

# myweeklymarketing.

**Janice Hostager:** 0:04

I'm Janice Hostager. After three decades in the marketing business and many years of being an entrepreneur, I've learned a thing or two about marketing. Join me as we talk about marketing, small business and life in between. Welcome to My Weekly Marketing. At the beginning of each new year, I love to start fresh. I order a new journal, a new calendar and find an excuse to spend some money on some fun things like sticky notes and markers. Because who doesn't like those? But with a business, it's important to start the process of planning a little before the new year begins. We need to start it now, which is mid-November when I'm recording this, or even earlier. I'm a planner by nature, but in the first couple of years in my first business, which was a design business, I was so head down trying to get projects done for my clients that I really didn't plan for the upcoming year. If business got slow, I would slap together a promotion and put it out there, knowing that it was not the right way to run a promotion. But when it's the last minute, your hands are tied right. I shudder to think about all the business I could have had if I had had systems and promotions in place. I left a lot of money on the table. So when you know better, you do better right, and I want the same for you. So for the next couple of episodes, I want to talk about planning for the new year, planning for marketing, for systems and for reaching your goals. If you want your business to grow, you need to take some steps to make that happen. Some of these are big steps, like hiring help when you need it, or planning your marketing promotions in advance, and setting up processes inside your business, even if it's just you and you don't have employees. That's where my guest, Julia Wolf, comes in. She's actually a Six Sigma Master, Black Belt, and she spent much of her life in the corporate world, but she's also been a small business owner and she's going to talk to us today about process mapping. Six Sigma, in case you don't know, is a set of tools and methodologies that improves businesses' quality. Six Sigma identifies inefficiencies and puts solutions in place to improve profitability. Now, you may wonder how that can benefit a small business. Basically, with Six Sigma principles, you, too, can streamline your business to help you reach your goals. Now, Julia is actually a very special guest. That's because, besides being an expert at processes and systems, Julia is also my sister when I was putting the show together. I couldn't think of a better guest to talk about all this, because she's been in the shoes of a small business owner and as a systems expert, and she also has the theme most organized house I have ever seen. You should see her pantry and her kitchen. So, without further delay, here's my sister, Julia, talking about process mapping. So hey, how are you today? I'm doing well, how about you? I'm doing just great. So explain to someone like me who's not familiar with the term process mapping what it is.

**Julia Wolf:** 3:17

Well, it's a good question. Process mapping is one of the most useful tools you can use to help your business understand not only what it does, but where you might find opportunities to improve it or save money or make things better for your customer. It's a way to actually take the words that you use and turn them into pictures. And that's important, right, because as we tend to work our business to stay today, we get hung up on details. Sometimes those details mask what might be a problem, might be an opportunity, and if we use a nice process map, whether it be simple or complex, that can help us to maybe understand what we need to change, how we can eliminate waste or even reduce cycle time and save money.

**Janice Hostager:** 4:23

Okay, the whole words into pictures thing kind of lost me a little bit, so tell me more about that.

**Julia Wolf:** 4:29

Well, we often use words to describe things you mean like. But you're like me, right, I'm more of a visual learner. I can look at a picture and understand things much more clearly than I can if I sit down and read it in a paragraph, right? So once you've got that picture of what you're doing, you have the opportunity to actually look at it in depth and kind of pick up things that might go undetected when we just run around in our busy worlds creating products or providing services or doing whatever it is we do.

**Janice Hostager:** 5:10

So I was thinking that this was more for processes with intercompany, right? So this is what we're talking about, right? So if we have something we need to do weekly, daily, annually, however frequently, we'd want to map that out, right? Is that where we're going with this?

**Julia Wolf:** 5:32

Well, it could be, and it certainly would be useful for doing that, but it can also be much more than that. It might be a definition and detail that really exemplifies how we provide services or products to our end customer. So, depending on how elaborate we get with our process map, it might in fact show things like costs, like delivery time, certainly who provides a service to us, who is our supplier. All those things can be incorporated into a process map. Now, not to confuse you, because process maps can be incredibly simple and in fact, the more simple maps are really excellent things that you can use to, for example, train new employees. So you sit down with them and say this is what we do first of all. Second of all, this is what your role is in that process. And third, do you have any questions

that would, in fact, come up as we sit with that new employee and talk to them about what they're going to be doing?

**Janice Hostager:** 6:49

Okay, so it's kind of a flow chart, would that be okay?

**Julia Wolf:** 6:54

It is a flow chart and, as I say, they can be very simple or very complex depending on what it is that you're trying to accomplish with the actual process map.

**Janice Hostager:** 7:07

So, applying it to a small business, like very small business, like maybe you have an employee or maybe you work with some contractors or maybe you don't, maybe it's just you and your business. What are some ways that you could utilize a process map?

**Julia Wolf:** 7:23

Well, look at it this way we all have processes, whether we recognize that fact or not. Right, all you get up and get ready for work in the morning is a process. It can be very sporadic or highly varied, but it's still a process, whether you recognize it or not. So, as a small business, you're probably struggling with well cost for one thing, of course. Second of all, getting things done on time, delivering to your customer what you said you'd deliver. All of those things may benefit from sitting down and saying, okay, what is it I'm going to do today, right, and what is it I'm going to do tomorrow? How are those things different? How do I understand what's happening?

**Janice Hostager:** 8:11

Okay, okay. So right now, as we're recording this episode, it's late November 2023, and many of us are planning for 2024. Personally, I invest a lot in planning my marketing, because that is kind of my main focus of my business. But how can process mapping help us when we plan for 2024?

**Julia Wolf:** 8:35

For 2024,. You might use a process map to determine, for example, where can I cut costs, example given say I produce a widget right, and I know that even if I'm doing that myself, I take certain steps to do that If I don't fully understand what those steps are and where costs come in to each of those steps, whether it be through rent, space, time. If I could better understand that, I might see the opportunity to cut my costs and that would mean more profit for you.

**Janice Hostager:** 9:17

Okay, okay, that makes sense. So I just finished a book called Buy Back your Time and in it which I highly recommend, by the way in it the author, dan Martel, talks about having a buy back rate for your own time, figuring out what an hour of your time is worth and how much of it could be outsourced and save you money by outsourcing it. Is that the example of the sort of thing that you would track in a process map?

**Julia Wolf:** 9:49

Yes, definitely Okay. For example, if I spend three hours just coming putting parts together back to our widget example, then how can I take that time that I spend and reduce it, whether it be through using a contractor or outsourcing it to someone else. So definitely that would be the way to go, okay.

**Janice Hostager:** 10:14

Okay, so the reason you'd map a process is pretty much just for saving money.

**Julia Wolf:** 10:20

Not always Okay. You might want to reduce your cycle time. So if you could accomplish in one day, which that will take you three days, wouldn't you want to change that? Yeah, absolutely Okay. Okay, so you can use your process map. Once you understand what you're doing, where you're spending that time, use that process map to try and perhaps reduce the time that you spend on each task.

**Janice Hostager:** 10:47

Okay, all right, that makes sense. So if you have an example of a process map that someone that is maybe a solopreneur, I guess, I'm thinking I mean, I used to have a design business, right, and a lot of what I would do, you know would be the same every time, and it would be, I would actually. I actually made checklists for myself to make sure that I covered all my bases. For example, by getting a new client, I would make sure that I recorded all their information in my CRM system, I would make sure that I have a contract done, and that sort of thing. Are these the examples of things that you would include in your process map?

**Julia Wolf:** 11:33

Absolutely Okay. For example, just what you described. Now, that's what you're doing it yourself, right. But if you expand your business and you want to train someone on how to open an account, for example, then you'd use that process map as an easy way to show

them what's expected of them, what they need to do with each new account that they open.

**Janice Hostager:** 11:56

So it's basically a standard operating procedure, or it could be. It could be a standard operating procedure.

**Julia Wolf:** 12:02

It could be right, but more importantly its visual. Well, I was going to say, I don't have to sit down and write out things, I just flash that map right in front of them and they love it.

**Janice Hostager:** 12:23

I love that, okay, so how do you develop that?

**Julia Wolf:** 12:26

So, first of all, you need to consciously define what it is you're mapping and why you're mapping it. So if, in fact, I just want to document the process, to open an account, and we've been doing it for so long we don't really believe there's any reason to believe we can do it faster or better. Then it's a simple map, right? We're sitting down, we're saying I first do this, I second do that, but we're putting it into a picture and from that you're going to maybe document that and put it away and save it, and when you have that opportunity you would just bring it back out and show people what it is.

**Janice Hostager:** 13:16

What are the steps to go ahead ?

**Julia Wolf:** 13:19

So you've defined the reason you're mapping. You've defined the outcome that you want. In other words, I want to just document this so I can use it to hire new people, or I want to really look for how I can improve the process. But you need to define that up front so you don't spend a lot of time working on things that really aren't something that you're interested in at that point in time. Then you need to gather irrelevant data. So, for example, if I'm looking at reducing the cycle time that it takes me to create the widget, I want to understand how much time I spend at each step. Or if I'm working on a process map to reduce costs, I want to understand the costs that come from each of those various steps in a process. So once you gather that data, if, in fact, you're not a sole entrepreneur working by yourself and you have other people that work for you or you have contractors that are involved, you want to gather those people, whoever they may be, who need to give input into your process map. The more complex your map is, the more important it is

that you get the input that is relevant to whatever process you're mapping. In my own experience, people tend to say we're going to create a process map, so I'm going to bring in my first line managers and talk to them. In reality, that might not be the person you want to talk to. What you want to talk to is the person who's actually doing the job.

**Janice Hostager:** 15:05

The implementation.

**Julia Wolf:** 15:06

Right.

**Janice Hostager:** 15:07

Yeah.

**Julia Wolf:** 15:08

The reason for that is that very often, especially at a managerial level, you will not really know what you people do. Not always true, but sometimes right. Then you've got your people, you've got your data. You actually want to create the map, and that can be very complex if you start using some of the softwares that are offered all over the web, but you don't have to be quite that studious to begin with. So what works really really well in my experience is you get a blank wall and you get a packet of post-it notes in various colors and you start by saying, okay, what is first of all the first thing I do, what is my starting point in the process and what is my ending point in the process? And then start filling in that map and you want to include as much information as you can relevant to the level of process mapping that you're doing. So here again, that might involve the costs, cycle times, if you will, the inputs, whether it's suppliers that send you things or contractors that provide services for you. Put that information on a post-it note, stick it on the wall. The reason this works really well is because if you find a mistake when you're halfway through, you can go back and move the post-its right. Very simple After you've got that map, go where you think it needs to be, just snap a picture of it on your phone and you can take that back to your software and make it all pretty and really fancy in your processing, whether that be Vizio or one of the many others that's offered.

**Janice Hostager:** 17:08

So you could even do it on like a Google Doc right or some kind of anything that Excel, you know? Oh, right, right.

**Julia Wolf:** 17:21

As you're creating that map and you've got, whether it's many people standing around or if it's just you. One of the key tenets of making a successful process map is to fully understand what's happening, and what I've had very good luck with is to start asking why. So ask yourself, why do I get this piece of information and put it on a post-it? And then ask why again, and why again. And it's called a little tool called the Five Wives. So you keep asking why until you think you've got to a root cause.

**Janice Hostager:** 18:12

Is that something that you would recommend doing yourself, or is it more beneficial to have somebody from the outside come in and look at what you're doing?

**Julia Wolf:** 18:22

Either way if you're honest with yourself right. Right, right, you can do it for yourself, or bring in someone from the outside who can keep asking why, and eventually you'll get to a root cause or a root understanding of what it is that you're doing in your process.

**Julia Wolf:** 18:43

So why do I get up in the morning? Well, I have to go to work. Why is that? I need money. Why is that? Because I have a house to support and a family and dogs Keep asking. Why, right, why? To the point where it's inactionable, in other words, to the point where you're talking about the solar system or something like that. Or you have to eat, or you have to eat, right, okay, yeah.

**Janice Hostager:** 19:16

So by asking those Five Wives you basically are seeing if you can eliminate that step altogether.

**Julia Wolf:** 19:21

Yeah, that will help you understand. So if I'm trying to, for example, generate an invoice for my business something that most everybody has to do, especially in a small business, right, right, and you keep asking why it is that a certain step happens, for example, I need to gather data, I need to gather information about what services were performed from the person I sent out to do the job, okay, and I find out that it's taking a day and a half because that person is remote and doesn't work in the same building as you do, or it's a spouse and they have other duties. And you keep asking why it is that it takes three days to give you that information. And through doing that, you might discover that, oh well, I have someone in my house who's supposed to be delivering that data, but they can't because they're busy with other things. So what are the other things? Well, they have childcare issues, or they

have you name it, and they keep digging down until you find something that might be actionable.

**Janice Hostager:** 20:47

So obviously childcare issues wouldn't be an actionable thing. That's pretty much out of your control, unless you hire a nanny for your company. But what you're saying is that if there's something that you uncover that you could actually do something about That-

**Julia Wolf:** 21:05

And you make the decision whether you need to do it again or do it for yourself, gotcha, to make your business better, to save time, save money, whatever it might be.

**Janice Hostager:** 21:17

Oh okay. Super interesting. So tell me what are some of the problems that happen when you're putting together a process map?

**Julia Wolf:** 21:26

Well, there's some pitfalls that you can stumble across. One is as I alluded to earlier, with the fact that you need to have the right people in the room. So we always tend to think in terms of, well, this is how it should happen, but we might not actually happen that way. So be aware of the fact that you want to actually map the real versus the ideal. So, in a perfect world, for example, if I have to say I'm writing a document and I have to have it reviewed by a number of people, and in a perfect world each of those people would take three hours to review it. But in reality that never happens, right? One person might say I can do it in 15 minutes. Another person actually takes eight hours to review it. So it's important, as you map, to understand what the reality is versus the ideal situation.

**Janice Hostager:** 22:35

Gotcha. And then at that point, if somebody is taking three hours and another person is taking 15 minutes, you may want to transfer that task to another person, right?

**Julia Wolf:** 22:45

Well, either that or find out with your five whys. Why does it take them eight hours versus three?

**Janice Hostager:** 22:51

Okay, really interesting. So what is the? So? I guess the ultimate goal for this would be to save time and save money. Right, that's the reason why, as a small business owner, you'd want to implement something like this, because, at the end of the day, time is money. True.



**Julia Wolf:** 23:13

And customer satisfaction, right, right. So if you're going to hang on to your clients or your customer, whoever that might be, you want to provide the best service you can for them at the best price, and this will help you get to that hopefully ideal state where you are doing that for your customer Okay, perfect, and benefiting yourself as well.

**Janice Hostager:** 23:37

Perfect, okay, well this has been really interesting. As I mentioned in the intro, I am kind of focusing on planning for 2024, and I think that this is something that we could certainly use looking back at processes that we already have in place in 2023 or new processes that you're creating for 2024, to just really get down to making it the most efficient as possible and the most effective as possible. Would you agree?

**Julia Wolf:** 24:15

Most definitely Okay. As I say, one of the most useful tools that I think any business can use to understand how to make things better and to basically understand what it is you actually do, right.

**Janice Hostager:** 24:31

And it can be small things too, like moving the trash can closer to your desk or right or well, that's the only example I can think of. But bigger, small, anything that saves us time is gonna save us money as small business owners and make our lives simpler, and that's, of course, what we all want. Now you have some information that you can share with us too. Right, the show notes that I can put to show notes.

**Julia Wolf:** 25:01

I'll give you a link to some information that people might find useful.

**Janice Hostager:** 25:05

So people wanna reach out to you personally. How can they get a hold of you?

**Julia Wolf:** 25:11

You can reach me on LinkedIn.

**Janice Hostager:** 25:13

Perfect, I'll put the link in the show notes. Well, thank you so much. This has been super interesting. I'm excited about what I personally can be doing for process mapping in the next year, and I have a feeling that a lot of us are gonna learn a thing or two from everything you taught us today. So thanks so much, thank you. Janice. And there you have

it. What did you think? Are there some areas of your business where you could use some process mapping? I know that I'll be looking at some systems to see what I can improve. To learn more about process mapping and about today's episode. You can find the show notes for today at [myweeklymarketing.com](http://myweeklymarketing.com), forward slash 34. Thanks for joining me today. See you next time. Bye for now.