Uncork the bottlenecks

Streamline your workflows with scalable technology solutions

INTERVIEWED BY JAYNE GEST

NANO ZEGARRA
Chief technology officer
Blue Technologies

(216) 271-4800, ext. 2260
nzegarra@BTOhio.com

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Every organization has workflows. But do you proactively try to improve your workflow processes, or only consider them as you're scrambling to fix a problem?

If your company has people-intensive processes, where documents and tasks touch and affect many, you need to be evaluating them proactively.

Workflow technology solutions can help — uncorking bottlenecks, adding efficiency and streamlining the whole process, says Nano Zegarra, chief technology officer at Blue Technologies.

"Picture someone's desk with a stack of papers on it," Zegarra says. "That process owner has to get through all of those documents to get to the finished product, whether that's billing a customer or manufacturing something. And that final product is how your company makes money for what it does."

Smart Business spoke with Zegarra about how scalable workflow solutions can make it faster and easier for your organization to get where it needs to go.

How do workflow solutions help?

One of the biggest pain points for organizations is a loss of productivity. You may have people sitting around and waiting to get to the next step, doing a lot of unnecessary investigation into a task or perhaps wasting time searching for documents.

With the right interface, you can eliminate those inefficiencies. You can enable multiple people to see a document at one time, or to easily find and view everything related to a project through a singular interface. You can also automate administrative tasks, and set alerts to keep things moving through your process.
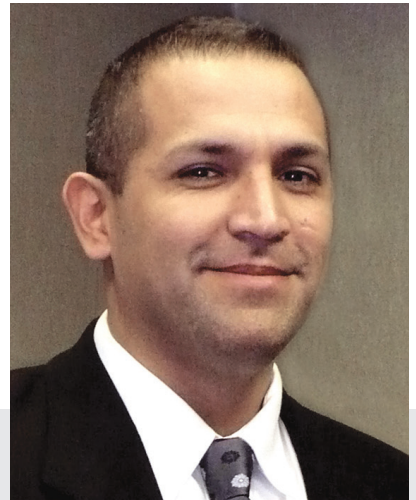
That adds a level of accountability, as well, because a business leader has an overview of where a particular project or order is sitting in the organization at any time — and he or she can jump in to add efficiencies as needed.

The technology can even be set up so that if a certain person doesn't handle a task in a given amount of time, it's moved to another person to ensure completion in a timely manner. This enables you to guarantee deadlines.

Can these solutions accommodate a company that's growing?

A flexible, enterprise-based solution can be expanded over time, so that you can plan for the long term, and continue to do more as you grow, without having to add resources.

The backbone of a workflow solution is always document management, but on top of that you need to understand the structure of your organization. How is everything going to be stored and accessed? How will changes to documents and redactions be handled? How are the changes in retention period or compliance going to be handled?

After the first six months to a year, you and your employees will likely notice additional inefficiencies that can then be improved upon with the software investment that has already taken place.

For example, if your accounts payable

solution is working so well that you want to add in the human resources department, it can be a matter of simply reconfiguring the workflow solution to handle another area. Rather than buying an entirely new product.

Or you acquire another company and need to integrate their system with yours. The right, scalable workflow solution will either work upfront with the other system, or allow you to easily add pieces to communicate data back and forth.

How can a company determine the right, scalable fit?

Make sure you ask your technology vendor about what will happen if you go from handling 500 pieces of information to 1 million. You don't want a workflow solution that's driven by volume or task.

You also don't want to look for a solution specific to a problem you're trying to fix, because investing in a canned solution could hold you hostage later.

The key is not to limit yourself, to think proactively and choose flexible technology that aligns with your future business goals.

That's why working with a technology partner to help you find the best-fit, scalable solution is critical to streamlining your workflows. The right partner can help you grow by identifying your inefficiencies and uncorking bottlenecks through a thorough analysis and workflow design. ●