

HOW TO BUILD A SYSTEM FOR ANYTHING

WHY SYSTEMS?

Systems make everything easier! They allow you to think less about each task in your business, so you have the energy to think about the big picture and new goals. They also ensure that you consistently provide a great experience for your customers and readers. Systems also let you occasionally step away from your business, while everything runs smoothly. For example, if you have a blogging system of writing new posts (or making products) every Monday, it's easy to work ahead and just write an extra post (or make extra products), so you can take the next week off.

I have been a long-time fan of systems and I've been writing about it for 5 years! You can read more about why I love systems and the ones I've used over the years, in the following posts:

- ★ [Why systems?](#) (2010)
- ★ [My first foray into systems in my yarn biz](#) (2010)
- ★ [In which systems lead to beach time](#) (2010)
- ★ [The systems I used to blog daily](#) (2012)
- ★ [What it takes to go on vacation](#) (2014)

WHAT NEEDS A SYSTEM?

This is a *partial* list:

- ★ Shipping products
- ★ Ordering supplies
- ★ Listing a new item in your shop
- ★ Making an item
- ★ Photographing your items
- ★ Getting ready for a craft show
- ★ Labeling your products
- ★ Sending press releases
- ★ Contacting new retailers for a wholesale relationship
- ★ Submitting your work for editorial review
- ★ Communicating with a customer after a sale
- ★ Marketing (revisit *Craft Your Marketing* to make a system for your marketing)
- ★ Accounting (doing your monthly numbers)
- ★ Answering the same question on email (make a template!)
- ★ Managing custom orders - taking requests + filling them

THE STEPS TO MAKING A SYSTEM FOR ANY AREA OF YOUR BUSINESS:

1. Identify what you want the system to do.

If this system was running smoothly, what would happen?

What do you currently do?

What part of that doesn't work?

2. Identify WHEN this system happens.

Once a week? Once a month? When there's a sale? Or after 5 sales?

What is going to trigger this? Will you do it at a certain time or day or will an event, like a sale or a craft show, trigger it?

3. Automate, batch or make a checklist.

What parts of this could happen automatically?

Tip: Both [Zapier](#) and [IFTTT](#) can set up apps to do things automatically. For example, I have Square sales trigger an entry in a Google Sheet (so I can easily add these to my monthly accounting); emails that I "star" are automatically sent to Evernote; sales from Paypal can be automatically imported into a Mailchimp list.

What part of this could be batched? Can you cut down on steps by doing a bunch of this thing at once? For example, if you have to print shipping labels, get out tape and packaging, etc. every time you ship something, what if you waited and shipped just once a week?

If you were teaching someone else to do this, what are the steps you would include? Turn this into a checklist! I store my checklists in Evernote, so I can access them from anywhere.

4. Implement and tweak.

Start implementing your system the *VERY* next time the triggering event happens. Set it up in your calendar or app, or whatever technology is needed. Then, when it happens next, follow your checklist perfectly and pay attention: is there a step missing from the checklist? Is something not clear? Is this the *MOST* effective way of doing it? What would make it more effective?

Take what you've learned and apply it to the very next time you use the system. Keep tweaking and commit to using your system every time. Within a month or so, it'll become second nature!

Bonus! Once you have the system in place, it'll be very easy (and fool-proof!) to hand this off to an intern, friend, or employee!

WORKSHEET: BUILD YOUR SYSTEM

1. Identify what you want the system to do.

What is the system you need?

If this system were running smoothly, what would happen?

What do you currently do?

What part(s) of that doesn't work?

2. Identify WHEN this system will kick in:

What is going to trigger the system?

3. Automate, batch or make a checklist.

Could you automate this in some way?

What part of this could be batched?

What are the steps?

Turn this into a checklist!

4. Implement and tweak!

Is there a step missing from the checklist?

Is this the MOST effective way of doing it? What would make it more effective?