

BUSINESS BOFFIN

5 Golden rules for an approach to action management

Phil Chambers of Strategic Safety Systems explains you could set up an action management system to reduce workload. Whilst the original concept was for safety management, it can be used for a whole range of business activities



For years, I've watched people get into a state over managing actions. People get overloaded and often important items get missed. With a sensible approach using an action management system, you can overcome this. There are systems on the market, but there is no reason why you can't do it yourself. If you choose to do it yourself, here are some golden rules to setting up your own system:

Have a single database

Rather than having records all over the place, have just one database. Don't use a spreadsheet, use a database program. This database can store your incidents, inspections, internal problems, customer complaints, meeting minutes, audit reports and so on.

Recognise that issues and actions are all the same.

No matter its source, everything is an issue, with actions arising from it. Whether it's a customer complaint, an incident or whatever, you still end up with an issue that needs managing. Have 2 main tables, *Issues* and *Actions* so that you can allow for initial and long-term actions for some issues, and be able to filter by source.

Keep it simple

Don't try to guess every situation. What you will find is that as it gets used, you will see other features that you will need. So start simply, but have in mind the ability to develop the system.

Give as much access as possible and avoid mandatory data entry

This is probably one of the biggest benefits. As soon as information is shared and made available, you will be surprised how many ideas for improvements arise. Shared access allows you to enter data only once and avoid paper forms. You will need to add some security features, but keep these simple. I recommend avoiding mandatory data because it is difficult to guess every situation and you end up with junk data just because something must be entered.

Have a system that meets your exact needs

If you decide to buy a proprietary system, be wary of those which are set in stone; you end up suiting the system, rather than it suiting you. With our own INTACT system, we have the policy of adapting it to meet individual client requirements and we will keep this approach as we develop it to be web-based.

This is really a short run through the benefits of action management systems. White Paper 15 available via <http://www.strategicsafety.co.uk/Publications.html> goes into more detail.

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