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GROW YOUR BUSINESS

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4 Common Communication Failures (And How to Fix Them)

Starting your business may be a one-man show, but eventually, it will be time for the onboarding of new partners, colleagues, and team members. With each new individual comes a new collaboration, and with that, perhaps new challenges in communication.

Every person has their own unique method of communication. One of the most essential qualities every good business owner displays is the ability to listen to, adhere to, and mediate between these many diverse personalities.

While each situation may play out differently, there are some common communication gaffs that can be expected universally, no matter the team, no matter the industry. More importantly, there is also always a fix!

1. First and foremost, is the delicate issue of balance. The pendulum swings two ways- too much communication and too little. Be discerning of what you share to avoid clogging up inbox's and overwhelming your team. Keep notes of what you want to communicate throughout the day, then send everything out at one

time. Conversely, be wary of not being informative, and essentially alienating your team. Try your best to uphold transparency and keep people feeling connected.

2. Misunderstandings lead to misinformation. Or is it the other way around? Either way, the danger here is the (mis) itself. Poor communication breeds both of the above and can lead to conflict between team members, late or missed deadlines, poor productivity, frustration - the list goes on. Avoid the two (mis') by being simple, clear, and to the point in all communication. Give directives, be assertive, and always confirm that you are being understood. Don't be afraid to reiterate or resend information in a new format; repetition can help cement understanding.

3. Location, location, location. With so many new developments these days, you may find that your team is more scattered (literally!) than ever. Remote work has its benefits, but one downfall is that it can create communication issues. To avoid this snag, work on setting up standing meeting times and holding to them.

It is your responsibility to keep the team connected, to keep freelancers in the loop, and to facilitate the best communication methods possible.

4. Failure to listen. This one is big. It's a common problem because most of us think this is not a problem! Actively listening is crucial to avoid communication issues. Reacting, not responding, is very common. Try to encourage your team to actively listen by demonstrating the practice yourself. Your team look to you for guidance, and being an effective communicator is no different. Find your own strengths and be a mentor for others.

Always remember to set expectations, no matter what form of communication you are engaging in. This will provide a great base line for what needs to be accomplished and will allow better assessment for you as to the effectiveness of the exchange. Remember - communication is not always face-to-face. Emails, voice messages, newsletters, blog posts, social media messages- these are all forms of communication whether they be between your team, your clients, or your potential audience.



Foolproof Ways to build Your Customer Base

Talking customer acquisition does not have to be intimidating. After all, it's mostly common sense, paired with a few tricks of the trade!

The easiest trick? Tap into your current customer base! Ensuring that your clients are also your number one fans creates a buzz without you having to do much. Happy clients spread the word, people love to rehash a service that went above and beyond.

Make sure you are going above and beyond for your current clients- even with growth in mind and new clients as a goal, never neglect what is right in front of you. The driving force behind a happy customer can rarely be matched!

Along these lines, think referrals. Referrals are one of the most commonly employed acquisition strategies worldwide. Why? Referrals are based on mutual trust and respect- leading to a more pressing call-to-action. Having current clients vouch for your services does more than any ad campaign can do.

Consider offering incentives, discounts, or rewards for referrals, incentivizing both the party who referred, as well as the

referee.

Forge partnerships with businesses that compliment your own and offer custom-tailored incentives for their clientele. Do a lot of business with one vendor in particular? Perhaps you have a mutual message that can be shared across both platforms, seamlessly allowing you to tap into their customer base.

Be more social! Both media wise, and IRL (that means 'in real life' for those not versed in newfangled internet-speak!). Take to social media to launch a campaign that is specifically geared towards customer acquisition.

Remember that these platforms are a great way to convert new clients, bring back past customers as well as recruit from your competition.

Troll the Facebook pages of your competition- are there unmet customer needs? Are there disgruntled clients seeking salvation in the form of better customer service? Take advantage of these public forums of complaint and capitalize on their mistakes.

IRL, get out there and be face-to-face.

Networking may seem like the thing you never have time for; make time. Meeting people and having personalized discussions is still a top-of-the-list method of customer acquisition. Old school does not mean old hat- many potential clients still value the importance of communication that is not separated by screens.

Offering great customer care is the way you keep a client, so the hard part becomes getting those potential new clients in the door, so to speak. Be a powerful publicist for your business- host an event in your location, or partner with local businesses to host one. Give a speech, join a committee, hold a fundraiser, support a local cause, create a giveaway.

You should always consider your business to be 'on stage' whether it be big or small. Speaking to your audience through any and all platforms, in other words, completely canvassing your market, is the most foolproof way to acquire new business. Once you have the customer in the door, the focus can shift to retention efforts. Though do not forget you should always be driving energy, time, and funds towards new clientele, no matter how many great customers you find yourself with!



Implementing The Most Effective Social Media Marketing Techniques

We have come a long way since the days of door-to-door marketing. Heck, we have come a long way since the golden age of radio and then television advertising! The driving force behind this constant evolution is simple: technology.

Safe to say, evolving technology is not a trend. Inherently fluctuating, we must be fluid, flexible, and ready to accept the changes and incorporate them into our best practices.

This cannot be truer than with social media and the way that we utilize it. Marketing techniques have reached a boiling point- and the pot continues to overflow. There seems to be an unlimited supply of ideas on how to make the most of your marketing via social media, it can be a challenge to decide where to begin and which to employ.

We will try to simplify this process... All media marketing techniques are NOT created equally. The same goes for businesses. These techniques are a base line for what will work, but be sure to always cater to your audience, build your message and stay in line with your vision, mission and goals.

Your social media, at its best, can serve as a virtual sales team. This is not to say that by simply creating and maintaining your accounts, clients will begin to pour in. It takes work, commitment, and mostly, it takes time.

If you can, consider a social media manager. This can be a part time position, as long as the sole responsibilities include the content management of all your platforms. Embracing social media is important, but we aren't asking you to bite off more than you can chew. Hire someone who is versed in the language of social media- the investment in their time will pay off handsomely.

Really cannot afford it? Look into local colleges or universities or even high schools and inquire about intern programs.

Feeling up for the challenge yourself? Great! Start by establishing your goals for the campaign- this is the best (and only) way to track ROI.

Employ the good old SMART acronym when defining objectives: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-Bound. Take a look at how you are currently utilizing your social media platforms. Cultivate a list of the best platforms for your business and consider a content management assistant,

like Hootsuite. Some experts refer to this step as the "audit", identifying areas for improvement, what works, what doesn't, etc. A quantitative view of your current practices can act as a springboard for improvement.

Do your fair share of stalking (the competition that is). In creating your online identity, it is imperative that you stand out and are offering a message that has not been over indulged. Check out what your competition is doing as an aid in the crafting of your own individual and unique strategy. Don't be a copycat!

Get your team on board- you need the support! When adopting new strategies, it is best practice to ensure that your whole team understand the choices being made and can get behind the plans. Social media is a lot of work and work that can easily be derailed by one reticent individual. If they don't "buy into it", offer up workshops, training seminars, or resource materials that could convince them to change their mind.

Once you are up and running, it is all about cultivating and managing relationships. Your platforms must be relatable and responsive. Your media must act as an employee itself- show up every day, put in the work, confer with colleagues, measure results, and produce.



Benefits of An Internal Audit

The word “audit” is scary. Cue sweaty palms, racing minds, and a general feeling of unease and panic. However, when we are talking about an internal audit, the ball is in your court and the benefits greatly outweigh those pesky panicked feelings.

Internal audits aim to assess:

1. Functionality
2. Risk
3. Solutions

Instead of fearing the audit, embrace it. It provides crucial insight into your business’ overall effectiveness and is designed to support improvement.

Interestingly, a terrifying number of small business owners believe that their size somehow protects them. This false sense of security is exactly what sets them up as perfect targets for security breach.

Truth is, size does not matter. Every business, small and big, should be aware of their potential risk factors in order to best be prepared to fend them off. This is the possible number one

benefit of an internal audit: protection and proper planning. Whether it be risk-avoidance or operational, an audit is like exploratory surgery- open it up, take a close look at all the working parts, then assess, identify, and solve any problems.

An internal audit is also a great way to perform a quality control check of sorts. Taking a closer look at each stage of your process (whether it be recruitment and hiring, customer service, production, etc.) allows for small tweaks to ensure at each stage, performance is at its best, improving overall quality.

It is also a great time to look back at your business plan. Are you hitting your goals? Are you sticking to your mission? Have you altered, deviated from, or completely strayed from the plan? Take the opportunity to realign.

Assessing your internal controls every once in a while is just like an oil change for your car. It is necessary, though you can push it

pretty far before the eventual breakdown. Steer clear of the breakdown with an internal audit.

In short, an internal audit:

1. Protects assets, reduces risk of fraud
2. Improves efficiency
3. Secure financial integrity
4. Ensures compliance
5. Establishes procedures for future monitoring.

BLURB: Consider Value over Volume as a Time Management Skill.

So you start the day with a to-do list. Items are removed, as others are constantly tacked on. Seeing your list divided as “value” or “volume” can help rank levels of importance and assign an order in which things should be accomplished. Give yourself the goal of accomplishing one item from “value” for every two “volumes”. At the end of day, you should see a much shorter list under value. If something remains on your volume list for days on end, constantly being bumped, perhaps it’s time to delegate.



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