

# The Practical Process Workbook

A step by step guide to  
writing down your  
processes



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## Introduction

No matter the size of your organisation or its goals, a healthy, sustainable and productive enterprise relies on practical processes that achieve what you want.

Like a good gardener – he or she doesn't just throw down a seed and wait three years for fruit. The gardener cleans the ground, fertilises the soil, plants and waters the seed, keeps the weeds clear and grows strong roots for the tree through care and attention... and then the good fruit comes.

**Superior Business Analysis** is about understanding those roots that are essential to thriving organisations and ensuring that they do what they need to. For further information on Superior Business Analysis and the **Superior Business Analysis Framework** you can visit <http://superiorbusinessanalysis.com/overview/> .

**Superior Business Analysis** is based on a simple premise - that to improve what you do, you need to think about what you do. That is of course what 'analysis' is: considered, logical and structured thinking about a subject with the aim of better understanding it. And by 'what you do' I mean, ultimately, your processes.

I don't mean you need to spend weeks agonising over one particular process ad nauseam - the 80-20 rule seems to apply here as much as anywhere. Nor do I mean that you need to get a PhD in statistics or an MBA to do a decent job of thinking through your strategy and procedures. I just mean that it is worthwhile to spend a bit of time, relative to how important a particular process is, making sure it achieves what is desired.

And that is what **The Practical Process Workbook** is about. Giving you a set of steps, which are as simple as possible, to document your processes so you are then ready to improve them. After all, processes are the ultimate implementation of strategy. If there is no process in place for doing something – whether tacit (in someone's head) or clearly expressed on paper – then that 'thing' just does not happen.

Now, if your job is based on simple tasks that can be easily completed in three or four common-sense steps, then that analysis could be quite straightforward. Conversely, it might be counterproductive to analyse the steps for extremely creative tasks where the artist prefers to be driven by the creative process, within constraints. However, many jobs entail a longer, more consistent and/or far more complex series of steps involving

inputs and outputs from other people - and there can be large risks, costs or other implications at stake.

In these cases it is not really possible for people (or teams of people), without photographic memories, to decently analyse processes in their heads. It is necessary to write the processes down. You see, some of this information can be held in people's heads, but you cannot expect what they do to be of a high quality if they do not have the time, information or permission they need to improve what they do. Maybe that is ok in some cases, but when you are asking staff to do work on which health, reputation or income depend, high quality is essential.

That is why I say: **Practical Processes. Thriving Organisation.**



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## First Things First

So let's quickly cover some fundamentals before we set about the details. Specifically, a bit of a business case for why you would be a star employee if you wrote down your key processes, what ground work you need to do before you get stuck in and exactly what we are suggesting here.

### What is a process?

A process is a series of repeatable steps that is carried out in order to produce a specific outcome. This is distinct from a project, which is an initiative that is undertaken once-off only for a single result. There are generally a large range of processes rolling along, over and over, every day, week, month or year in your organisation to produce the goods or services delivered by your organisation, or to produce the services needed to support and maintain the resources that your organisation relies on to be functional.

Processes are the series of steps that underpin the activities that are routinely carried out to fulfil the job descriptions of staff and other resources – often invisible unless clearly written down and displayed somewhere. Processes are there whether you know it or not! Of course, whether they are consistent, effective and efficient processes is another thing altogether – and that is what we are trying to address today.

### Exactly WHY should I write down my processes?

Really it should be a no brainer that, if you are doing an important job that customers / clients, your managers / staff or other stakeholders depend on – whether for money, health or other value – you want to do it well. If you do not do a good job, then a lot of people, including your own reputation and health, can suffer.

- If you are responsible for marketing and do not do a good job at advertising or on social media, your organisation can lose or miss out on new customers.
- If you are carrying out some specialised role that creates value in your business (e.g. producing products, speaking to customers, delivering a service) and do not perform at a good level, your organisation can lose reputation, business, morale and more.

- If you are in Human Resources (HR) and do not do a good job at new staff inductions, your organisation cannot make best use of its staff.
- If you are in Finance and do not do a good job at turning around invoices and/or payments, your organisation can lose money.
- If you are in OHS (Occupational Health and Safety) and do not do a good job at ensuring staff and volunteer safety, people can get injured.

I could go on...

But of course, to do these things, you and your staff or colleagues actually need to know what you are doing. And in many of these cases, the only way to be sure that what you are doing is appropriate, cost-effective, efficient and complementary to other business processes, is to write it down and then give involved people the opportunity to make it better.

### *18 Reasons why your staff or colleagues should write down what they do*

So, following this vein, here are not just one but 18 excellent reasons why you, your staff or your colleagues should write down what you are doing. If you are about to champion a process improvement drive within your organisation, it might be worth keeping this list at hand. Different reasons will resonate better with different people.

Writing down your processes means you can:

1. Be on the same page as the people you work with so there are less annoyances or nasty surprises.
2. Ensure your manager is aware of what is happening and has the opportunity to give you feedback **before** you carry out tasks.
3. Identify ways to do your work with less time and better quality.
4. Know exactly what you're doing so that you can do it efficiently and smoothly.
5. Show you take pride in doing your best and distinguish yourself from someone who might just do the bare minimum without thinking about what they're doing and how to improve.
6. Create a smooth and clear process through the routine work so that you are left with more time and brain-power to do, identify or participate in exciting new projects (which, depending on your workplace, might raise your profile and increase your value as an employee).
7. Identify and avoid or mitigate risks, whether physical, political or financial, before they become issues.

8. Delegate or train up someone else to do your work (if you're on leave, sick or moving on to another position).
9. Identify logical places where you could benefit from additional information inputs or advice.
10. Identify opportunities to work with other business areas or leverage this or other activities to reduce duplication across the organisation.
11. Know what current arrangements need to be considered if you are significantly improving or reforming the process.
12. Start to make a case for getting additional resources or tools to help improve what you do and your results.
13. If cost effective, have a starting point for fine tuning your processes further by you or a specialist using *Six Sigma, Lean, Total Quality Management* or another process improvement methodology.
14. Have a starting point for seeking other types of external advice on whether the process is correct (e.g. from a lawyer, accountant or social media consultant).
15. Have a starting point for identifying the user activities (use cases) that a new or existing computer application should support (as a part of developing system requirements).
16. Provide proof of quality to clients, customers or funding partners and maybe therefore secure more work or funding.
17. Have a basis for seeking quality assurance accreditation if you think that would be a useful marketing and quality maintenance tool.
18. Have fun! Well why wouldn't you? It can be very satisfying writing down what you do and knowing that you are doing the best you can. Seriously!

## What do I need to do BEFORE I write down a process?

To be honest, there is not anything you HAVE to do before writing down a process. If you are itching to get going and to start writing down your steps then go for it! However, it is probably worth at least being aware of the context in which you are operating to avoid (1) wasting time, or (2) putting a lot of people off-side. If you want to do this in your personal free time and not tell another soul about it, then these considerations will not be relevant.

So here are five questions to which it is good to have answers before you jump into process documentation.

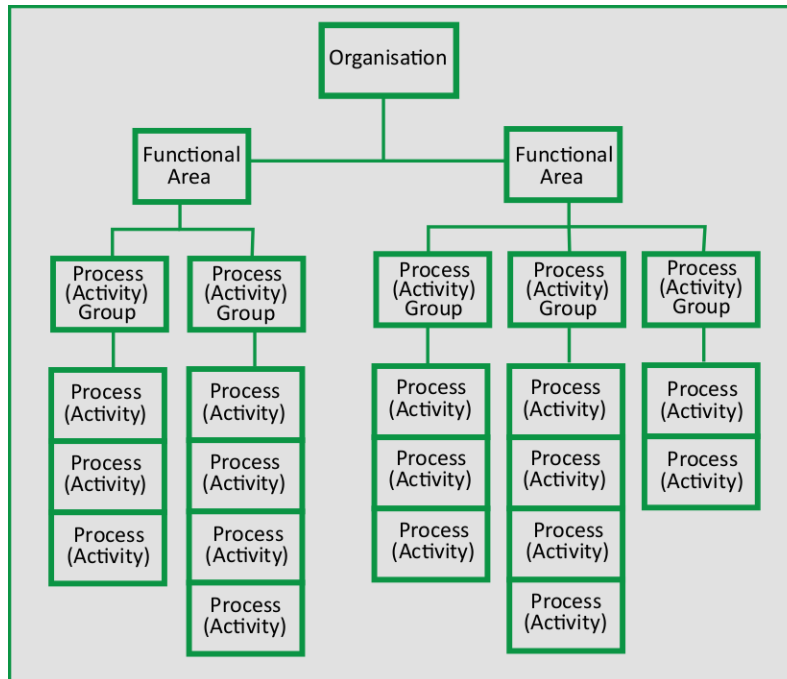
### *Question 1: What activity am I generally interested in writing down as a process?*

Before you start, you clearly need to have a bit of an idea about WHAT you are writing down. You can't try and capture everything that your organisation does in one go – it's just too big! So you break down everything carried out by your organisation into functional areas, and then you break down those functional areas into groups of activities, and then you break down those groups into discrete (but usually intersecting) activities... and then you have something that you can start turning into a practical, documented process.

This break-down of an organisation into its functional areas, activity groups and activities (and perhaps with more or less layers of this hierarchy depending on the scale of your organisation's activities) is central to best practice management in a few ways. It can:

- be the basis of a logical organisational structure
- be the basis of an intuitive information management framework for all types of information in your organisation's network directories, intranet or other systems / databases
- provide all staff and stakeholders with a common understanding of what your organisation does and how the activities interact.





For the purpose of writing down processes we are interested in the second and third dot points. A functional breakdown of an organisation enables information about the activities carried out by your organisation to be understood and managed in a logical and easy to navigate way.

A functional organisational breakdown may already be in place in your organisation, which gives you a great place to start, but sometimes (especially in smaller organisations) there is not a clean split of functions between individuals or teams. Many organisations know that there are HR activities that are carried out (sometimes by a full HR department, sometimes outsourced, sometimes handled by managers and sometimes by a single person). Similarly ICT and Finance functions are clearly distinguished and defined. It is often when you get into the nitty gritty of what is relatively unique about the organisation where you have to think a bit more carefully through how the functional areas, the activity (process) groups and the activities (processes) are broken up.

You do not have to have this breakdown clear when you start choosing a process to write down and improve. However, having this conceptual understanding of where a single process fits into the big picture helps - especially as there are 'process classification frameworks' that can provide you with examples of potential processes and help you pick out what you should have in place in your own organisation.

One such Process Classification Framework (PCF) is the APQC PCF which you download from [www.apqc.org/pcf](http://www.apqc.org/pcf). There is a full cross-industry (generic) PCF and there are also industry-specific ones. You may look through them and find some gaps where their list of activities does not cover very specific aspects of your organisation, and you may find some that are not relevant or critical to your organisation (the list is huge!). However, if you are trying to get a better sense of what a process might be or what processes need to be written in your organisation, then this is a wonderful place to start.

If we are going too far into theory here though, do not fear. The main thing you need to know to write down your processes is generally what output you are trying to clarify the steps for – and when we kick off Stage 1, that will be what we look at first. The example provided as we work through the book should help you in defining this too.

*Question 2: Is it worth investing time in this process?*

As with anything worth doing, capturing and improving processes takes time (and therefore money) and effort. This time and effort is VERY worthwhile for key business processes that need to minimise risks, costs and time and maximise quality, consistency and throughput – and hopefully this is the case for most of the processes used by your organisation. However, it is less worthwhile (and probably counterproductive) to invest time in analysing processes that could easily be outsourced or that do not add value to your organisation or its customers. These are the processes that really do need to be moved outside the organisation or ditched!

However, I will concede that sometimes the very process of capturing a process allows you to think afresh about what value certain activities - and definitely certain steps – provide. If you are on the fence about whether a particular process adds value or not, sometimes going through the documentation process will help make that clear too.

### *Question 3: Do you have the information you need to write down the process?*

Once upon a time I came across a school of thought which claimed that if you are improving processes you can just start from scratch without any knowledge of existing and undocumented processes. I haven't come across anyone from that school of thought now for a quite a while. If your organisation has never carried out a particular job before, then that is fine – you have nothing to lose. However, if your organisation has carried out the activity before, then I would suggest that it is always worth (albeit just briefly) jotting down the current steps. Even if your organisation has the worst, most badly conceived and convoluted process imaginable for a particular activity, it is worth at least taking 5 minutes to jot it down (notwithstanding you will be changing everything about it) for these four reasons:

1. To, as quickly as possible, identify the existing inputs, outputs and communication channels that will need to be considered in your improved process.
2. To, as quickly as possible, identify points where the existing process interacts with other processes, so that you know what other processes may need to be updated as a result of this process being changed.
3. To make it blatantly clear what you do NOT want included in your improved process.
4. To give you a benchmark so that you can remember and remind other people how awful the process was before you made it better.

If you are trying to write down an existing process, the information to which you will need access will depend very much on what is available to you, but will usually fall into these categories.

- Existing guidance and directions relevant to your current process – policies, procedures, guides, standards, legislation and other regulatory requirements
- Existing systems that support part of or the whole process
- Inputs to your process – usually in the form of templates, reports, forms, printouts, information sources / files or products
- Outputs from your process – including data and other information records that are identified or created through the process and which need to be stored or recorded somewhere.

My personal approach is to review the information available to me BEFORE starting to write-up the process so I can just take a clean run at getting things down on paper when I am ready.

However, in trying to write down the process in any real way, be aware that all this information you have collected and assimilated will be very relevant to a future process but maybe less so to the existing process. In terms of what happens now and what will have an influence on the future process, sometimes the most pertinent information is the tacit information which is held within people's heads and is not written down ANYWHERE!

Which leads us on to...

*Question 4: Do you have the right people involved in writing down the process?*

As mentioned in Question 2, often the most important information that is relevant to business processes is that information which is not written down and is stored in the heads of people. Some organisations have very little written down and your only starting point is either writing down your own knowledge of how an activity is carried out, or – where you are not a 'subject matter expert' about the activity – sitting down with the person /s who are the 'subject matter experts' and picking their brains.

Another part of the decision about who should be involved in writing down the process is political and involves working out the best way to involve affected people in the process improvement exercise. It is key to the success of any process improvement initiatives that the affected people are engaged and involved early on in the piece, and the more they can be involved in the actual creation of the process, the better. So for that reason also, a very important question to ask upfront is, "Do you have the right people involved in writing down the process?" Because if you do not, you will not get a practical process at the end of the exercise, and you will have key people (as in the people who actually carry out the process) fighting the change as hard as they can.

*Question 5: Are the politics around the process improvement exercise being handled sensitively?*

Remember, one of the main reasons you are writing down the process is so that you can change the way things are done for the better. Unfortunately, change management generally is not the easiest space in which to work. Why? It involves people. People with all sorts of quirks, sensitivities, ideas, motives and fears. Engagement with involved staff and other stakeholders needs to be handled sensitively and proactively, otherwise you will be on the road to failure. Sorry.

We started discussing this in question 3 when we were thinking about who to involve in writing down the process, but it goes further than that. Even just taking the steps to document and receive endorsement of a current process needs to be handled appropriately. This means genuinely involving the affected people, following the correct organisational procedures and including plenty of empathetic, timely and consistent communication. Change management is a whole big discipline in its own right and we will not go into the detail here, but be aware of it and think out your approach first!

## HOW do we write down our processes?

We should get this straight before we go any further – process improvement NEVER ends.

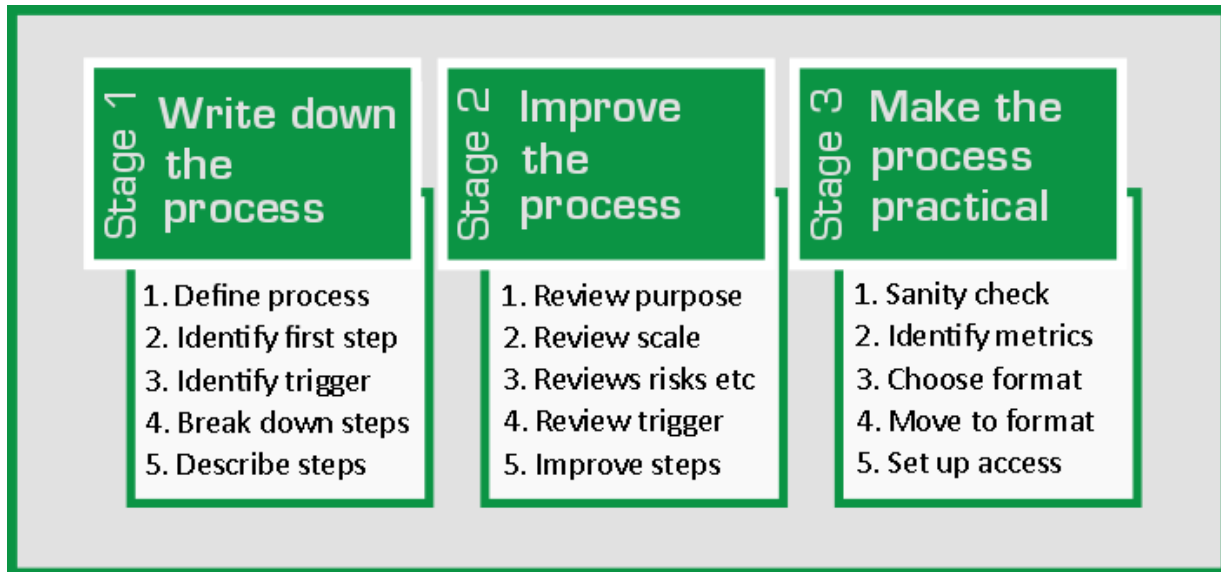
Yes, it is a little disappointing to put it that way, but it is filled with positives too. For someone who wants to do their job well, there are infinite ways in which you can keep adding value to your organisation through the work you do. You can:

- Include better communications with other staff and customers
- Find (or even develop) cool new technologies that will improve quality, efficiency or savings
- Create a better standard of quality, efficiency or savings through what you do
- Find ways of leveraging what you and others do to optimise what is happening across your organisation or industry.

This is all exciting! It does mean that the improvement cycle never ends, but once you know what you are already doing (as in, if you already have practical processes written down and in use), then it makes it easier to identify opportunities for improvement, agree on them and implement them.

There are a variety of continuous improvement cycles that reflect the ongoing nature of process improvement. The Deming Cycle of 'Plan – Do – Check – Act' (PDCA) is one that you may have come across. We are not trying to cover the whole gamut of change management in this workbook, but we do need to have an idea of the context within which process management sits.

What we are looking at in this workbook is the first of three stages for creating practical processes – the writing down stage. Each stage is made up of five steps as shown in the picture below.



The **Write Down the Process** stage is where you put your first thoughts about the current or even a new future process down in writing. The idea here is to get as much as you can down so that you and the other people you are working with have something tangible that you can start to play around with. With some groups it is best to engage everyone in this step immediately. In some other settings it is worth getting a nominated person or the group facilitator to have a first go and then using that for workshops in the second stage.

The **Improve the Process** stage is where you start consciously looking for ways to do better. In this stage there are lots of ways of identifying improvement opportunities, and making progress toward a more effective process. This stage can also be repeated as many times as you need. Depending on the levels of comfort and expertise of the people involved, it may be wise to run through this second stage a few times to gradually refine the process steps at a speed that does not make key people freak out and disengage.

The **Making the Process Practical** stage is where you finalise the process in a format that is meaningful, useful and essentially practical for the people who need to use it. This is the final stage in this workbook, although in reality it may be just at the beginning of the identified changes actually occurring.

The wonderful bit though, is that once you have completed your practical process, it is then there for use, not only every time the process is carried out, but also when you inevitably make little tweaks or even major reforms to this process in the future. If you have a finalised process in place already, then for any new desired changes you can skip straight to Stage 2!

However, in this workbook we are just focussing on the first of these stages, the writing down. So let's get started...



## WRITE DOWN the Process

We are going to take the approach here that getting something – ANYTHING – down on paper (or on your screen of course) is a win. If that all-important person in your organisation gets hit by the metaphorical bus, then having SOMETHING written down is way better than a blank page. And you will be amazed at how quickly some obvious improvements can spring out at you – like an unnecessary step or a gaping hole in communication.

Also keep in mind that no process, no matter how carefully scripted, optimised and reiterated is likely to be perfect for long. Demand, technology and people all change, and process management is about making the resulting and necessary changes to processes as painless as possible. So writing up your processes – especially for the first time – is about capturing as much useful information in the one place as possible about how a task is completed. The improvements – should they be necessary – come next.

The main message from this is really, do not be embarrassed about what your first attempt at writing down a process looks like. Ever. For any process. Just for starting to write down what you know, you deserve a high five! Do not let a quest for perfection stop that critical first step being taken (which is exactly what I have been telling myself whilst writing this book).

And finally, in guiding you through the stages of creating a practical process, I use the term 'you' a lot. I am a native English speaker, so I normally do not see that there is any problem with the English language not making any distinction between you singular and you plural, unlike many other languages. In this case though, it does seem to create unnecessary ambiguity. When I say 'you' in this book I mean 'you' singular and / or plural. Whoever is going through this exercise basically, which in some cases will be done by an individual and in others will be very much better done by a group.

*At the back of this workbook is an example walkthrough that will help you through the questions and the writing down of your own processes. The example is told through the eyes of one of the franchisees of the best sweet store chain in Australia – Ultimate Indulgences.*

## STEP 1: Define the process

I find that one of the trickiest things about writing practical processes is breaking up a whole package of processes into manageable chunks. If you try to write down a huge process that covers all the work of a business area, then often your process document gets too big to think through in one sitting. On the other hand, if you make the scope of your processes too small, you end up with too many different documents to be able to connect the dots between them.

Step 1 is therefore all about clarifying the scope of what you are trying to capture. We don't do this by trying to work out every little detail and action that is in scope at this point – that is too overwhelming and sends us down too many rabbit warrens. Instead we define what we want the process we are writing down to achieve.

This is logical if you think about it. We do not write processes as an end in itself. What is the point in that? We write processes as a means to an end. We write processes to confirm that we know what we are doing and that we are doing it in the right way.

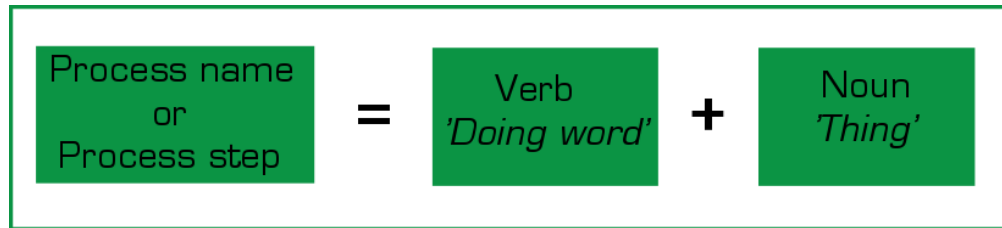
Now, before we go any further it is necessary to go back to English class just for a couple of minutes. If you are crystal clear on what a verb is and what a noun is then you can skip over it. If you are a bit hazy on the difference though, I'll make it painless for you.

According to the English Oxford Dictionary, a **verb** is a *doing* word, a word that “describes what a person or thing does or what happens”. Examples include *install, write, assess* and *create*.

A **noun**, on the other hand, is a “word (other than a pronoun) used to identify any of a class of people, places, or things, or to name a particular one of these”. This is being defined quite broadly to include noun-type phrases that explain the ‘thing’ with which you are dealing. Examples include *customer, new customer application, catalogue* or *solar panels*.

What we are aiming to do here is define the result of the process we are going to capture in order to make our job doable. And we do it by – as far as possible – writing it down as verb + noun.

*The same formula is used for defining each step within a process, so you are going to get lots of practice at picking out your verbs and nouns. But don't worry, it becomes pretty effortless as you get into the habit. Doing it this way generally makes for clear and consistent processes that can be easily understood by whoever reads them. And if they can be easily understood, they are far more practical and likely to be used going forward.*



So we start by asking ourselves some questions. **Remember to turn to the back of the workbook for an example walkthrough that can help you along the way.**



1. What are you handling in this process? What is the 'thing' (noun) that you are creating, installing, submitting or in some other way changing the state of through this process? *(I've left a few lines in here to allow you to have a play around with a few ideas.)*

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2. What are you 'doing' with this 'thing' in this process? How are you changing this 'thing' in the process? Are you creating, installing or processing it or doing something else entirely?

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3. How can you frame this in terms of 'verb' + 'noun' to make sense and clearly define the process you are looking at? *Sometimes you may need to add a few words at the end of the 'verb' + 'noun' description, to make it clear exactly which of a number of similar processes you are looking at here.*

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## STEP 2: Identify the first step

Alright, now you know what end would usually be achieved by someone following the process we are looking at, we now look at the beginning of the process. Looking at the beginning and end of the process is really about defining the scope and limiting the size of what you are writing down.

This is a good thing. The scary thing about writing down processes is like the vertigo some people experience when they stand at the edge of a cliff looking over the ground below them. What can be overwhelming is seeing how much there is and how small the bit you are handling is in comparison. So at this point we make sure that we focus on the small bit first and get that right. We do not try and cope with everything in the business at once. One step at a time...

First we start having a think about what is the first activity that someone tasked with completing the process will need to do, and have a go at framing it as 'verb' + 'noun'.



4. What is the first thing someone would need to do when they are tasked with this process? Do they open up a computer file? Do they check or open up their toolkit? Do they travel to another location? *Don't stress about getting this 100% correct during this first run through. It may well change and that is absolutely fine. Having a starting point for refining things in Stage 2 is what we want.*

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5. How can you frame this in terms of 'verb' + 'noun' to make sense and clearly define the process step you are looking at? *Sometimes you may need to add a few words at the end of the 'verb' + 'noun' description, to make it clear exactly which of a number of similar process steps you are looking at here.*

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### STEP 3: Identify the trigger

While we are thinking about the front end of the process, we can also think about the practicalities of what triggers the process. This is useful because it starts to ease us into the detail of the process, and at the same time helps us to reflect a little on how this process fits into the bigger picture of business activities. Not that we want to be overwhelmed by everything that is carried out by the business. But we do want to be aware of some of the dependencies between this and other processes and be ready to break this one apart into multiple processes if it starts to seem too big and unwieldy.

Broadly speaking, there are several types of triggers to choose from. They are broken down even further when you get to the next question, but as an overview:

**Time-based triggers** apply where a process commences when a certain time /date is reached or where a certain time period has elapsed. For example, if a process must happen on the last day of every month or every six hours.

**Event-based triggers** apply where a process commences after another event has happened. For example, if a customer comes up to the counter to pay for a product, or if an order has been placed. These events may be outside of the control of your organisation (e.g. a customer taking an action), or may be as a result of a process already carried out by your organisation (e.g. one of your staff members creates an order for a customer).

**Criteria-based triggers** could also be seen as event-based triggers, but are worth thinking about in their own right. Criteria-based triggers apply where a process commences when a certain set of criteria are met. For example, if the inventory level of a certain product you stock has dropped to a certain quantity and has a certain level of turnover, then the process to order new stock commences. In this sort of example, you would do well to make sure a process exists for identifying and notifying someone in the organisation that the criteria have been met (either through a time-based or event-based trigger), but we do not need to worry about that for now. Try to identify any criteria-based triggers in this step and then you can change and improve them later if need be.



6. What type of thing (trigger) should get this process happening? *Circle whichever one you think applies:*

- A. A certain time / date is reached
- B. A certain amount of time has elapsed since the process last happened
- C. A notification is received that it is time for the process to happen again
- D. An external event happens (initiated by customer, regulatory authority etc)
- E. A notification is received that an external event has happened
- F. Another process / process step within your organisation is completed
- G. A notification is received that another process / process step within your organisation is completed
- H. A set of one or more criteria are met
- I. A notification is received that a set of one or more criteria are met

7. You have had a think about what type of trigger commences your process. What is the specific trigger that applies to your process? *(As in, should the process happen at 9am on Monday and Fridays, or does your book-keeper, Sharlene, let you know that your next BAS statement is due?)*

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8. *For the trigger we actually frame this in terms of 'noun' + 'verb'. It is switched around to help emphasise that this is what activity had to happen **before** the process commenced. How can you frame this in terms of 'noun' + 'verb' to make sense and clearly define the trigger that applies? Once again, do not get too hung up on the phrasing, just get something down on paper that can be refined in Stage 2.*

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## **STEP 4: Break down the steps**

If you've now got your end point in sight and your starting point clear, then now is the time to fill in the important gap in between – how you actually carry out the process!

What we are doing here now to work through the process is two-fold, just like it was when you were identifying the first process step. Firstly, you are trying to work out at each step 'what happens next?' Secondly, you are trying to frame each step into a summary that makes sense to you and other people who will be improving the process with you. The idea is to make the process and its improvement as clear and unambiguous as possible. Once again we will be using the 'verb' + 'noun' formula, which hopefully will be starting to feel a bit more natural for you. Believe me, this really is about making it easier for you, not just being bossed around by an English grammar pedant!

I'll say it again - at this stage we are not looking for perfection. Your aim is to get as much useful information down on paper (or on the screen... but don't underestimate the value of using paper or, even better, a whiteboard to play around with your process) so that you have something real to improve. It is really hard to improve any process of more than about 5 steps when all the information is just stored in your head, and nigh on impossible if you have more than one person involved in the conversation.

This also means that we are focussing on the 'happy path'. I know... it's such a cheerful term! By this I mean the path along which you expect things to go and without thinking about any exceptions to the rule. Stage 2 is the time to get caught up in the more colourful routes that the process-users can take, but for now we will stick with the easy way.

In terms of detail, you really have to work this out for yourself and the more you do the easier it will get to judge! If it is a highly technical process then a lot of detailed steps are to be expected. If it is a process that should be fairly straightforward, but for quality control purposes you need to make sure that everyone is doing some key steps within the bigger process, then maybe it will not need so much detail. Just put something down on paper and it will soon become pretty obvious if you need to take it up or down a level.

### *To Avoid Derailment...*

During this step, if not before, you will probably start coming up against some knowledge gaps, questions or other ideas which might be in danger of giving you a distraction from just getting on with writing up your process.

Now is not the time to follow up any of these worthwhile thoughts. Sure, if you have started breaking down the steps and have realised that you have no clue whatsoever about how this process currently happens, then it is a pretty good sign that you do not have access to the right information or do not have the right people involved. In that case, yes, best to stop and sort that out.

However, if you are generally getting through the process, but are identifying bits and pieces in the detail that are derailing you, just write them down and come back to them in Stage 2. This includes any issues, risks, opportunities and questions which come up as you have your first go at writing down the process.



9. Use the template on the next page to note down the **R**isks, **I**ssues, **Q**uestions and **O**pportunities you pick up as you go through breaking down your process. If you need more room, duplicate the page.
10. On the following page is a template to help you bring your answers to Questions 3, 5 and 8 into the one spot (in the yellow highlighted spaces in the template) and work your way through the other steps in your process. Feel free to use this template (it may be worth making multiple copies if you are anticipating lots of moving things around!), or have a go at drawing it out yourself on some butcher's paper or the whiteboard. The column on the left hand side is for your initial go at writing something down for each process step, while the column on the right is where we want you 'verb' + 'noun' process step name to be filled out.












**Risks, Issues, Questions and Opportunities Register Template**

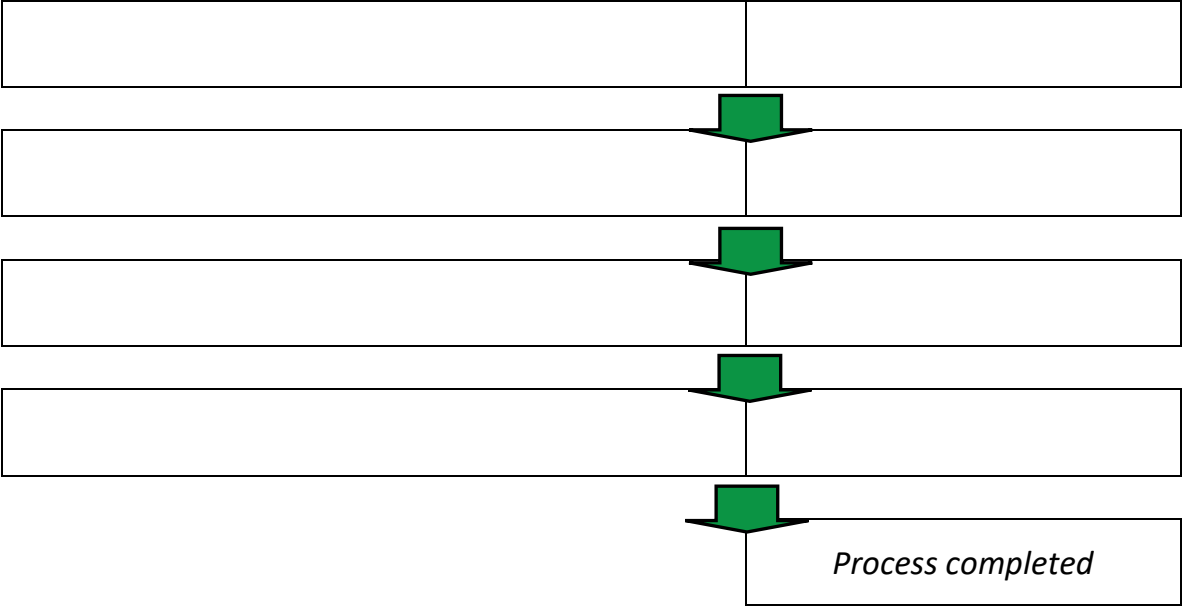
<b>R / I / Q / O</b>	<b>Summary / Notes</b>

*Process Step Break-down Template*

Process Name (Q3):

Trigger (Q8):

<i><b>What is the next Step?</b></i>	<i><b>In Verb + Noun format?</b></i>
<i><b>Q4</b></i>	<i><b>Q5</b></i>
	
	
	
	
	
	
	
	
	
	
	



## STEP 5: Describe each step

You should now have a huge smile on your face, because you have just completed the hardest part of creating a process. You have identified and made a coherent chain of events that happen in the course of a process being carried out. It may not be perfect, but you have a starting point to discuss with other people.

Now it is time to capture a bit more detail about what happens in this process. In this step we are trying to flesh out a bit more detail about:

- Who the responsible person/s are for carrying out each process step
- How they go about carrying out each process steps, including what they need to particularly consider / be aware of
- What systems, inputs and outputs are currently involved in each process step

The amount of detail is once again going to be up to you, but I suggest that, for this step, you imagine that the person who will be reading this is someone new to the position but highly qualified for it. As an example, if a highly qualified person for the role is likely to have a decent working knowledge of the Microsoft Office suite and standard physical office infrastructure, you will usually not need to provide detailed advice on how to print documents or create a new Word document.



11. Use the template on the next page to describe how each process step is carried out, including the responsible person and involved systems, inputs and outputs. The yellow highlights again show previously completed information.

*Process Step Description Template*

Process Name:

Trigger:

<b>Step</b>	<b>Process Step (In Verb + Noun format)</b>	<b>Responsible Person</b>	<b>Process Step Description</b>	<b>Available systems, inputs and outputs</b>
1	<input type="text"/>			
2	<input type="text"/>			
3	<input type="text"/>			
4	<input type="text"/>			
5	<input type="text"/>			
6	<input type="text"/>			
7	<input type="text"/>			
8	<input type="text"/>			
9	<input type="text"/>			
10	<input type="text"/>			

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11				
12				
13				
14				
15				

*Process completed*



## Final Words

Nice work! If you have completed all the exercises in this workbook you have an EXCELLENT starting point for making your processes better and more practical.

If you have been working through a process that is currently happening, then what you have completed is commonly known in the business analysis field as the 'As Is' or the 'Current State'. We have only done this for the happy path though, so I would encourage you to investigate a bit deeper through the process improvement stage. That is where we take a better look at what is happening in there, and not only identify where some of the process steps don't always go to plan, but also try to improve them.

If you have been putting down your first thoughts about a NEW process that has never been carried out in your organisation, then there is no 'As Is' or 'Current State'. What you have actually done is start putting down the solid foundations of your 'To Be' or 'Future State', which should be just as satisfying.

Hopefully you are now feeling confident about writing down the key processes in your organisation and can see how, if done correctly, it can benefit you and your organisation. If you are in a place where key jobs you are tasked with are carried out ad hoc, then please try these steps out in your own work and see how it goes. You will not be disappointed! And please feel free to share the 18 reasons why your staff or colleagues should be writing down what they do with others in your organisation.



For further information about Superior Business Analysis and the other resources that we have available – including more practical guidance on how to go to the next stage and start improving your processes - please visit [www.superiorbusinessanalysis.com](http://www.superiorbusinessanalysis.com).

## Example Walkthrough – Sales Counter in a Lolly Shop

### Background

In this example you are the boss of a lolly shop selling the most colourful range of fruit chews ever made. Orange and banana, lime and kiwi fruit, avocado and pomegranate, date and dragon fruit... What an incredible range!

In fact, that's what the owner of your lolly shop chain, Ultimate Indulgences, is all about: licensing franchises to franchisees who will be the ultimate in lollies – the ultimate destinations for all connoisseurs and lovers of sweets. You sell fruit chews. The franchise the next suburb over sells lollipops. The franchise in the Sydney CBD has the biggest range of fudge you have ever seen.

Ultimate Indulgences is a pretty special sort of chain, not just because of its range and yumminess. It's also because Wally Sweetstuff, the chain owner, runs a tight ship and has set some pretty high flying goals for his stores that he expects to be met.

Wally Sweetstuff wants Ultimate Indulgences franchises to:

- be profitable,
- have the biggest range of their chosen sweet out of any store in the country, and
- increase the interest of consumers in exotic gourmet sweets.

In order to meet Wally Sweetstuff's goals and retain your franchise licence you know that you have to really up your game. This includes making sure your staff are very clear on what they do and how, so you are now going through the process of identifying, writing down, improving and making practical the critical processes for your store.

First up, you know that an integral part of the customer experience you provide and the income you generate comes from the customer service you provide in the shop. You know that there are a lot of different activities to look at in this area, but a key one is about what happens when a customer comes up to the counter to make a sale. You decide to write down what is currently happening at the sales counter to improve consistency amongst your front of house staff and start looking at ways to do better. Let's use this as an example to work through the questions in the workbook.

**Step 1: Define the Process**

1. What are you handling in this process? What is the 'thing' (noun) that you are creating, installing, submitting or in some other way changing the state of through this process?

One or more fruit chews, or whatever other related goods / products we have in the store which the customer wants to buy / purchase. 'A sale' / 'purchase'

2. What are you 'doing' with this 'thing' in this process? How are you changing this 'thing' in the process? Are you creating, installing or processing it or doing something else entirely?

Selling it / processing it.

3. How can you frame this in terms of 'verb' + 'noun' to make sense and clearly define the process you are looking at?

Sell Goods / Process sale / Process customer purchase at counter

**Step 2: Identify the First Step**

4. What is the first thing someone would need to do when they are tasked with this process? Do they open up a computer file? Do they check or open up their toolkit? Do they travel to another location?

Need to make sure they are at or get straight over to the counter and make the customer feel welcome.

5. How can you frame this in terms of 'verb' + 'noun' to make sense and clearly define the process step you are looking at?

Greet customer at counter.

**Step 3: Identify the Trigger/s**

6. What type of thing (trigger) should get this process happening? *Circle whichever one you think applies:*

- A. A certain time / date is reached
- B. A certain amount of time has elapsed since the process last happened
- C. A notification is received that it is time for the process to happen again
- D. An external event happens (initiated by customer, regulatory authority

etc)

- E. A notification is received that an external event has happened**
- F. Another process / process step within your organisation is completed
- G. A notification is received that another process / process step within your organisation is completed

- H. A set of one or more criteria are met
- I. A notification is received that a set of one or more criteria are met
7. You have had a think about what type of trigger commences your process. What is the specific trigger that applies to your process?  
There are times when no one will be behind the counter and so the trigger is actually when someone is notified (can see or is told) that 'a customer is coming up to or at the counter with a purchase'.
8. How can you frame this in terms of 'noun' + 'verb' to make sense and clearly define the trigger that applies?  
Customer with purchase noticed at the counter.

#### Step 4: Break down the Steps

9. Use the template on the next page to note down the **R**isks, **I**ssues, **Q**uestions and **O**pportunities you pick up as you go through breaking down your process. If you need more room, duplicate the page.
10. On the following page is a template to help you bring your answers to Questions 3, 5 and 8 into the one spot (in the yellow highlighted spaces in the template) and work your way through the other steps in your process. Feel free to use this template (it may be worth making multiple copies if you are anticipating lots of moving things around!), or have a go at drawing it out yourself on some butcher's paper or the whiteboard. The column on the left hand side is for your initial go at writing something down for each process step, while the column on the right is where we want you 'verb' + 'noun' process step name to be filled out.

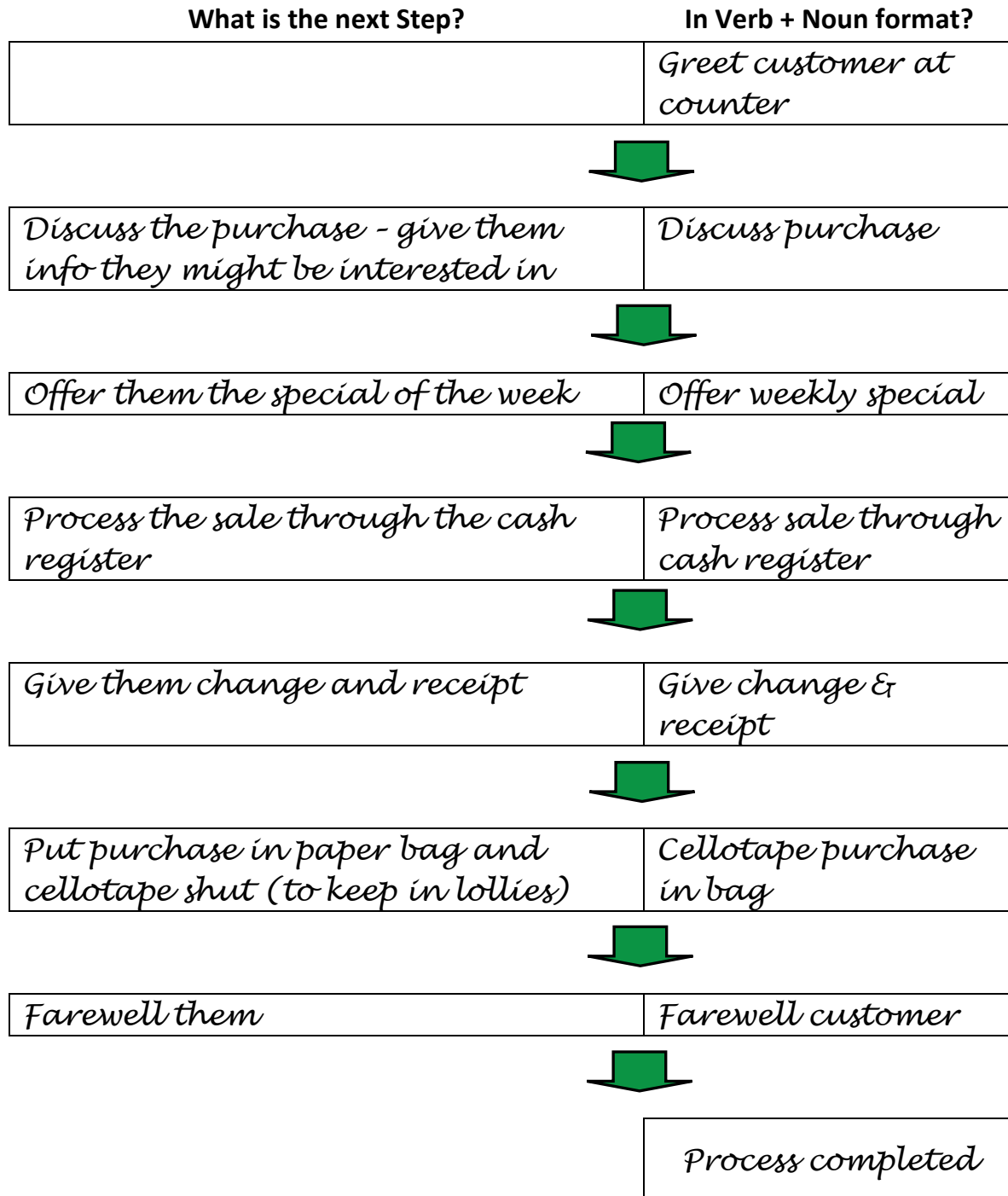
**Risks, Issues, Questions and Opportunities Register Template**

<b>R/I/Q/O</b>	<b>Summary / Notes</b>
Question	Need to make sure someone is always quickly made aware when a customer is ready to make a purchase - does this mean we need some sort of bell / alarm to notify someone in the back that a customer has arrived in the store? Or put a bell or something more fun at the counter for customer to let staff know they need attention? Or a policy / procedure / training about how to keep an eye on and engage with customers while they're in the store BEFORE they're ready to make a sale. Don't want to keep customers waiting at the counter if that could be pre-empted.
Opportunity	Any fun way for letting customers get staff attention?
Question	Should all staff members ever be out the back, or do we need a policy requiring at least one staff member to always be in the store?
Issue	Wally has complained that our branding is not visible when paper bags cello-taped shut
Risk	Instructions at the counter for using cash register / EFTPOS are not clear enough
Issue	Low uptake of weekly sale offer - often not relevant to purchase
Issue	The product folder at the desk and our website do not have comprehensive information about each fruit chew - big gaps and sometimes out of date
Question	Might it be helpful to give staff members a spiel about the special each week - or maybe do away with specials and ask staff to always recommend something similar to the customer's chosen purchase?
Issue	Receipts in a mess at the end of the day - take ages to sort through.
Issue	Time consuming at point of sale where have to find different barcodes for each fruit chew

*Process Step Break-down Template*

Process Name (Q3): *Process customer purchase at counter* \_\_\_\_\_.

Trigger (Q8): *Customer with purchase noticed at the counter* \_\_\_\_\_.



**Step 5: Describe each Step**

1. Use the template on the next page to describe how each process step is carried out, including the responsible person and involved systems, inputs and outputs. The yellow highlights again show previously completed information.



*Process Step Description Template*

Process Name: *Process customer purchase at counter* .

Trigger: *Customer with purchase noticed at the counter* .

<b>Step</b>	<b>Process Step (In Verb + Noun format)</b>	<b>Responsible Person</b>	<b>Process Step Description</b>	<b>Available systems, inputs and outputs</b>
1	<i>Greet customer at counter</i>	<i>On shift retail assistant</i>	<i>Smile, say hi to the customer and make eye contact.</i>	
2	<i>Discuss purchase</i>	<i>On shift retail assistant</i>	<i>Have a look at the purchase and ask the customer who the purchase is for. If you have opportunity, share your knowledge about the product or let the customer know where they can find out more about it.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Product folder at the counter has history and information about some of the fruit chews.</i></li> <li>• <i>Our website has some information that customer can check out.</i></li> </ul>
3	<i>Offer special</i>	<i>On shift retail assistant</i>	<i>Let customer know what is on special for the week and point to it at the counter</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Special always on display on the counter.</i></li> </ul>
4	<i>Process sale through cash register</i>	<i>On shift retail assistant</i>	<i>Scan purchase/s including weekly special and make sure any specials registered on the screen. When you print the receipt store it in the drawer and</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Product folder has barcodes for each fruit chew</i></li> <li>• <i>Cash register</i></li> <li>• <i>EFTPOS machine - manual card swiping machine in backroom if needed.</i></li> </ul>

			<i>ask the customer if they want a copy.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Receipt paper</i></li> <li>• <i>Detailed Point of Sale instructions in drawer under cash register</i></li> <li>• <i>Our copy of receipts - need to be kept</i></li> </ul>
5	<i>Give change &amp; receipt</i>	<i>On shift retail assistant</i>	<i>Give the change (usually count it out to the customer) and receipt to the customer straight away.</i>	
6	<i>Sellotape purchase in bag</i>	<i>On shift retail assistant</i>	<i>Make sure all products are put in the paper bag and cellotape it shut so the lollies do not fall out before you hand it to the customer.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Paper Bags</i></li> <li>• <i>cellotape</i></li> </ul>
7	<i>Farewell customer</i>	<i>On shift retail assistant</i>	<i>Make eye contact and say goodbye to the customer and that you hope to see them again sometime.</i>	

## Next Steps

You now have a first draft of the current process that staff are using to conduct sales as the counter and a list of questions, issues, risks and opportunities that have already been picked up. This is a great place to start with minor improvements and making sure that all staff are following the basic process – in this example a lot of emphasis is on courtesy and making customers feel welcome and so you do not want one or two staff members disregarding this and doing their own thing.

If you – like in this example – have a lot of opportunities for improvement picked up, you are likely to want to focus on a more deliberate process improvement exercise though. Please visit [www.superiorbusinessanalysis.com](http://www.superiorbusinessanalysis.com) for more practical guidance on how to go to the next stage.

