

# Exploring Common and Uncommon Bottlenecks

A bottleneck is a sudden slow point in a business process. Typically caused by a capacity, resource or performance issue, bottlenecks can draw out the cycle time. They lead to inefficiency, frustration and even loss of business and revenue. Identifying and resolving bottlenecks in your company's business processes can save you time and money. It can also help to improve efficiency and morale. There are several common bottlenecks that plague businesses, and even a few that are more difficult to recognize that can cost companies millions of dollars per year.



## Recognizing Bottlenecks

There's an old saying, "Sometimes you can't see the forest for the trees." This is often the case with bottlenecks. You're so close to the root of the problem that you can't see that it's an issue. Taking a step back and analyzing your business process is the first step to recognizing bottlenecks. Making a flow chart can help you determine where the bottlenecks are. Ask your employees if there are any steps in their processes that slow down their ability to work quickly and efficiently.

## General Bottlenecks

Companies in a wide range of industries suffer from similar bottlenecks in their processes. One example is that the amount of time allotted to make a decision is shrinking. According to research by the Aberdeen Group, 64 percent of business managers have experienced a reduction in the window of time that they have to make decisions, while the amount of data they have to analyze has increased by 40 percent. This causes decisions to be made hastily and perhaps without the important information needed. This is just one of several bottlenecks that can make your company fall behind in production or cause you to lose out on potential business projects.

Here are some common bottlenecks that companies face, and possible solutions to help eliminate the issues.

### Issue: Decision Control

When every decision funnels through the same person, a bottleneck is inevitable. It's nearly impossible for any company - especially a growing one - to sustain an efficient workflow. One reason may be a lack of trust in other people's abilities to make decisions. Another issue may be a lack of knowledge or training to recognize key factors in making the right decision.

**Solution:** Allow people in the lower ranks to make more decisions. Those who have the most information and are closest to the need for the decision may be the best ones to make the call. If you're uncomfortable with an employee's decision-making skills, put a different person into the role. Providing

the proper training and resources so that employees can make smart decisions gives them knowledge, empowers them and relieves the bottleneck.

### Issue: Quality Assurance

In many industries, the last step in the process is making sure that the product or service is appropriate for the client. Quality control is often the last step in the process before items are packaged up and shipped off to the customer. For example, someone needs to check and verify that production and order picking are done properly in manufacturing and distribution services. To skip this step creates a risk of quality dipping below an acceptable level. Some business owners and managers take the high road, determined to do everything themselves. Both of these quality control issues create bottlenecks.

**Solution:** If you have a quality assurance department, ensure that there are enough people in the department to handle the load. When these responsibilities fall on another person, give them help or create a dedicated quality control department. Make sure that employees can learn from their mistakes to keep them to a minimum. Leaders and managers who do the work instead of allowing others to do it - perhaps incorrectly - are the root cause of the bottleneck. Teach workers how to identify and prepare for potential trouble spots.

### Issue: Missed Opportunities

Entrepreneurs who are doing the work instead of supervising it are missing out on the opportunity to broaden a business' footprint. Diversifying interests can help a company sustain longevity and adapt to changes in supply and demand.

**Solution:** Be the coach, not the player. Once things are up and running, hand off the daily tasks and operations to others and look for new opportunities for the company.

## IT Bottlenecks

When it comes to communications and information technology (IT), the flow of data can slow or stop completely if a system doesn't have the ability to process it efficiently. Some causes are a matter of infrastructure, capacity or workflow traffic.

### Issue: Infrastructure

There's a natural progression to implement infrastructure changes in all things IT. With newer, better and faster hardware and software, changing a company's infrastructure is inevitable. Upgrades in products have a natural tendency to make some steps obsolete while implementing new features. Large changeovers to infrastructure can cause the loss or corruption of information that's critical to a company's data collection and even everyday operations.

**Solution:** It's a common practice to wait until a product upgrade is out for a short while before implementing it. This gives forerunners a chance to test the products, discover any bugs and



idiosyncrasies and find solutions to any problems. Oftentimes, outsourcing IT management for installation and upgrades relieves the bottleneck. The professionals who are in tune with the products can detect and find solutions to bugs before the upgrades are made to your infrastructure.

#### **Issue: Capacity**

When the system has insufficient capacity, the flow of data and information can slow or cease altogether. Storage-area networks, cache memory and workload flow can become saturated and eventually overload. Slow performance in one area creates a bottleneck, which can have a snowball effect on other parts of the system.

**Solution:** Improve the system's ability to process necessary data. Increasing storage size, adding memory, installing adapters and balancing loads improves system capacity.

#### **Issue: Workloads**

Data networks can get bogged down when there's a wide variety of workloads taxing the system. The impact generated by data retrieval and storage, reports, analytical queries and interactive tasks can slow down the rate of performance. Heavy workloads that are performed and stored with random organization in an assortment of file types can force the network to take even longer to handle necessary tasks.

**Solution:** By isolating and organizing workloads, data can be handled in a more orderly manner. Limiting the number of file extensions allowed and optimizing data processing with a more advanced framework can speed up the time it takes to process tasks and increase performance levels.

### **Oracle Bottlenecks**

Some companies using Oracle can accidentally fall into bottleneck traps without even realizing it. This slows down productivity and can result in database inefficiencies.

#### **Issue: Storage and Memory**

A common bottleneck among Oracle users is insufficient storage or memory. If your company doesn't have ample storage or the correct amount of memory, it slows down the entire process and can cause more problems. Not allocating memory properly can severely affect performance. An overloaded system that crashes or one that simply doesn't process data quickly enough can result in a bottleneck. In some cases, it's a storage system that fails without sufficient back-up. Lost data or insufficient data can cause financial burdens and unnecessary hurdles in business operations.

#### **Solution:**

Businesses using Oracle for database management should scale their storage according to their needs, and ensure that the memory is allocated properly. A quality remote database administrator (DBA) can help the company to meet storage requirements and prevent bottlenecks. Daily health checks with automated system reports can detect power failures and also note when there is a potential problem with the system. Upgrades and rerouting trouble areas are just two of the proactive steps that remote DBAs can take to prevent storage bottlenecks.

### Issue: Resources

Database systems run slower when constrained by input/output capacity, CPU resources, memory and clustered interconnection traffic. Slower systems can, in turn, shift the problem to other resources. This creates a snowball effect and compounds inefficiency.

**Solution:** Oracle products can be optimized to maximize the resources in a system. The problem is solved by focusing on performance issues and minimizing the use of unnecessary resources.

### How to Beat the Bottlenecks

Overcoming bottlenecks is key to having a more efficient process. From the general business process to IT issues to Oracle data processing, identifying the problem is half the battle. Once you recognize them, you can address the issues. In many cases, outsourcing duties is an efficient solution. A qualified professional can often do the job in much less time, due to a higher skill level and better resources. This allows your company to maximize your workforce in the most efficient manner.

### Conclusion

Bottlenecks in your company's processes can cost you time, money and customers. By identifying the inefficiencies in your company's processes, you can make changes that benefit your employees, your company and your clients. Whether it's a bottleneck associated with Oracle, IT or another portion of your business, take the necessary steps to overcome your bottlenecks.

To learn more about how Database Specialists can help your business through database management and remote DBA services, contact us at (888) 648-0500 or (415) 344-0500 x525.

### About Database Specialists

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