Work Smarter, Not Harder.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ungerwhat?</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Process</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interdepartmental Communication</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Hard Way, Smart Way, &amp; Smartest Way</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is Integrated Software?</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preventing Knowledge Loss</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Hard Way, Smart Way, &amp; Smartest Way</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reporting/Data</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Hard Way, Smart Way, &amp; Smartest Way</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accounting &amp; Financials</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Hard Way, Smart Way, &amp; Smartest Way</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Tasks</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Hard Way, Smart Way, &amp; Smartest Way</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer Service &amp; Sales</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Hard Way, Smart Way, &amp; Smartest Way</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eliminating Excuses</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excuses</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t Forget to Review!</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ungerwhat?

This isn’t usually the kind of information we lead off with, but in this case, who we are and what we do is a critical part of the conversation!

Ungerboeck is the world leader in end-to-end venue and event management software. Capabilities include functionality for room scheduling and conference registration, CRM, booth sales, booking, CAD floor plans, budgeting, event management, operations, financials and more. Available in six languages, Ungerboeck software is used by more than 50,000 event professionals in 50 countries and supports clients worldwide from its headquarters in St. Louis, Missouri and 6 regional offices around the globe.

So what does that have to do with business process optimization? It comes down to this: we know your industry and we have access to the best practices of tens of thousands of clients just like you. There are common patterns in the business processes of the most successful organizers and organizations in the events business and we’re in a unique position to be able to spot them and help you learn from their example.

Now that we’ve got that out of the way...
Business Process: A series of steps that get us from Point A to Point B.

Just to make sure we’re all on the same page, when we refer to “business process,” we’re referencing a specific series of steps that get us from a stated goal to the achievement of that goal. For example, everything that happens between “I want to sell exhibitor booth space” and “I sold exhibitor booth space!”

There are many ways to get from Point A to Point B, but they aren’t all created equal. And that’s where “optimization” comes in.

Business Process Optimization: Selection of the most efficient series of steps to get from Point A to Point B.

What follows are what we’ve discovered are the best possible ways to successfully run an event-based business for the least possible effort, time and money (which we all know are the same thing)!
Interdepartmental Communication

It’s a basic fact in any business: If the right hand doesn’t know what the left hand’s doing, there’s going to be trouble.

This is particularly true in the events industry where frequent changes are just a standard part of doing business.
The Hard Way: Face, Phone & Email Time
This is probably the most common strategy businesses use to encourage collaboration and effective communication between departments and even if you adopt one of the “smarter” strategies you’re about to read, it’s still probably a good idea to meet face to face once in a while (no one knows the value of face-to-face interaction more an event organizer, right?). However, this can also be one of the biggest productivity killers in the business. Research suggests that up to 31 hours are spent in unproductive meetings over the course of a month source. That’s 31 hours not being spent on new business development or customer service!

This method is also nearly impossible to do effectively. If people have to pick up the phone, send an email or call a meeting every time they need to communicate something to another department, you can bet things are going to slip through the cracks!

The Smart Way: Internal Message Boards, Social Networks or Collaboration Tools
Technology can go very far, very fast in terms of being able to recover time wasted in meetings, on the phone or via email. Things like a company intranet, a dedicated social network like Yammer or collaboration tools like Basecamp create one central space where people from every department (or office) can go to share information, easily and quickly.

The Smartest Way: Integrated Software
The only way to improve efficiency even further is to have every department working on the same system to begin with. In this scenario, you immediately eliminate the requirement that everyone in the organization actually utilize the company intranet or Yammer or Basecamp and then also check in regularly to see what’s new – which is a BIG limitation of standalone systems like this. If everyone is using a really powerful integrated software solution that encompasses everything from A to Z, tracks changes in real-time and sends automatic notifications, it takes compliance out of the equation.
What is Integrated Software?

Integrated Software combines the most commonly used functionality of several different programs into a single application - meeting the needs of multiple departments while sharing a single database. In other words, you enter information into the system once and it is then immediately available to the entire organization.
Don’t let valuable business contacts and processes walk out the door with your employees.

Preventing Knowledge Loss

For an industry as centered around relationships and experience as the events business, documentation is absolutely key to making sure your valuable contacts and processes don’t walk out the door with employees when they leave.
The Hard Way: Traditional Documentation
The traditional way of documentation looks like Rolodexes, file folders and long, drawn-out meetings every six months or so to sit everyone down, talk everything through and manually draw up the latest version of the “business plan.”

The Smart Way: Formal Mentorship Programs
A more efficient and effective solution to this issue is a uniquely low tech one: formal mentorship programs. When it comes down to it, all this really means is doing a better job capitalizing on the knowledge of senior employees in your organization. Creating a formal mentoring program that pairs newer employees with older, more experienced staff is a great way to ensure that key information about your business processes doesn’t leave the business when they do. Doing this well involves setting up regular meetings and activities for mentors and mentees to interact, and is, of course, improved by technology like company-wide wikis or intranets where what is learned can be documented and stored.

The Smartest Way: Integrated Software
But, once again, the smartest option involves an integrated technology solution.

Think about it: if every lead, client and vendor is cataloged in a universally accessible database, along with their entire communication and/or order history –including frequency of communication, contact preferences and detailed notes – you immediately eliminate the mad scramble to pick up the pieces when a star employee disappears while upping your game across the board in routine customer service, internal communication and the handful of other things coming up next.
It’s hard to know what’s working and what isn’t when it’s difficult just to find and analyze the data.

Reporting/Data

You *already know* that data analysis and reporting is the key to making good business decisions but if it’s next to impossible to find the data in the first place or it takes an incredible amount of time and energy to complete, you’re almost guaranteed to miss out on valuable information.
The Hard Way: Manually Collecting Information & Building Reports From Scratch
The hard way involves rounding up the various spreadsheets, documents or separate software solutions you’re using to store things like client information, billing and order history and so on, making side-by-side comparisons (whether it’s year-over-year, month-to-month, etc.) and creating a report on your findings from scratch. Every.Single.Time.

The Smart Way: Various Tools For Analysis & Custom Built Reports
The smart way to handle data analysis and reporting across your organization is to use specific tools that have been built for this purpose. Whether that’s software like Domo that connects to all your various standalone systems and pulls data into custom reports or built-in reporting functionality from each of your separate systems, this can cut out a lot of the time you’d waste manually searching for info and building a report on your own. The limitations of this route include the added expense of yet another technology solution, including the time it takes to connect it with each of your separate software systems and to learn how to use it. It’s also generally unwise to spend a lot of additional money and effort developing complex custom reports (custom Crystal reports, for example) that can be difficult to edit over time.

The Smartest Way: Integrated Software
Yes, using tools that have been built specifically for data analysis and reporting is better than nothing. But “general” analytics and reporting software is never going to be as thorough or as easy to use as a system that was built specifically for events and “personalized” to fit the way you do business. One, centralized system with powerful reporting and analysis functionality and access to templates for standard reports (that actually make sense for the events industry), wins every time.
Accounting & Financials

It’s a universal problem: You need clients to pay invoices quicker. Solving the issue starts with getting accurate invoices out faster.
The Hard Way: Standalone Accounting Software
You know the usual suspects: Quickbooks, FreshBooks, Wave, Microsoft Dynamics, etc. Indispensable functionality, perfectly capable of crunching numbers and balancing the books.

The Smart Way: Connecting Separate Software Systems Through Custom APIs
What’s so great about connecting your financial/accounting software to the technology systems you’re using in the other areas of your business? There’s two main benefits to a connected system: First, we all know that change is constant and inevitable in this industry. Not only is it incredibly inefficient to log changes in two or three separate systems, there’s also a good chance that not every change or addition is going to make it through to the final invoice. Research among our clients actually suggests that you could be losing as much as 10% of potential billings this way.

The second benefit of a connected financial system is the ability to issue final invoices quickly. No need to reconcile between the various systems and tracking methods if all of your software is communicating and transferring information automatically. Invoices that go out faster get paid faster, not just because you avoid adding unnecessary delay to the net payment terms of clients but also because an immediate invoice reduces the likelihood of costly billing disputes since the details remain fresh in clients’ minds.

The Smartest Way: Integrated Software
So, if the benefits of having an integrated system are the same as connecting several, separate systems by API’s, then why is an integrated system still the smartest choice? Because systems that weren’t designed to communicate with each other will never work as smoothly and seamlessly as software that shares one central database. Not only will it be more difficult to use, it will likely take a lot of time and money to make those connections. And when a technical issue arises (as it inevitably will) you’ll need to deal with each vendor separately just to figure out where the problem originates. Same goes for regular updates. Update one system and you run the risk of breaking the custom code that’s connecting it to everything else. If there’s an alternative that gets you the same benefits without the headache and additional costs (and there is!), why not?
Administrative Tasks

Data entry, filing, fact-checking; this is the necessary but mundane work that is required to make your business operate effectively. But, there are steps you can take to minimize time spent on these tasks so you and your staff are free to concentrate on activities that have a more direct impact on the bottom line.

There are ways to minimize admin time so that you and your staff are free to concentrate more on activities with a direct link to revenue.
The Hard Way: Pens, Paper & File Cabinets
It’s hard to believe but there are still people out there using some combination of desk calendars, massive whiteboards and file folders full of hard copies as their primary means of organization. If you need to see something, you have to come to the physical location of these items and manually search for the information in question. Making a change requires an eraser and a series of emails or phone calls to pass it along to anyone else down the line who needs to know. Minus the eraser and the need to physically get up to locate information, the use of one or more spreadsheets for this purpose is almost equally limiting.

The Smart Way: Separate Software Programs & Digital Storage
Separate software programs are better than the alternative in a number of ways, but only slightly in terms of administrative work. This way at least, you’ll spend less time just trying to locate information and you cut down on the likelihood that information will be lost or misplaced.

The Smartest Way: Integrated Software
Reducing the amount of time spent on administrative work and the rate of errors is one of the strongest selling points of integrated software – and it’s very simple: If everyone is working from one system, using one central database, information like client contact info, billing and order history, contracts, etc. only ever has to be entered once vs. multiple times in separate systems. The same goes for changes. Enter a change once, it’s updated system-wide, in real-time and everyone who needs to know about it receives an instant notification. Our clients report an average of 3-6 hours per week, per user of saved time on administrative tasks. Time that is then available to spend on services and activities that tie in directly with revenue generation.

As far as reducing errors goes, the benefit of an integrated technology solution can best be explained by the 1:10:100 rule. Research has shown that it costs approximately $1 to verify the accuracy of data at the point of entry, $10 to correct or clean up mistakes in batch form and $100 (or more) per inaccuracy if the mistake is never caught source. That last figure includes the costs associated with something like low customer satisfaction and retention that can be hard to quantify but has an indisputable impact on your bottom line.

Human error is inevitable, there’s no way around it. The difference is in whether or not your processes are set up to maximize or minimize those errors. If your event information has to be entered multiple times in separate systems, you’re setting yourself up for expensive mistakes in the long-term. Enter it only once in a single system and you cut that risk immeasurably.
Customer Service & Sales

Even if everything else behind the scenes is a mess, at the end of the day in the events business, it all comes down to customer service and sales. Are you setting yourself up for success or fighting a losing battle?
The Hard Way: Tons of Paper, People & Sweat
This is the way of Post-its, Outlook reminders and scribbles on notepads. Maybe each customer service and/or sales person has a “system” that works for them but there’s really no way to know for sure when you’re just relying on each rep to juggle all the details for every account in their heads or scattered across their desks. This is the definition of the “hard” way and it makes for a frazzled, frustrated sales and customer service staff – which is the last thing you want the team responsible for direct contact with current and potential clients to feel.

The Smart Way: Spreadsheets, Generic CRM Software & Electronic Transactions
There are really two levels of “smart” when it comes to improving business processes for sales and customer service. The first is the use of spreadsheets. Much like the step-up from hard copies and filing cabinets to standalone software systems for administrative tasks, the move from the process described above to spreadsheets is a definite improvement, but only marginally – and for pretty much the same reasons. Updates are not in real-time, change notifications are not automatic and the kind of massive spreadsheets these usually become when being used as a makeshift CRM or event management tool make it extremely easy for information to be lost or overlooked.

So, the next step up? CRM software. Pretty much any CRM software. This brings immediate relief to sales staff who now have a clear place to store and access information with a built-in standardized process. Research has proven that the addition of CRM software alone can return as much as $8.71 for every $1 spent on implementation source.

The Smartest Way: Integrated Software With Purpose-Built CRM & Web-Based Transactions
Things don’t actually get much better for customer service staff though until you consider a solution that integrates CRM with functionality for operations and finance. Not only are there fewer opportunities for embarrassing and costly mistakes when everyone is working from the same system, the ability for anyone, at any level to pull up complete, up-to-date information for every account, at any time, means that clients can feel confident their needs are being met, regardless of who picks up the phone.

If you stopped right there, you’d still be ahead of the game. However, there is one more improvement you can make to really take your sales process to the next level – and that’s a CRM solution that has been purpose-built for the events industry. I don’t have to tell you there are huge differences in selling tangible products vs. services vs. space – and I don’t have to tell you that the events industry doesn’t fit neatly into any of those categories. This is a unique business and a generic CRM that takes a one-size-fits-all approach can never really work the way you need it to–even with a ton of expensive customizations. The organizers who are at the top of their sales game are all doing it with purpose-built CRM.
Eliminating Excuses

In addition to being privy to best practices for business optimization from hundreds of clients around the globe, we also hear our fair share of excuses for not adopting them. Here’s a few of the most common arguments we hear and why they don’t hold up.
Technology Is Expensive, Labor Is Cheap

Yes, it is true that technology can be expensive, but when you consider everything we’ve explored here, it’s easy to see that nearly any technology solution can pay for itself if applied appropriately. However, given the trend toward new web-based, Software as a Service models for integrated software, cost has become even less of an issue. These kind of ala carte solutions allow you to pick and choose among options for functionality, selecting and paying only for what you need – allowing you to scale up or down easily in the future.

As for “cheap” labor. Let’s not forget that it isn’t always as cheap as it seems at face value. First, you have the standard problems with a low to moderate wage labor force like high turnover and poor motivation. Regardless of their compensation, every new employee costs time and money to train. But maybe more importantly, if your processes are loose and there’s little incentive for your staff to go above and beyond the call of duty, you’re likely to lose money in the long run due to factors like low customer satisfaction and retention that can be hard to quantify but have an indisputable impact on your bottom line.

Turnover Is Too High To Justify The Time & Expense Involved With Technology Training

Remember what we’ve learned about documentation? High turnover is expensive, period. But would you rather train new employees to use software or start from scratch every time somebody leaves? There’s time and money involved either way but at least with software, the integrity of the business doesn’t take a hit every time there’s a personnel shake up.

Aside from that, technology can also be a powerful deterrent to high turnover in the first place, in that it increases employee satisfaction by easing day-to-day tasks. A more secure, stable and organized business leads to a more secure, stable and organized workforce.

I Don’t Need Technology To Be Competitive In My Market

While most of your competitors at the moment are probably regional, the events industry is an increasingly global business. To be competitive on that level, you need to be able to provide truly world-class service and have the same robust capability to manage things like event details and billing that international clients have come to expect.

Bonus Tip: Given all the ways we’ve discussed that technology is able to drastically improve efficiency, being an early adopter offers you an excellent way to get ahead of your immediate competitors and stay there!
Don’t Forget to Review!

Last, but not least, no matter what solutions you choose, make it a point to regularly review your business processes.

Your business doesn’t exist in a vacuum. Outside forces like the economy and technology can impact your bottom line in ways big and small. So too can internal factors like changes in leadership. That’s why it’s important to re-examine your business practices on a regular basis to evaluate whether they’re still a good fit or if there might be a newer, better way.

- Schedule reviews at least once every six months
- Include everyone or, at least, representatives from every department
- Consider bringing in a consultant for an outside perspective

If you have invested in any technology solutions, the review process is particularly important given how often technology changes. It’s also a valuable opportunity to make any necessary adjustments to bring software up to date with any changes in your business processes or discover whether your technology is being used to its full potential within your organization.

Want to learn more about how integrated software can help your business save time and boost the bottom line? Call us at +1 636-300-5606 or visit us at ungerboeck.com for more information.