SMARTer Entrepreneurs

FREE QUICK CARD

IMPROVEMENT I 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 shared drive where last year's proposal takes longer to find than to rewrite. None is worth a meeting. Together they quietly cost the business a day a week.

The Model for Improvement, a long-established method from health care, keeps it simple: what you want to fix, how you will know it worked, and a small change to try first. An IT services business sent a self-service reset link to one client's users; password tickets fell from 22 a month to 6. Keep a fix only if the number moves, and do one a month.

This month's fix

The irritation (and how often it happens)
What we want to fix. For example: "Resets don't need an engineer"
How we will know it worked. For example: "Reset tickets a month"
The small change. For example: "A reset link, one client, four weeks"
Owner, and date to report back

Pick from a month of everyone's irritations, not just yours.

Try this this week

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

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE CARD

Coach yourself

Fill in the front first. Then take fifteen minutes with these, in writing.

1. Is your measure a number you can count this week, before the change?
2. Is your small change small enough to try with one client or one team this month?
3. Whose irritation did you pick: yours, or the team's?
4. What happened to the last fix you made? Is it still in use?
5. Which irritation would your team pick first, if you asked them?

If you catch yourself saying...

You hear yourself say	Try asking instead
"We don't have time to improve things"	How much time does this irritation cost each week?
"If we do it, we do it properly"	What is the smallest version you could try this month?
"I'll sort it myself tonight"	What would it mean for the team to fix it?

ONE HARDER QUESTION

What irritation have you been meaning to fix for more than a year, and what is it costing you to leave it?

Keep it going

Make choosing the month's fix a fixed ten-minute item in a meeting that already happens. Put three dates in the diary: 3, 6 and 12 months from today. If a month slips, choose a smaller fix.

When to get help

Most fixes need no specialist. If a change affects people's hours, roles or contracts, talk to your employment adviser first.

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 your SMARTer coach and mentor: book a Discovery Call at smarterentrepreneurs.co.uk

Quick card CI-02 v2, October 2026. Sources: The Model for Improvement (Institute for Healthcare Improvement); Amabile and Kramer, Harvard Business Review (2011). © 2026 SMARTer Entrepreneurs. Free to share with other business owners, unchanged and with this notice.