

Bottleneck Buster for Small Business Owners

Step 1: Identify the Bottleneck

- Clearly pinpoint the area where workflow slows or halts.
- Interview key personnel to gather detailed insights on exactly where and when bottlenecks occur.

Template for Identification:

- **Process Name:**
 - **Frequency of Issue:**
 - **Team Members Involved:**
 - **Symptoms of the Bottleneck:**
 - **Impact on Business (time lost, customer dissatisfaction, revenue):**
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Step 2: Analyze the Root Causes

- Examine the bottleneck thoroughly to identify underlying issues.
- Utilize simple tools like the "5 Whys" technique for deep-rooted analysis.

"5 Whys" Template Example:

- **Problem:** Orders are consistently shipped late.
 - **Why?** Packaging takes too long.
 - **Why?** Inventory isn't organized efficiently.
 - **Why?** There's no clear inventory layout.
 - **Why?** Team hasn't established a standardized system.
 - **Why?** Lack of training and clear instructions.
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Step 3: Prioritize Solutions

- List potential solutions clearly ranked by ease, cost, and impact.

Solution Prioritization Template:

Solution	Ease (1-5)	Cost (1-5)	Impact (1-5)	Total
Implement inventory labeling system	4	2	5	11
Employee training session	5	3	4	12
Workflow automation tool	2	4	5	11

(Higher totals indicate a higher priority)

Step 4: Streamline & Implement Solutions

- Develop clear, actionable steps to address prioritized solutions.
- Assign accountability and timelines.

Implementation Template:

- **Solution Chosen:**
 - **Responsible Person:**
 - **Start Date:**
 - **Completion Date:**
 - **Steps to Implementation:**
 - Step 1:
 - Step 2:
 - Step 3:
 - **Resources Needed (tools, budget, training):**
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Step 5: Monitor & Adjust

- Establish clear metrics to measure success post-implementation.
- Schedule routine checks to confirm bottleneck resolution and make necessary adjustments.

Monitoring Template:

- **Metric to Track (e.g., shipping times):**
 - **Target Outcome (e.g., reduce by 30%):**
 - **Monitoring Frequency (weekly, monthly):**
 - **Person Responsible:**
 - **Date of Review:**
 - **Adjustments Needed:**
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Step 6: Continuous Improvement & Prevention

- Foster ongoing process refinement to ensure bottlenecks don't reoccur.
- Regularly engage employees in identifying and suggesting improvements.

Bottleneck Buster Worksheet

This worksheet provides a structured, systematic approach to identifying, analyzing, and resolving

How to use this worksheet:

- Clearly document each step thoroughly.
- Review and update regularly to proactively manage and prevent operational bottlenecks.
- Keep completed worksheets accessible for continuous improvement and future reference.

Business Name:

Date:

Prepared By:

Step 1: Identify the Bottleneck

- Process Name:
- Frequency of Issue:
- Team Members Involved:
- Description of the Bottleneck:
- Impact on Business:
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Step 2: Analyze Root Causes

Use the "5 Whys" Method Below:

1. Why?
 2. Why?
 3. Why?
 4. Why?
 5. Why?
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Step 3: Prioritize Solutions

Proposed Solution	Ease (1-5)	Cost (1-5)	Impact (1-5)	Priority Total
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(Rate each solution: 1 = lowest, 5 = highest. Higher totals indicate higher priority.)

Step 4: Streamline & Implement Solutions

- **Chosen Solution:**
- **Responsible Person:**
- **Start Date:**
- **Completion Date:**

Implementation Steps:

- **Step 1:**
- **Step 2:**
- **Step 3:**

Resources Needed (tools, budget, training):

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Step 5: Monitor & Adjust

- **Metrics to Track:**
- **Target Outcomes:**
- **Monitoring Frequency:**
- **Responsible Person:**
- **Next Review Date:**

Adjustments and Notes:

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Step 6: Continuous Improvement & Prevention

- **Next Scheduled Review Date:**
 - **New Potential Bottlenecks Identified:**
 - **Proposed Solutions:**
 - **Employee Suggestions & Comments:**
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