoided with adequate planning.
- **Fluke Bottlenecks**: A delay that could not have been anticipated or avoided.
What’s *REALLY* causing your bottlenecks?

- **Root Cause Analysis**: A systematic approach to uncovering the underlying cause of a problem.
The Five Whys

• Ask yourself why the problem happened.
• Then ask yourself why the answer to that first why happened.
• Keep going until you have an actionable root cause related to your process.
• The answer to the 5th why is usually the answer.

1. Why did A happen?  
   Because B happened.
2. Why did B happen?  
   Because C happened.
3. Why did C happen?  
   Because D happened.
4. Why did D happen?  
   Because D happened.
5. Why did E happen?  
   Because D happened.
Ishikawa Diagram

- Named for its creator Kaoru Ishikawa, this is also sometimes called a “Fishbone Diagram.”
  - Brainstorming in a group

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Problem: Book published late

Software
- Problems setting up launch page website

Policy
- Took too long to get required approvals

Process
- Waited until after copyediting to begin securing permissions

Resources
- No copyeditor was available when we needed one

Communication
- Didn’t know how long the manuscript was

Category
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ASSOCIATION MEDIA & PUBLISHING

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Risk Management

Analyzing, anticipating, and planning for potential problems in order to minimize their impact
Risk of Bottlenecks

- Where in the process might bottlenecks occur?
- What type of bottleneck is it?
- How can you minimize the risk of it occurring?
- How can you minimize the impact if they do?

Don’t deal with problems when they occur. Know in advance what you’ll do if they happen.
Most Common Areas to Bottleneck

• Schedule
• Resources
• Communication
Schedule Management

• Reverse phase scheduling:
  • Start at the end of the project and work backward

• Examine Dependencies:
  • Mandatory or optional dependencies?
  • Alternative dependency relationships—Can a finish-to-start relationship be changed to a start-to-start?

• Examine Leads and Lags:
  • Lead: a successor task is scheduled to begin before a predecessor is complete
  • Lags: a predecessor activity does not start right away after the predecessor.
Milestones Schedule

• A list of major deliverables and when they should be completed.
• A milestone is a point in time (not a period of time) and is about what is accomplished not how it’s accomplished.
• What’s it good for?
  • Keeping stakeholders informed
  • Evaluating progress
  • Early stages of planning

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Bar charts or Gantt charts

• What’s it good for?
  • Visualize relationship between tasks
  • Clear visual timeline
Critical Path

• The longest path of dependent tasks from start to finish
• Determines the duration of your project

What’s it good for?
• Projecting completion date
• Streamlining
• Prioritizing resource allocation
Resource Availability

• Use critical-chain method to avoid unexpected resource overload

• Dealing with resource overload:
  • Split overloaded activity into parts or acquire more resources
  • Postpone non-critical tasks to level the resource load
  • Build buffers into the schedule where resources are tight
Communication Bottlenecks

• Communication issues that can cause delays:
  • Not knowing about a problem or delay immediately
  • Misunderstandings about expectations or deadlines
  • Not knowing about resource unavailability in advance
  • Too many people reviewing the same information
  • Getting bogged down in answering inquiries ad-hoc
Communication Management

• Develop Communication plan in advance
  • Identify stakeholders and what kind of communication they’ll need
  • Use Stakeholder Analysis Matrix to set priorities:

  **Power**: Who has the ability to cause delays or other problems?
  **Interest**: How much interest do they have in the project?
Project Management Software

• Keep schedules, assign resources, facilitate team communication, etc.

• Pay/subscribe:
  • Workzone
  • Workfront
  • Zoho
  • Microsoft Project
  • Monday
  • Airtable
  • Celoxis

• Free:
  • Teamweek (5 team members)
  • Asana (15 team members)
  • Teamwork (5 team members)
  • Wrike (5 team members)
  • Paymo (1 user)
  • Clickup (unlimited)

