

WHITEPAPER: THE CLASSICAL IMPROVEMENT SYSTEM

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ASTROCAT CONSULTING

The Classical Improvement System (CIS) is AstroCat Consulting's methodology and approach to unravelling business challenges. Our firm's system of classical problem solving and analysis merged with our real-life business experience come together to create harmonious solutions for any objective.

Our goal is to build lasting, meaningful success for you and your organization.

The Classical Improvement System evaluates business problems by...

1. Learning everything we can from the client first: we ask questions about their goals and any obstacles they are facing, or specific areas of improvement they are seeking.
2. Evaluating the big picture and isolating the critical components: we determine the most essential processes and systems for the client's goal within their current infrastructure and focus in on these areas.
3. Analyzing the client's strengths and weaknesses in the areas of Technique, Theory, and Performance to reach their objective, and developing strategies in each category to meet their goal.
 - Technique: This is the *way* you, or your team performs operations, or individual tasks. Technical skills include writing aptitude, ability to use specific software programs efficiently, how to introduce yourself to a client. In other words, the technique area of our CIS is where soft skills are developed. Where the know-how and memorization of processes are important.
 - Theory: This is the *why* for you and your team. Or, the *overall goal* for any task, or system. Theory and Technique are closely related, so it can be difficult to determine what category a challenge falls in. Our differentiator is that theory involves a deep understanding of why their business is doing what they are doing. What is the reason behind the work being done? Where does

it go? How valuable it is? This is where mission and core values come into play, as everything in your business should relate back to this statement and invigorate every “why?” with a clear answer.

- Performance: This is the actual work being done and real *output*. For individual workers, performance involves their on-the-job results – regardless of if they fully understand objectives for their work, or have all the systems mastered. When there is “a natural” on a team who just *gets it* with very little context, they are an example of a good performer. They get the job done, whether they understand the task, or not, or whether they have internalized the soft-skills the company wants them to have. Or on the opposite side, a team member who fully grasps both the technique and theory behind their work, but cannot execute it in practice, has a performance-related problem within our CIS.
4. Lastly, we define improvement markers to quantify success in each of these three areas, as well as around the overall goal. Having a tangible way to know you are on the right track in the short and long term is critical to creating both success and improvement. Reaching milestones propels you forward, and having an ongoing plan leads to sustained growth and success.

When all three of these areas around a challenge - Technique, Theory, and Performance – are strengthened and balanced, a synergy occurs, and any goal is possible for your business.

Creating this unity and holistic understanding gives you and your team momentum to create and define lasting success.

BENEFITS of The Classical Improvement System:

By applying targeted attention to a specific challenge and analyzing the areas of Technique, Theory, and Performance associated, AstroCat delivers deeply insightful solutions with ease and can quickly assess the most effective path forward to reach your goal. Organizations and

leaders are left with a clearer connection to their mission, and there is more direction to daily work and setting long-term goals when these 3 areas balance.

To accomplish this balance, each area is made strong independently, then brought back together into the “big picture”. This isolated problem-solving merged with the reuniting of each component into the whole leads to meaningful and effective results, as well as increased sense of purpose and mission for an owner, or their organization. CIS also creates opportunity for reflection and self-editing, which is crucial for progress.

What makes CIS unique and effective is that this system is very easy to learn as a complete novice, and it is universal. It can be effectively applied to almost ANY learning challenge in work, life, art, education, and more.

The intuitiveness of this system is why it is so effective. It is based in logic, which connects with the majority of humans and workers in a meaningful way. Once CIS is employed and workshopped, it never has to leave a leader’s process tool-kit and can be called on any time.

Isn’t this CIS obvious for problem-solving?

If our CIS is feeling too obvious at this point, we totally understand. It IS obvious for some – especially those who have highly process-oriented careers and trades that rely on similar types of thinking. Also, there are likely other systems out there that are more defined and with a similar, or same, perspective. Like with most strategic advice, you’ve probably heard it before. But this time may be different...

The reason a system like CIS is not already wide-spread is the same reason not everyone who takes piano lessons knows how to play piano now, or why every child in their soccer rec league doesn’t grow up to play soccer as an adult. And neither is a bad thing! Maybe piano wasn’t your instrument, but you liked the drums. Maybe you were not a natural soccer player, but became a yoga instructor as a physical outlet.

But just maybe – you may have had aptitude in piano and / or soccer, but did not have the right teacher (cue the music teachers who founded AstroCat!).

That is where CIS comes in. We all think of the same problem in a different, personal way. CIS is for analysis AND the practice of problem solving in motion, and it can be tailored to each individual leader and business. For that reason, it just may be the tool and process-oriented thinking that creates a new way forward, or creates a breakthrough with a predicament you are facing, or a new skill you’d like to learn. The success of our system is

when applied to business and industry goals is the same success an effective piano teacher has in reaching a wide range of students with different learning styles. That teacher makes an instrument “come to life” in a way other teachers could not achieve, and that’s what we hope our system does for leaders everywhere.

Also like a student learning how to play piano, CIS is a skill you practice and develop over time. It is a problem-solving technique and philosophy that grows more and more intuitive the more you engage with it, and we’d like to teach it to you, as well as practice it with you.

As a bonus, this system can be applied in many areas of both your business and personal life as a logical approach to deconstructing challenges and achieving new goals.

HOW DOES CIS WORK IN PRACTICE?

CIS is both a learning and problem-solving philosophy, as well as a living method that can be applied to challenges in almost any realm of personal achievement – especially business development and business processes.

With industry-related problems, there are a few recurring areas that come up for clients and where they would like to see better results: operations – set up and refining processes, as well as scaling; sales; advertising; training and hiring; and developing a brand image, or company culture – including events and personal development for leaders. Workflow and work / life balance are big ones too.

These six areas all intertwine for owners and businesses, and challenges can span more than one – possibly even more than two – of these categories! There are other categories not listed, but important as well, like program development, or rolling out new products for your customer base. No matter the specific topic, each part of your business has its own set of techniques, theories, and levels of performance associated that can lead to improvement when all 3 work together fluidly.

As we start with an organization and apply AstroCat’s CIS, the learning phase at the very beginning is critical to us to create measurable success for you in the end. For that reason, we pay extra special attention to this step. Our goal is to fully understand the companies we serve like we are part of the team, and we want to learn what they are working to achieve first. We will keep asking questions until we fully see our client’s vision, so we can help bring it to life.

From there, we will dissect the systems and processes that have been built around the challenge, or goal for the company and will get down to the very core actions that result in success.

For example, challenges can include sign up success and the direct actions attached, or a metric for staff retention and evaluating all the data and team members involved. For solo operations, or leaders, we hone in on the intersection of different processes and streamlining efficiency in all your key areas. No matter the initiative, growing bottom-line, net profits is a huge deal and THE metric most businesses are working to improve, whether the objective is directly or indirectly contributing.

After learning the full scope of a business challenge, we analyze. We pick apart the systems involved and evaluate the strength of the soft skills and services needed to complete essential processes. We ask questions that determine a leader or team's level of understanding around the tasks they are completing every day, how they complete them, and uncovering if they see the same purpose in their daily work as our client (buyer) intended.

Finally, we assess the strength of performance around specific tasks and how aptitude in the areas of technique and theory tie in. Can improving one, or both areas help with performance? Or are technical and theoretical skills strong, but issues with performance are still present?

We will uncover the source, and will implement *practice-based solutions* for each of the three classical areas for improvement. Performance is the output and where clients see progress demonstrated, but developing a plan to address the technical and theoretical challenges that tie in leads to much greater success than any of the three areas alone. The process of problem-solving creates a connection with the person implementing the solution, as well as the audience being served.

Ultimately, the art of 'practice' is the cornerstone of CIS, because it is how you bring together Theory and Technique to create action within your business.

Studying and practicing performance will always be an important step, and it requires maintenance for you and your team.

THREE APPLICATIONS OF CIS :

Demonstrations of Our Philosophy, in Motion

To showcase the conceptual process behind our Classical Improvement System, we have created three fictionalized case studies and examples of how our method is applied. These challenges and businesses are based on a combination of real scenarios we have seen in our work as a team, and individually, but the specifics are revised to ensure anonymity.

Though these examples were imagined for the purpose of illustration, the types of challenges shared are authentic and occur. For small business owners across many industries, at least one of these situations will feel all too familiar.

Enjoy our applications of CIS for challenges in 3 different areas – sales, staff hiring and training, and advertising.

CLIENT CHALLENGE # 1 –

A company specializing in recurring personal training services with regularly scheduled appointments for group and private clients wants to improve their sales metrics.

PROCESS –

With our application of the CIS, we first learn what current advertising methods are in use and how effective these are for the company and generating clients. We also review their sales metrics for the last year (month by month), and year over year for the last 5+ years to get a sense of performance. Then we work with the owner to learn about processes and how goals are being met currently.

After learning the basic details, we review the company's communication channels and performance over phone, email, and through text with new clients and enrollment. To our surprise, we learn incoming traffic and leads are strong, and calls are being returned promptly and converting clients well. But email communications are more frequent than the phone for sales inquiries, and admins are unsure of how to answer complex questions with ease, or pitch the program beyond the initial contact form response template in written form.

This one area of lower performance has resulted in less-than-ideal conversion rates for the sales team with contact form outreaches. Also, a low percentage of conversations are started via email from web inquiries, as the volley of messages fades out after 1-2 responses.

The company's goal is to increase efficacy of sales, which will contribute to sustained growth and staying ahead of attrition rates. To achieve this, we at AstroCat would like to see their contact form conversions increase to the level of phone conversions, or beyond, as this will drive sales growth quickly and within the current infrastructure. Retention will also be addressed as part of the puzzle, but sales is the main focus for our objective and increasing conversion rates.

After the contact form sales metrics are made stronger, and current advertising becomes more impactful, we can move into new initiatives and adding to current campaigns. As a progression, our goal is to optimize what is available and running first to assess the current potential with the company's existing advertising and set strong, baseline performance metrics. Plus, web contact forms are a major way incoming clients will contact this business, so optimizing that channel will be needed for any additional advertising to be effective too.

Then, we analyze – we work with the owner on auditing their three-person admin team that handles sales, customer service, and managing the office. AstroCat uncovers a lack of templates, answer resources, and set process references created for these admins and identifies different routine communications and outreaches that occur regularly.

We also find the team performs well on phone calls and are good at engaging customers to drive sales through that medium. But in writing, they often reach dead ends on questions.

TECHNIQUE SOLUTION: We learn there has never been a specific sales training within the admin team and techniques to create call to actions, steps for sign up, etc. They are having to engineer solutions on the spot for any question that deviates from pricing, how it works, and how to sign up. Any policy questions are derailing the process via email, and most customers are abandoning the process, or not responding once they receive pricing and sign-up details.

Lastly, we learn there are no follow up templates for repeat engagement with leads and most conversations do not progress beyond the company's first outreach attempt. This results in a lost opportunity to pull as much value from successful client inquiries that made it to their organization. Though we do not believe in harassing follow ups, three genuine and spaced-out outreaches are not offensive, if sent thoughtfully.

We help with the development of new templates and most common questions to workshop within the company's team meetings. We work on communication strategies for the toughest inquiries and also rehearse sales verbiage as email exercises, since that is the most challenging medium for the group. We recommend the creation of extra training resources for admins, especially explanations that can be copied, or quickly reworded.

THEORY SOLUTION: We learn that admins are unsure of what clients experience when they have a first service with their company and do not know all the steps of their experience. The client forms are automated, and the admins do not see them, or receive a copy of what the client is seeing.

In terms of competitive advantages, the admin team is unable to provide confident answers for why a customer should choose their company's product over their competitors, or what others are charging within the same industry and how they measure up.

A meeting, resources, and training on the company identity is highly recommended and a presentation format is recommended to the CEO. We find this is an opportunity to include everyone in the organization during a slow time of year where 30% of the work day can be allocated to a lunch-and-learn workshop with their 6 employees.

They also start development on a company handbook at our recommendation and a set, defined sales process that includes a way to receive more context and talk through help solutions before answering the client inquiry. This ongoing, on the spot mentorship from the Admin Director will lead Junior Admins to grow their skill sets and receive personalized support.

Lastly, a bcc copy of clients' automated emails is added for admins to build awareness of what the client is seeing at each stage of getting started.

PERFORMANCE SOLUTION: in the area of Performance, we find that 2 of 3 administrators do not have regular intervals each day to answer contact form responses and keep email conversations active with potential clients, as they are going back and forth between project-related tasks and admin tasks – sometimes outside of the office entirely.

We recommend a couple ways to reorganize the office team and streamline communication. These include moving different admin duties exclusively to 1 person per medium (email leads go to the strongest writer, phone leads go to the strongest conversationalist). Or,

setting aside specific hours in each work day where admins check their emails to maintain communication flow with email responses and follow a set of template-based responses to the most difficult questions and next-lead communications. Another added benefit is that they can contact each lead 3 times with catchy subjects to make sure they receive the contact attempt and generate more traction via email.

Workshopping tricky dialogues and discussing the most difficult questions of the week in a regular round-up with the admin team will boost confidence in delivery of the company's information, which will lead to more sales due to increased trust and perception of reliability. Lastly, encouraging admins to move email conversations to the phone medium (if they feel more confident answering a specific question in this format) is a way they can apply their strengths wherever possible and work faster, if email is slowing them down.

For the future, the team plans the implementation of an AI solution for sending and creating template-based responses at specific intervals. The goal over the next year is to optimize workflow and eventually free 2 administrators from email management. This change will be made after fully testing and integrating this AI solution.

CLIENT CHALLENGE # 2 –

A music school is experiencing high staff turn-over and wants to make a change. Hiring is a huge expense, and turn-over hurts lesson quality and breaks parent confidence. The school would like to improve this trend and maintain teachers for multiple years, rather than months.

PROCESS –

As we start our work on this challenge, we first speak with the owner about trends they are seeing with their teachers and reasons given for exits. She shares that most are polite answers, but many teachers complain about their schedules and amount of parent communication needed day to day.

We then interview 10 members of the teaching staff that the owner arranges over a Zoom to get their individual thoughts about their day-to-day experiences with clients. We learn that there are high instances of cancellations and rescheduling requests teachers are fielding

directly, and many are quoting the policy and stock answers directly, but do not feel a relief in their overall schedule load.

From there, we analyze all the information gathered from the interviews and find that in addition to the issue with schedule density, most of the teaching staff has never seen a copy of what cancellation expectations parents have from the company's literature and the full policy they expect. There is also a gap in understanding the cut-off for rescheduling and instances when to reschedule and when to avoid. This issue snowballs for teachers with studios over 15 students, because the make-up density and lesson density in a week become a double-schedule in some cases.

Because the staff is varied, some teachers with studios over 15 students are still more impacted by cancellations than others, due to the internal pressure placed on themselves, as well as the varied levels of client pressure being received around rescheduling.

TECHNIQUE SOLUTION: in the area of technique, we find the majority of teachers have the baseline messaging mastered for schedule management. The issue is actually more organizational, than staff-related. The owner should create a limited number of scenarios and parameters around rescheduling for the entire team that resets this expectation for clients, especially. That will assist with creating a different wide-spread expectation, as well as a reference point for teachers to go back to with their clients, if asked for a reschedule they cannot do.

By creating clearer communication all around, messaging can become more aligned. New responses for teachers should also be created and presented in multiple forms over a period of 3 weeks to ensure this new solution is widely received and implemented.

THEORY SOLUTION: we recommend the owner and scheduling team create a centralized plan for make ups that is built into teaching schedules in advance, so that the time component is factored in, as well as the expectation on their end. To relieve the pressure the teaching staff is receiving around rescheduling and having their schedule density increased, it is up to the booking staff to build in the space for the expected and reasonable amount of make ups a teacher will need in a week. With a company-wide briefing (clients and staff) at the next, major seasonal break re: the policy additions, we will have a good time of year to refresh messaging, as well as manage any customer service related communications that will uptick slightly.

Then, we create a workshop strategy for the owner to roll out to the teaching staff around how to create the most efficient schedules and explaining the context for make ups and

when to go for it versus when to hold off. In the announcement of this new system, the direct benefits the teaching staff will experience should be highlighted. This initiative is designed to improve their experience, but any owner needs a buy in from their team to reach success. It's okay to share the expected benefits with your team, so long as you are transparent about what is fact at the time and what is your hope around the results.

PERFORMANCE SOLUTION: lastly, we encourage the entire teaching staff to send in their observations of the new systems for reschedules after a month, but share what questions we'll be asking at the start of this initiative through a starting survey. We will measure staff engagement and satisfaction markers at the beginning and end of the month to ensure we are moving in the right direction, based on their observations.

The advance knowledge of the questions and areas we are measuring encourages the teaching staff to start implementing the solution right away. For the owner, the data collected around the teaching staff's "experience metrics" will help us assess if there have been changes in the staff's workload. Also, we closely monitor their level of satisfaction with the role through both natural engagement and data provided.

If the overall changes are put into motion, the teaching staff should feel a positive change, but having a contingency plan in motion is always important. As a precaution, the teaching staff is given a way to reach out for assistance with specific client questions and predicaments, so on-demand support is possible for the challenging situations. This extra resource will ensure performance and implementation of the new system remains strong within the team. Though continued education (theory) and verbiage (technique) will be needed and repeated for the staff, this effort will lead to performance and positive results in their experience.

For the owner, we create ongoing initiatives to gain more insight into the day-to-day, inner workings of their team performing lessons. The goal is to continue developing the staff experience, and this will lead to a decline in staff turn-over that is fully measurable after a year.

Though retention measures will take time to be realized, immediate markers of success will be a slower pace of resignations and reschedules at key annual times where staff change-over naturally occurs. Also, there should be an immediate increase in the number of administrative dialogues that occur with the teaching staff to offer assistance with scheduling as a marker that retention trends are moving in the right direction.

After 3 months, we would like to see a decline in the number of off-season resignations that occur at atypical times, as well as expected times of year when compared to the last 3 years.

CLIENT CHALLENGE # 3 –

A Family-Owned and Operated landscaping business in Tampa, FL is having trouble generating sales through their current advertising methods. They have a loyal customer base in the Tampa area, but it is not growing fast enough to support rising equipment purchases and repair costs...not to mention the amount of earnings needed to support the labor requirements for the number of projects in motion. They are at an unsustainable place financially and need to speed up customer acquisition so they can shorten their drive routes and ensure timing + labor + revenue are all balancing.

PROCESS –

Our first step of listening and learning includes meeting with the owner and advertising manager within the company (i.e. family) and comprehensively auditing all advertising sources and history of “legacy clients” – the long time subscribers to their service and repeat buyers for years. We go through all ways they are and have attracted customers successfully and unsuccessfully.

As we dive deeper, we find that social media has been utilized by the younger family members and owners who will be taking over since the pandemic. Social Media was intended to replace the family’s former print ads their parents were running for years before to gain clientele effectively. As times changed, so did sales from the local papers. So social media came through for them around 2021 and helped them sustained an even pace of growth as younger family members introduced new ways of attracting customers. But in recent years, this medium has become flooded with similar businesses working the social media angle more aggressively, and the pandemic surge the family experienced when the real estate market was booming in their key neighborhoods faded out in intensity.

After analyzing the trends in Tampa and the neighborhoods the business serves most, we narrow down a defined geographical range of focus where the ideal clientele would live. Our theory is that utilizing as many advertising streams as possible that target this narrow area will lead to the most concentrated group of clients for the business, which will be the best asset for revenue growth. As more neighbors within the concentrated area see this

same company around, they will gain brand recognition and become associated with that area.

TECHNIQUE SOLUTION: We are missing varied advertising methods and “tools for the tool kit”. Therefore, we introduce new ways of building both brand recognition and ad streams to the company’s advertising efforts.

As one example of branding - all employees and crews are given matching, high-quality uniforms with shirts & rain jackets in a bright, neon-yellow color featuring a large company logo on the back. The high quality of garments to those seeing the crew will translate to better brand perception, as will the clear indication that this business and the same crew are synonymous with different properties.

Also for branding, all company vehicles are given a logo sign with a large phone number visible to neighbors and passers-by. The logo-sign and same vehicles within a short radius will build brand recognition in time. Each crew is also given referral cards for neighbors who approach them about services to hand out, and included is a free mowing upon sign up for a package, or \$100 off the first garden service.

THEORY SOLUTION: We get deeper into the different advertising sources that are available overall, and we add in Thumbtack.com campaigns, listserv campaigns, and hiring a freelance Paid Advertising specialist who can assist with both Google and early predictions about AI search to stay ahead of the curve (as of 2026). With Google, especially, geographical targeting can be refined to capture only the clients within the service bubble of the business, and budget is highly controllable – great for their seasonal business.

We also discuss the importance of working with the crews, themselves, to the owners. They need to find ways to make every layer of their team feel valuable part of their operations. By finding ways to show appreciation to the crews on the ground and build happy, healthy teams with fair working practices and pay, they generate a positive brand image from the ground-level where the service is happening and loyalty forms.

PERFORMANCE SOLUTION: Getting the pieces above in motion is sometimes easier said than done! On the performance side, there are 2 components...

1. The set up of these new ad streams and getting the ball rolling on that quickly, and effectively. The CIS can be applied AGAIN here to generate a 90 day plan for testing

and rolling out all these ad sources and initiatives...down to who buys the new uniforms and who reorders this year's advertising budget.

2. Then, the continued nurturing of the branding efforts as a focus for the family management team is a big focus. They should appoint 1-2 family members to be in charge of consistently monitoring competitors, pricing, the neighborhoods they are working in, and ways to create attractive, but not intrusive, promotions.

With these foundational steps, this business is on its way to new, refreshed advertising, as well as a recommitment to their mission and defining how they want to interface with their community in Tampa. With diligence, persistence, and the ability to go back and self-edit when needed, this business is bound for success.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

AstroCat Consulting applies our Classical Improvement System to business challenges across all clients and leaders as a central philosophy to problem-solving and systematically reaching goals.

The beauty of the Classical Improvement System is that it is universal and can be applied to any process-based objective! It can be utilized in many areas of life and personal development as a way to bring dreams into reality, and it can be taught to all ages. Truly, CIS is the philosophy behind learning and one way to theorize how education is approached. Just think of learning to write from the technical, theoretical, and performances aspects – there is a dash of technique, theory, and performance each in the mix.

With organized thought and a plan of action, no goal is out of reach. In fact, this is exactly how we help our clients reach for the stars and how we approach our own development and personal achievements.

Contact us, or send an RFP to astro@astrocatconsulting.com to discuss our services and how we can help you Reach for the Stars!