

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT | QUICK CARD CI-02

One improvement a month

Fifteen minutes, one irritation, and the questions a good coach would ask you.



The practice

Every business has a small collection of things that do not quite work: the template everyone edits by hand, the client who sends their records in three instalments, the shared drive where finding last year's proposal takes longer than writing a new one. None of them is worth a meeting. Together, they quietly cost the business a day a week.

The Model for Improvement, widely used in the NHS, asks three questions: what are we trying to accomplish, how will we know that a change is an improvement, and what change can we make that will result in improvement? Test the change on a small scale first, keep it only if it works, and repeat every month. In a study of nearly 12,000 work diaries, the single most important contributor to a good day at work was making progress on meaningful work.

This month's improvement

The irritation we chose

Owner, and date to report back

What are we trying to accomplish?

How will we know it is an improvement?
(one measure)

What change will we test, with whom, and
for how long?

What happened?

Keep, adapt or drop?

An accountancy practice logged 23 irritations in a month. Testing a checklist and two reminders with ten clients cut the wait for complete records from 18 days to 11.

Try this this week

Start an irritation log: a shared page where anyone can note what got in the way of their work, and how often. Add three of your own today.

Coach yourself

Set aside fifteen minutes where nobody can interrupt you, and answer in writing. An answer looks surprisingly different once it is on paper.

G

GOAL

If twelve irritations were gone a year from now, what would be different?

R

REALITY

What gets in the way every week, and what happened to the last things we tried to fix?

O

OPTIONS

Which irritation would be easiest to test, and how would we know it worked?

W

WILL

Where will the log live, who will choose the first improvement, and when?

If you catch yourself saying...

You hear yourself say	Try asking instead
<i>"We don't have time to improve things"</i>	How much time does this irritation cost each week?
<i>"If we do it, we do it properly"</i>	What is the smallest version I could test this month?
<i>"That's just how it is here"</i>	When did it start, and who decided it would stay?

ONE HARDER QUESTION

Whose irritations are we fixing: mine, or the team's?

Keep it going

Improvement habits stall in the first busy month. Give one person the log, make it a ten-minute item in a monthly meeting, and put check dates in the diary: 3, 6 and 12 months from today.

When to get help

If a change affects people's hours, roles or contracts, talk to your HR or employment adviser first. If the team is exhausted and the log is endless, deal with the workload before the improvements.

What a coach adds

This card gives you the questions. What it cannot do is notice which one you avoided. It is one of the SMARTer practice cards, covering the ten key areas of a business that sells expertise.



Talk yours through with me: book a Discovery Call at smarterentrepreneurs.co.uk

No pitch, no pressure, and you'll leave with something useful either way.