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**Arianna Campbell** • Dec. 17, 2019



Many firms are looking for new ways to leverage technology to save time, scale their services and increase profitability. However, when those firms operate daily with processes that are disorganized, lack consistency and are ineffective, even the very best technologies will fail.

Here are five ways inconsistent processes are costing your firm.

## Differing levels of client service

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be difficult to overcome.

Clients want to trust the firms they work with, and trust and consistency go hand-in-hand. Consistent processes make clients more willing to engage your firm for multiple services and more likely to recommend your firm to others.

### Training time

When processes are inconsistent, training your staff will take longer and be less effective. People will be frustrated when they learn one way during their initial training, only to find out that things are done differently once they actually start working. Typically, this leads to disengagement and higher turnover.

Undocumented, inconsistent processes become dependent on the attitude, experience and wherewithal of the person performing them. When processes are consistent and your team follows them, you can measure performance and hold people accountable.

Some firms or departments may believe they're too busy to focus on consistency. But unless you invest the time to develop processes, establish a performance management structure and train employees properly, new hires will be confused, your staff will suffer from low morale, and your firm will experience low productivity.

### Turnaround time

Without consistent processes, your firm's overall turnaround time and ability to get work out the door will suffer. Many firms experience symptoms of inconsistent processes and believe them to be simply a fact of life in an accounting firm. This includes:

- Waiting on client data to trickle in

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Simply put, you cannot automate an inconsistent process. Automation can be very promising for firms. When done right, it offers improved speed and quality. It helps to reduce costs by cutting hours spent on manual tasks while adding accuracy.

But before processes can be automated, they need to be consistent and documented. If you try to automate a process that is undefined and inconsistent, you'll get chaos. You won't be able to leverage your existing technology or achieve the same return on investment. Instead, your technology will cost you money.

Technology cannot replace sound methodology and a culture focused on continuous improvement. Before investing in new technology or RPA, create quality processes that are worth automating.

## **Mergers and acquisitions**

M&A activity is a vital component of a firm's ability to hit aggressive growth goals, but those efforts will be a lot more challenging if your firm is weighed down by inconsistent processes. Managing one firm with multiple variations is tough enough, but trying to bring another firm into it is chaotic.

Every aspect of the merger or acquisition, from culture to integrating people and technology, will be more complicated and more time consuming than it would be if you had consistent processes.

Remember, consistent processes aren't just for your compliance services, but throughout your business. This includes human resources, billing, onboarding new clients and new hires, client acceptance and more. Take a good look at these areas and evaluate the number of variations and exceptions you're tolerating. On an individual level, they may seem minor. But on the whole, you're losing effectiveness and hurting your bottom line.

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