Improving Turnaround Time in a Sponsored Programs Office

Or – How Many Research Administrators Does It Take to Set Up a New Sponsored Research Account?

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The Premise

Do any of these conditions sound familiar?

- You have a feeling that it takes “too long” for a research account to get set up once the contract or award notice is received.
- Paperwork gets lost in the shuffle between pre- and post-award offices.
- Too many people (or not the right people) seem to be involved in the process.
- There are persistent quality control issues (e.g. incorrect award start or end dates, inaccurate budgets, incorrect F&A rate or fringe rates, etc).
- Non-standard terms & conditions cause the account setup to linger in limbo indefinitely.
- You can’t hire more staff (or you have hired more staff, and the problems haven’t resolved themselves…….)

Resulting in…..

- Unhappy Principal Investigators (and their Chairs, Deans or Directors) constantly calling to ask why they don’t have an account number yet.
Before you begin any process engineering effort, assemble tracking data (1st self-help step)
- Know how many awards/contracts, how many accounts, how many people, how many days it currently takes.

Document your existing business processes completely (2nd self-help step)
- Many problems arise from lack of clear instructions or consistent application.

Choose an outside party who is expert at facilitating process engineering
- This process will cost money. It may or may not save any money in the short term, or reduce FTEs.
- Senior leadership must buy in. Decision-makers will need to participate.

Consider the challenges of thinking outside the box
- This is especially challenging when your business process requires putting things into accounting boxes!
- Be willing to re-align job duties so that problem-solving is separated from production activity.

Public accountability is more motivating than personal responsibility
- Publishing your weekly/monthly turnaround times will keep everyone on track better than any checklists, manager review or individual counseling.
Burns & Allen Research Institute Case Study

In 2004 -

- Cedars-Sinai implemented PeopleSoft Financials/Enterprise Reporting (including General Ledger, e-Procurement, Grants, Projects, Contracts, Billing, and Accounts Receivable, Asset Management and others).
- Reorganized and combined the pre-award (Grants & Contracts Services) and post-award (Grant & Fund Accounting) into a cradle-to-grave operation.
- As a planned part of the implementation, gave Grant & Contract Officers and Sponsored Project Accountants “ownership & accountability” for the establishment of new accounts.
This sounded like a great idea…..

- Bottlenecks were removed (previously, only 1 person in the Grant & Fund Accounting Office was authorized to setup new accounts, creating a backlog)
- Staff received in-person training and customized copy of PeopleSoft training manuals.
- Pre-award and postaward staff were assigned to work together in teams, improving communication and resolving non-standard issues together.
- Staff could no longer complain that “someone else” set up the account incorrectly
But it was an unqualified disaster…..

- Many accounting transactions (both direct costs and F&A) errored-out or could not be billed to sponsors, due to missing or conflicting set-up parameters.
- Pre-award and post-award staff did not look at the complete account setup to ensure a consistent business practice.
- If a field could be left blank, it was often skipped or forgotten. Corrections were made ad-hoc.
- Pre-award and post-award staff continued to work independently as if the rest of the “team” did not exist.
Overview of Ad-Hoc Improvement Process

- Track actual performance to accumulate baseline data (6 months to 1 year)
  - Identify process(es) that are most problematic based on the initial tracked data
  - Identify goals or benchmarks to be achieved

- Select an improvement methodology
  - Budget resources for the process (funds, personnel, meeting time, conference rooms, etc)
  - Establish desired start date, milestone review dates and completion date for the improvement process
1st Step: Data Tracking
7/1/2005 - 6/30/2008

This is what we decided to track:

- Number of new awards/contracts received
- Number of FTEs processing new accounts
- Turnaround time of setup (data entry portion)
- Percentage approved on first review
Data Tracking 7/1/2005 - 6/30/2008

- Data elements tracked (see handout #1 for sample Excel spreadsheet):
  - Contract & Project ID number (text)
  - Date setup started & dates of subsequent reviews (dates)
  - Names of responsible team members (text)
  - Setup milestones (dates)
  - Total # of manager reviews (number)
  - Total number of days to complete entry (formula)
  - Problems or extenuating circumstances (free text)
Written checklist with signoff covered most common or critical elements (see handout #2 for sample checklist):

- Name of Sponsor (i.e. Sold-to Customer)
- Department ID number (assigns departmental account rollup in General Ledger)
- Principal Investigator
- Start & End dates
- Dollar amount of award
- Performance periods/segments
- Critical match-ups between Grants module and Projects module
- Critical data fields for general ledger accounting & billing
- Audit flag fields (i.e. A-133 audit)
- Pass through information (i.e. for federal and non-federal subawards)
- Major terms & conditions
Burns & Allen Research Institute Case Study (continued)

- Baseline Statistics - Processing New Awards/Contracts
  - **Excludes** non-competing funding segments – these account numbers are established & assigned concurrently with the original award/contract.
  - **Includes** setup of Internally Funded (i.e. from gift, endowments, operational funds)
  - FY2008 showed a 20% increase in activity for the office

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FY 2006</th>
<th>FY 2007</th>
<th>FY 2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Federal Awards (New or Competing)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Profit Sponsors (includes flow-through)</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate (Industry) Sponsors</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internally Funded Projects</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total New Contracts/Awards</strong></td>
<td><strong>196</strong></td>
<td><strong>196</strong></td>
<td><strong>235</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Burns & Allen Research Institute Case Study (continued)

- Number of FTEs handling Pre & Post Award FY2006 – FY2008
  - Federal, Non-Profit and Internally Funded Grant Officers: 2006 – 2008 (unchanged)
    - 4 Grant & Contract Officers
    - 4 Senior Grant & Contract Officers
  - Industry Sponsored Contracts –Increased by 3 FTEs between FY2006 and FY2008
    - FY2006 1 Snr Contract Officer & 1 Jr Officer
    - FY2008 3 Snr Contract Officers & 2 Jr Officers

- Sponsored Program Accountants as of FY2008:
  - 1 FTEs assigned to Industry
  - 4 FTEs assigned to Externally Funded
  - 1 FTE assigned to Internally Funded
  - Research System Administrators (new for FY 2008)
First Try – Ad-Hoc Improvement

- Assigned 1 manager and 1 contract supervisor to review all account set-ups
  - Created Setup Checklists to guide each Team thought the critical steps of the process
  - Team members required to sign the checklist jointly
  - Checklist would be returned to team with corrections needed, or with Manager approval signature and date
  - Ad-hoc training was given for problematic processes

- Manager tracked the setup process in a log for over a year (2005-2006)…..
First Try –

Ad-Hoc Improvement Results

- It sounded like a good idea, and accuracy improved greatly (but at significant cost to the manager’s time). However……

  - Checklists did not improve the quality of the initial entries - mistakes were made at random in almost every data entry point.
  - People certified that information was accurate and complete when in fact the fields contained obviously incorrect information or were skipped.
  - Teams dreaded receiving the checklists. For some teams, the accuracy & turnaround became worse as a result of using checklists*.
  - Teams with the highest number of egregious errors were formally counseled.

- While this addressed the accuracy issues, it did not improve the turnaround time or resolve “lost in the shuffle” problems.
Manager tracked the setup process in a log for a period of approx 1.5 years (2005-2006).

Highlights (or lowlights) of the results were:

- 327 new awards were set up between May 25, 2005 to Dec. 11, 2006.
- Overall average time for data entry alone was just over 15 calendar days. However....
  - 101 awards (31%) took between 15 and 60 days to complete the data entry phase.
  - 12 awards (4%) were stuck in data entry for >60 to >100 days.
The good news – by tracking results for over a year, we observed some trends that gave us important clues…
- The Team with the highest number of new awards to process had the best record of correct setups (i.e., the most setups entered correctly the first time, and approved on the first review).
- The Team with the lowest number of new awards to process made the most errors during setup.

We also tracked the types of errors being made during setup, for training purposes.
- Training materials were updated & additional training was given. New ad-hoc job aids were completed to document business processes/decision trees, and put into use.

As a result of training, counseling, and improved documentation, we were able to transition set-up responsibility back to the respective Grant Officers and Accountants.
- Spot checking reports were created to find any “system-fatal errors” as a protection against future accounting disasters.
First Try –
Ad-Hoc Improvement Results –continued

- **We drew a conclusion about the nature of the work, and who should be doing it.**
  - Practice makes perfect, and improves consistency. Fewer people doing a higher number of new account setups are both faster and more accurate.
  - New account setup needs to occur on a timeline that is independent of other competing time-sensitive tasks (e.g. proposal submission, or contract billing)

- **We determined that we still had a big documentation gap in our business process.**
  - The job aids and training materials created during this time needed to be combined in a complete re-documentation of new account setup, integrating both the business processes and technical system entries in an easy-to-follow format.

- It is now early 2007…..
First Try –

Ad-Hoc Improvement Results – continued

- We created a new Job Description – Research System Administrator
  - Exempt, Professional Position
  - Requires both knowledge of sponsored programs and knowledge of all related PeopleSoft modules
  - Room for job growth in multiple areas
- We contracted a professional documentation specialist
  - She took all paper training manuals, job aids, spreadsheets, flowcharts and created an integrated e-manual, including review checklists.
  - By giving up the on the idea of a “printable” paper manual, we were able to make a complete reference guide with extensive point-of-entry information, glossaries, and decision-making guidance.
First Try –
Improve our documentation

Create a technical manual covering the entire account setup process, and incorporating or creating all necessary job aids (glossaries, matrices, definitions, etc). The resulting workbook contained 17 tabs covering the technical process end-to-end (see handout #3 for sample):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposal Data Entry</th>
<th>Subcontract Calculations</th>
<th>Required Attachments – Types &amp; Names</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Generate Award Process</td>
<td>Scratchpad – Budget Corrections</td>
<td>Milestones - Administrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grants Module</td>
<td>PI Subdivision Dept IDs</td>
<td>Milestones - Financial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projects Module</td>
<td>Award Types Glossary</td>
<td>Decision Tree – Burden Plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contracts Module</td>
<td>Terms &amp; Conditions</td>
<td>Burden Plan conversion Matrix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined Checklist</td>
<td>NIH Specific T&amp;Cs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


First Try – continued

By now it is December 2007……

- The Research System administrators are in place
  - After a steep learning curve, their accuracy is excellent.
- The new Set-up Manual is complete, and is in use
  - Grant Officers and Accountants are using their checklists more or less faithfully
- We are now tracking the duration of the new account setup process, from the receipt of the contract or notice of award, to final account approval.

- So….. why are the PIs still unhappy with us?
First Try Encore – More Tracking!

- Developed a new tracking spreadsheet “Cedars-Sinai Monthly Scorecard” (see handout #4 for sample)
  - Setup Team (Research System Admins) are responsible for maintaining
  - Managers responsible for reviewing and following up on process problems
  - Data entry phase is visually separated from the Award/Contract receipt date
  - Predecessor tasks or problems are tracked
## Scorecard - continued

### Combined Overall Aver    8.88

#### Category Averages

- **INTERNAL AWARDS** 4.00
- **EXTERNAL AWARDS (FED, LOCAL GOVT & NONPRO** 15.17
- **INDUSTRY AWARDS** 8.88

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**System Entry Date** - Date completed/entered on External Security Tree

**Dependencies** - Setup unable to be begun or completed due to additional or revised documents needed from PI or Sponsor:

- IRB / IACUC - lack of an approved protocol prevents award acceptance or startup

**Revised Budget** - Sponsor has reduced the level of funding and a revised Budget must be completed (and/or submitted to Sponsor) in order to enter the Budget into PeopleSoft.
Scorecard

Turnaround Time in Days

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Average # of Days</th>
<th>Longest # Days</th>
<th>Shortest # Days</th>
<th>Number of Contracts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dec-07</td>
<td>39.33</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan-08</td>
<td>21.79</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb-08</td>
<td>22.93</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar-08</td>
<td>17.91</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr-08</td>
<td>22.93</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May-08</td>
<td>17.37</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jun-08</td>
<td>27.07</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jul-08</td>
<td>6.33</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug-08</td>
<td>12.27</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep-08</td>
<td>9.47</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct-08</td>
<td>10.38</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov-08</td>
<td>15.43</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec-08</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Value Stream Analysis

Overview of process

- What is it?
- How does it work?
- What are the outcomes?
Value Stream Analysis

What is Value Stream Analysis?

- A tool developed under the principles of “Lean Manufacturing”, pioneered by Toyota Motors (Japan).
- Embodies the principle of “kaizen” (continuous improvement)
- Helps to identify “waste” known by three types:
  - Muda: non-value adding work
  - Muri: overburden
  - Mura: unevenness
Value Stream Analysis

How does VSA work?

1. Identify the activity or service.
2. Draw a current state “value stream” map, which shows the current steps, delays, and information flows required to complete the task.
3. Assess (analyze) the current state value stream map in terms of improving flow by eliminating non-value added steps.
4. Draw a future state “value stream” map.
5. Implement the future state (may be a multi-phase plan)
Value Stream Analysis

What outcomes can be expected from a VSA procedure?

- A future state Value Stream Map of the streamlined process.
- A written plan (one or more phases) of policies, procedures, job responsibilities or processes that need to be revised, with deadlines.
- A schedule of brief status report/problem solving meetings.
- A tracking tool (i.e. spreadsheet or database) to monitor progress.
VSA Process

- 1st meeting (2-day event)
  - Logistics (days/time/room)
  - Materials (A/V materials, laptops, catering service)
- Facilitators
  - Discussion leader
  - Note taker/documentarian
- Participants* – end-to-end process must be represented by constituents
  - Sponsored Programs pre- and post-award staff
  - Managers/Directors
  - Department administrators

* A subset of the participants will be responsible for the completion of the improvement plan.
VSA Process

- 1st meeting results
  - Action Plan with two implementation levels
    - Just Do It
      - Implement right away, with minimal paperwork and signoff by the people in the room.
    - Projects
      - Multi-week efforts, with periodic assessments
      - May require changes needing additional buy-in or approval (e.g. system changes, security access, job descriptions, training).
VSA Process

1st meeting results (continued)

- Process Flow charts
  - As-Is
    - Shows process as it currently exists
  - First Phase
    - Shows improved process, incorporating immediate (Just-Do-It) changes
  - Second Phase
    - Shows desired end-state, incorporating more complex changes (Projects).
We began with our original Process Flow developed in January 2008

- Was 4 pages long
- Contained 18+ handoffs
- Required participation of 5 different types of research administrators
- Each team member touched the setup at least 2x
- No expected turnaround times defined
- Allowed for unresolved problem “eternal” loops
- No backup plan for missing team members
VSA Process – Final Process Flow Map

1.5 Days

SETUP TEAM'S ROLE

PHASE 1 - Completed

- Generate Office
- Review
- Set Up Team

INTERNAL TREE:
- Oversight: Scheduling, security, access
- Prepare access to next module (projects, modules)
- Send out reports, security

- More information: means, conditions, unclear, billing, information and budget

1 Day

PHASE 2 - 9/4/2008

- Project Module
- Review in Pre auction
  - Checking appropriate budget is applied
  - Budget accounts
  - Generate Invoice
  - Invoicing payment
  - Coding
  - Contract type
  - Template accounts
- Complete accounting steps

- Repository of approvals
carries the "go"
- Review and enter contract module

0.5 Day

- External File
- Plant on the external to for
  - Order and add project team
  - Specify PS

- Generate Office to
  - Allocate PS

- Generate Office
### VSA Process – Action Plan Worksheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Who</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Project Catch-up</strong></td>
<td>The current process is congested with projects. To decompress the process, allow for better evaluation, and eliminate pressing calls from PI’s waiting for account numbers, a one time process intervention will occur. This is an exception for these 6 projects. The remaining projects will follow the process <a href="#">See Prioritization Schedule – Handout #5</a>. Email to be sent out to team with the project numbers. 5/16/2008</td>
<td>John Doe; Industry Team</td>
<td>Start 5/16 and complete 5/22/08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Just-Do-It – 1st Huddle Meeting</strong></td>
<td>To assess the improvements, eliminate road blocks/barriers, and determine next steps, the team will hold a 15 minute meeting every two weeks from 9am to 9:15am. The life of this meeting is 10 weeks. Agenda: 1) Assess status of where group is relative to plan compared to where to be 2) Jane/John will review data with the group. 3) Actions for following the week. The first meeting is 6/4 at 9am and Jane will send out an email with the location.</td>
<td>Jane Doe will call meeting</td>
<td>Begins June 4, 2008 and continues every 2 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Just-Do-It – Scorecard</strong></td>
<td>To enable the team to track, communicate, assess the improvements in the process it was decided a score card would be developed. The life of the score card is ten weeks. The information tracked by the score card: 1. Project ID# 2. Sponsor 3. PI 4. Start Date 5. Time from Grant Officer submitting the completed forms to review by the Accountant and Grant Officer. TARGET – 1.5 days 6. Time of review by the Grant Officer and Accountant. TARGET 1.0 Day 7. Time from completed review by the Accountant and Grant Officer to Account Number assigned. TARGET 0.5 Day 8. Total Time for the process, TARGET 3.0 Days</td>
<td>John Doe will maintain Scorecard</td>
<td>Starts 5/16/08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Details</td>
<td>Who</td>
<td>Date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Project Phase 1</strong></td>
<td>The support provided by the Setup Team added two additional handoffs and increased delays in the process. To provide backup to IT, the Project Team was trained on how to add projects to the Internal Tree. As a result the team decided to move the responsibility of adding project to Internal Tree to the Project Team. This eliminates the two additional handoffs and delays. It is anticipated that this improvement will reduce the current 11 day average by 2 to 3 days.</td>
<td></td>
<td>5/16/08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Project Phase 2</strong></td>
<td>The team decided to eliminate the handoff between the Project Team and Project Contract Supervisor. This will require the Accountant to enter the additional accounting information during the Accountant Review. Once the review is completed by the Accountant and Grant Officer the Setup Team will complete the Contract Module. This will require additional training for the Setup Team for this task. It is anticipated that this improvement will reduce the improved time from phase 1 of 9 to 8 days by an additional 1 to 2 days.</td>
<td></td>
<td>6/4/08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Just-Do-It – Accounting Info Template</strong></td>
<td>Incorrect or no information was being input by the Setup Team for the budget regarding Industry Funded projects. Information that was originally sent to the accountant in completing this task was eliminated. Decided that Industry Funded Team would supply this information directly to the Setup Team using a standard budget template.</td>
<td>Industry Contracts Team</td>
<td>5/16/08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
An extract from our new tracking spreadsheet (handout # 7) shows that even after implementing the “Just Do It” and all but one of the “Projects”, we are still not meeting our ideal goal of 3 business days. **Red = Goal Not Met**
VSA Process

We decide to invite our facilitator back for a follow-on analysis. This begins the 2nd phase: **In-person Observation & Results**

- One the first day, the Setup Team members were observed and categorized for time management purposes (i.e. urgent, routine, “spam”, or personal)
  - Phone calls (desk and PDA) were triaged
  - Email (entire in-box was prioritized or filtered)
  - In-Person drop-ins (work related or ???) observed
- Personal work habits of RSAs and office staff improved after first day
  - Drop-Ins stopped
  - Personal phone calls stopped
  - Web surfing/shopping stopped
VSA Process

2\textsuperscript{nd} phase – In-person Observation & Results

- On the second day, all activities were grouped and assigned task lengths (in minutes)
  - Based on real-time observation without interruption.
  - Time set aside in day for planning and tracking tasks.
  - Email filters applied to manage volume of messages.
- Average daily activities took up approximately 85\% of workday, leaving plenty of time for unexpected or new tasks.
  - This has been consistent since the original observation in 2008.
  - Determined that one person could handle the entire workload for short periods (i.e. absence of the 2\textsuperscript{nd} person for vacations, sick days, etc).
# VSA Process – Activity Algorithm Sample (handout #8)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Time Allotted</th>
<th>Today's Daily Number</th>
<th>Minutes for Activity</th>
<th>Instructions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scorecard Update</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Do not change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awards</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>Starting with data entry &amp; ending with final review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuations &amp; Proposals</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Completion of data entry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add PIs</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Completion of data entry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add Sponsors</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Completion of data entry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add Staff</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Completion of data entry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email/Exceptions</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Completion of request</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Requests</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Optional - fill in an estimated time if a major request is received</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process Inquiries</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Same as above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workbook Maintenance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Same as above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filing</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Do not change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily Planning</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Do not change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breaks &amp; Lunch</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Do not change</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Minutes: 415  81.37% Percent of daily minutes needed

### Legend
- **Ad-hoc or as-needed tasks**
- **Tasks performed 1x daily**
VSA Process

2nd phase – In-person Observation & Results

Performance Myth-Busters:

- **Multi-tasking results in more work getting done – No!**
  - Multitasking does not improve speed. More time is wasted by picking up lost train of thought.
  - Prioritize tasks and complete in the planned order. There are a few good reasons to break “FIFO” (first in first out) and these should be documented via policy.

- **Frequent email checking saves time & improves communication – No!**
  - Unsolicited email has become a time waster – in our case, over half (52%) of emails received were not task-related (i.e. institutional broadcast announcements, spam, or personal).
  - Even task-critical messages benefit by being filtered & grouped for review at designated times of the day.

- **Answering all phone calls on the first ring – you will solve problems quicker if you are available at all times – No!**
  - Learn to love voicemail. See # 1 myth above
  - This applies to drop-ins too. You do not have to talk to everyone who comes by your office/cubicle
Performance Myth-Busters, continued:

- **Complete each task the first time you see it – No!**
  - Group & prioritize the tasks.
  - System performance is relative: use actual performance time parameters to choose manual batching vs. on-the-fly posting. Depends on the length of the task, and the ramp-up/completion time. Get real time observational data – don’t rely on staff members’ memory to estimate task time.
  - Self-initiated interruptions or diversions waste time. Once started, stay focused on the planned task and complete it before moving on to the next.

- **Silos are “bad” – Not necessarily!**
  - Consolidating expertise in a smaller group of people is not the same as Silo Syndrome, and in many cases is necessary when the task is complex or time-sensitive.

- **Personal accountability as a job performance criteria improves actual performance – Not really!**
  - Public visibility of all new account completion dates results in employees’ comparing themselves to the rest of the group. Peer pressure is more motivational than the supervisor’s directives.
  - Make your scorecard visible (on the bulletin board or online) in the SPA office. Include Award ID numbers, SPA assigned staff names and PI names. It’s both legal and effective.
VSA Process

A marked improvement became apparent in August 2008 as a result of staffing changes…….
VSA Process – Final Results

• We continue to use both tracking spreadsheets (handouts # 4 & #7), which are reviewed at weekly Managers Meetings within the Department.
• Both documents are posted on our shared file server, so that the setup status of any new account can be viewed by central administration staff or managers.

Current statistics, FY 2009 (as of January, 2009)

• Number of calendar days between receipt of sponsor’s contract or award notice, and completion of a new account number:
  • Internally Funded: 4 days
  • Externally Funded: 15 days
  • Industry (Corporate): 8 days

• Percentage meeting the 3 business day turnaround for Account Setup: 89%
Sample Tools, Templates and Job Aids

- Ad-hoc Process Tools
  1. New Account Review Tracking (Excel template)
  2. Original Setup Checklist (Word document)
  3. New Account Setup Instructions (Excel Workbook) *
  4. Monthly Scorecard - Award Acceptance to Account Establishment (Excel Template) *

- VSA Process Tools
  5. Prioritization Schedule for Proposals & Awards (Word document)
  6. Industry budget worksheet for performance-based contracts (Excel template)
  7. VSA Setup Turnaround Tracking (Excel Workbook)*
  8. Daily Planning Time Calculator (Excel template) *

* Indicates initial template developed by outside consultants. Our staff subsequently received advanced Excel training in order to maintain the workbooks.
VSA Process

- General Q & A

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