



MODULE 03:
**BUSINESS
OPERATIONS**



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LESSON 03

Business Operations

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY BUSINESS OPERATIONS?

📖 **Business operations** are the day-to-day activities and tasks that keep a business running. They enable you to produce goods or deliver services, serve customers effectively, and generate revenue.

Examples:

Production / manufacturing operations 🛠️

Service delivery operations 🖐️

Logistics and distribution operations 🚚

Sales and marketing operations 🛒

Accounting and finance operations 💰

THE FOUR CORE ELEMENTS OF BUSINESS OPERATIONS



Location

Physical location from where you will operate.

Cut costs and maximise revenue.

For example, compare a solopreneur working remotely on a tropical beach to a large corporation that needs offices, warehouses, and retail stores - all with adequate parking and facilities.



Technology

Tools used for operational tasks.

Stay up to date - use innovative tech to drive operational excellence & sustainability and boost your competitiveness.

Includes things varying from multi-million rand machinery to subscription-based software-as-a-service (SaaS) platforms.



People

The cornerstone of any organisation.

As the business grows, you will focus more on development and others will take over the day-to-day tasks.

Work out what employees are needed, how many, their contract type, etc.

Ensure morale & productivity.



Processes

Clear protocols for the recurring tasks that keep businesses afloat – and the backbone of *BizOps*.

Use to boost efficiency and productivity and stimulate continuous improvements.

Includes systems that are documented and used to increase consistency and train new team members.



LESSON 03.1

Prepare Operational Excellence

How to Optimise Your Business Operations

Optimising business operations means **doing more with less**.

In other words, improving efficiency, reducing waste, and increasing output without sacrificing quality.

OPTIMISATION PRINCIPLES

1. Use data to make decisions
2. Improve existing processes
3. Stay abreast of industry trends
4. Align operations with core competencies
5. Allocate resources intentionally
6. Set SMART goals

Operational improvement is ongoing. Set long-term goals, track performance regularly, and adjust as needed. This continuous feedback loop reflects the principle of Kaizen, or continuous improvement.

(Read 📖 *The Toyota Way* by operations expert Jeffrey K. Liker. for more on Kaizen)

Complete the analysis worksheets for each of the four operational elements on the next pages...

OPTIMISING OPERATIONS FROM A LOCATION PERSPECTIVE

 Location refers to the physical place from where you will operate.

 The optimisation goal is to cut costs and maximise revenue.

Best Practice	Considerations...
Use data to make decisions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you need a brick-and-mortar location? (e.g., retail store vs drop-shipping business) Where are your clients and prospects? What are your space requirements? (e.g., storage and/or parking for staff/customers) Do you need to be in a high-traffic location, close to a transport hub, etc? Do you need to be close to where employees live? What is the feedback from your team?
 Your answers here	
Improve existing location.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can you update your layout to make workflows more efficient? Would erecting carports/ renovating bathrooms/ installing quality storage etc. offer a good ROI?
Stay abreast of trends in your industry.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are there new location models you could use? (e.g., shared business hubs or work from home) How has consumer behaviour changed? (e.g., embraced online shopping)
Align with core competencies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How would a change of location impact the unique value you offer your clients? Who would take care of maintenance etc.? Are your team members tech-savvy enough to properly use WFH technologies? Would your employees need valid drivers' licences to get to work and/or carry out your main deliverables?
Allocate resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have you factored in paying people to do cleaning, catering, security etc? Do you have the money to upgrade the space? What is the cost of issuing reliable laptops, cell phones, etc if going the WFH route?
Set measurable goals to track improvement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What operational improvements would you like to see as a result of optimising your location? Are your goals S.M.A.R.T.? How will you know whether you have achieved those goals?


OPTIMISING OPERATIONS FROM A TECHNOLOGY PERSPECTIVE


📄 Technology refers to the tools used for operational tasks and includes things varying from multi-million-rand machinery to subscription-based software-as-a-service or even free online tools.


🎯 The optimisation goal is to use innovative tech to drive operational excellence and sustainability, and thereby boost your competitiveness.

Best Practice	Considerations..
Use data to make decisions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will investing in new technology justify the cost? Can you afford not to have the latest? • How will your business benefit from each unit? • What is the feedback from your team?
👉 Your answers here	
Improve existing technology.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you update your existing tech to make it more efficient? • Does the technology need upgrading? Or do your staff need training to get the most out of it?
Stay abreast of trends in your industry.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What tech do you need to be competitive? (e.g., 3-D printing, AI options, buying software vs SaaS) • What level of tech do your clients and prospects expect? (e.g., bots for 24/7 availability, self-service platforms)
Align with core competencies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would a change of technologies alter the unique value you offer your clients? • How much training on new tech is required? • Who will maintain/ service the technology? (e.g., hire an IT person vs include support in package)
Allocate resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you have the time to train your staff? Can you afford not to? • How much does appropriate training cost? • What kind of investment is needed to purchase the tech? Are there other payment options? (e.g., renting, SaaS) • What are the knock-on expenses? (e.g., solar generated power to keep the tech running, insurance)
Set measurable goals to track improvement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What operational improvements would you like to see as a result of optimising your technology? • Are your goals S.M.A.R.T.? How will you know whether you have achieved those goals?

OPTIMISING OPERATIONS FROM A PEOPLE PERSPECTIVE

 People are the cornerstone of any organisation. They could be employees, part-timers and freelancers, or even contractors you outsource to.

 The optimisation goal is to be able to hand over the day-to-day running of your business so that you, as the owner, can focus more on development and also allow yourself to step away.

Best Practice	Considerations...
Use data to make decisions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What skills and talents does your business need? • How many employees will fulfil its needs without overworking or over-hiring them? • Does your industry experience seasonal fluctuations that impact staffing requirements? • Should your team be made up of full-time, part-time, or contracted individuals?
 Your answers here	
Improve existing talent.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would additional training upskill your present team members? • What is the level of morale amongst your employees? • How could you improve their productivity? • What is the feedback from your team? • Do you schedule 360° reviews?
Stay abreast of trends in your industry.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are others in your field using remote contractors? (e.g., platforms like Fiverr and Upwork, virtual assistants) • Do employees in your industry expect to WFH, on-site, or in a blended model? • Is quiet quitting prevalent?
Align with core competencies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would a change of personnel affect the unique value you offer your clients? • This element is all about individual competencies! See more in Module 3 • Are your team members adequately skilled to do their jobs? • Do you have development plans in place? • What level of cross-functionality does your business have?
Allocate resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you afford adequate salaries and wages? • What about the knock-on expenses such as paid leave and benefits, not to mention extra tea, coffee, toilet paper? • How will you manage employees? (e.g., DIY vs hire or outsource HR specialists for hiring, onboarding, training, and development) • What is your budget for onboarding, training, kitting out new hires?
Set measurable goals to track improvement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What operational improvements would you like to see as a result of optimising the people element of your business? • Are your goals S.M.A.R.T.? • How will you know whether you have achieved those goals?

OPTIMISING OPERATIONS FROM A PROCESS PERSPECTIVE

📖 The backbone of business operations, processes are clear protocols for the recurring tasks that keep businesses afloat.

🔄 The optimisation goal is to increase efficiency, boost productivity, and stimulate continuous improvement.

Best Practice	Considerations...
Use data to make decisions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can you streamline your operations using processes? • How can you reduce errors? • What recurring tasks can you automate? • Do you have established processes for everything from developing products to scheduling social media posts? • What is the feedback from your team?
👉 Your answers here	
Improve existing processes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are your processes clearly defined? • Are your standard operating procedures used, or ignored? • Have you identified inefficiencies in your current processes?
Stay abreast of trends in your industry.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you guilty of an “if-it-ain’t-broke-don’t-fix-it” attitude? • Do your processes monitor and adapt to new legislation, economic changes, etc?
Align with core competencies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would updating processes impact the unique value you offer your clients? • Do you have processes to make onboarding easier? • Does your staff understand how the business works and how processes impact day-to-day tasks? • Are there processes that individuals need to be taught? • Is there someone who can take responsibility for establishing and/or documenting systems and processes?
Allocate resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who is responsible for establishing processes and systems? • Who will take responsibility for documenting them? • What are the costs of investing in automation tools? Can you afford not to?
Set measurable goals to track improvement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What operational improvements would you like to see as a result of optimising your processes? • Are your goals S.M.A.R.T.? • How will you know whether you have achieved those goals?

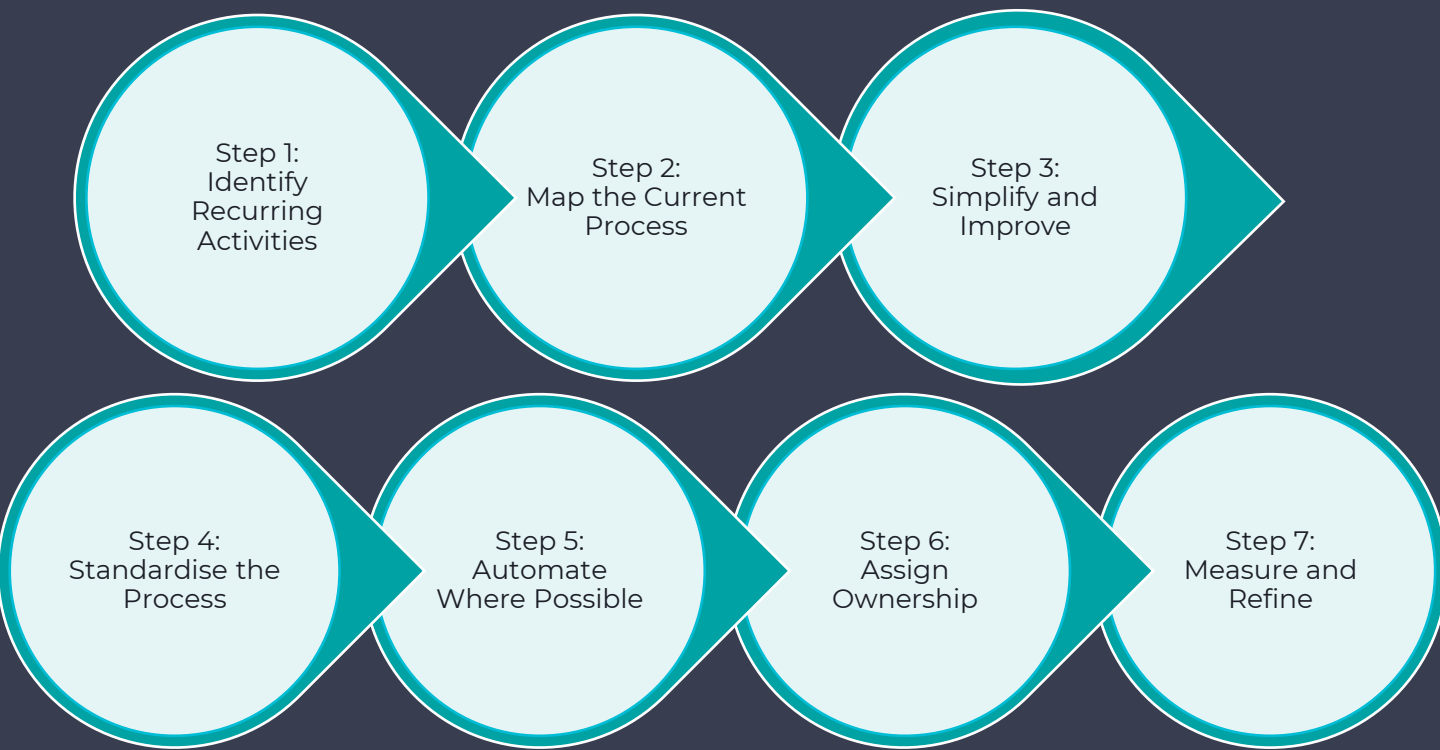
Design Systems for Peak Performance

Operational systems turn effort into results.

They reduce chaos, unlock productivity, and make growth sustainable.

By deliberately designing, documenting, and improving your systems, you move your business from survival mode to a position of control, confidence, and long-term success.

HOW TO DEVELOP EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT SYSTEMS



A photograph of two women in a professional setting. One woman with curly hair, wearing a yellow sweater, is holding a smartphone and showing it to another woman with straight hair, wearing a patterned top. They are both looking at the phone with interest. The background is a blurred office environment.

LESSON 03.3

Align Your Teams with Operations

■ An **organisational structure** defines how job tasks are formally divided, grouped, and coordinated. Structures may be more **mechanistic** (formal and hierarchical) or **organic** (flexible and collaborative). Most growing businesses use a blend of both.

STRUCTURING YOUR OPERATIONS

- Group roles by core business functions
- Assign clear ownership and accountability
- Keep hierarchies lean where possible
- Design teams that can scale as demand increases
- Encourage cross-functional collaboration
- Document roles, workflows, and responsibilities
- Review and adjust the structure as the business evolves

The goal is balance: enough structure to ensure efficiency and control, with enough flexibility to adapt to change.