

Online Communication Skills, Tips, and Business Trends

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We exist to train, educate, and support entrepreneurs of both new (pre-venture) and established small businesses. Positioned within the nationwide network of SBDCs, we offer resources, key connections at the state and national level, workshops, and online and in-person support that equips us to help Ocean State entrepreneurs reach the next level of growth.



Online Communication Skills, Tips, and Business Trends

Internal comms

Intranet
Emails
Meetings
Training
Newsletters
Phone calls

Websites
Social media
Flyers
Events
Photography

External comms

Advertising
News releases
Conferences
Speaking engagements

INTERNAL

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Internal- TEAM BUILDING

When a strong employee engagement communication plan is in place, it guarantees staff loyalty, motivation and productivity.

In contrast, poor internal communication can have an extremely negative effect on your business. It can lead to lowered morale, confusion and reduced productivity and profits. Ultimately, it can seriously harm your bottom line. In fact a Towers Watson study revealed that companies that communicate ineffectively are 50% more likely to report below average turnover levels.

Know Your Desired Outcome

Who is this specific communication aimed at? What do you want people to do differently as a result?

Never forget to focus on who your employee communication is aimed at. How can you make it relevant to your target audience? Your staff have a lot on their minds already, from the details of the task they have in hand to worries about what the future has in store for their job, to personal matters and concerns. Your job is to cut through all this noise and get your message heard.

To get, and keep, your employee's attention you will need to understand your audience and what information they will find interesting and important. It may be helpful to segment the audience into specific groups.

Timing is Everything

Are you maintaining a regular schedule of communications?

Timing is crucial. Make sure your timing does not conflict with big news events already in the corporate diary.

Another factor to consider is the pace of your internal communications. Your aim should be to maintain a regular, scheduled and consistent pace of messaging. When your communications become intermittent, you will find engagement levels begin to suffer as employees feel forgotten and side-lined.

Don't Overwhelm Employees

Our staff has a huge amount of information thrust at them on a daily basis. Emails, meetings, bulletins, notices, mandatory reads: that's not even accounting for non-work content pushed on social media, news sites, and more. You don't want the internal communications messaging to be just another part of this digital noise.

Refer back to the objectives of your larger internal communications plan and ask: what's the value in this communication or piece of content? Does it support my goal? Is it necessary?

Provide Channels for Feedback and Ideas

What's the value of a thought or idea if it's never expressed? Be sure to provide channels for your team to give feedback and share ideas, whether it's regarding the workplace, the current product, potential future products or the company as a whole. It could be a company forum, a designated channel within your company chat software, a whiteboard in the office or a cloud-based service. Without these channels, brilliant ideas and helpful criticisms can be missed, which no company should afford to lose.

EXTERNAL

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External Communication- MARKETING

In many ways, the importance of Online Etiquette, known as Netiquette, exceeds that of in-person etiquette, because unlike fleeting acquaintances, the internet creates a permanent record of communications which can haunt people and businesses that have been ineffective or offensive in previous online interactions.

When communicating via faceless channels, such as email or social platforms, it's important to remember that there is a real person on the receiving end, although you cannot see them. This will also ensure you are using human language, rather than writing with a robot receiver in mind.

Customized Experiences

As a marketer or business owner, you need to learn about your customers so you can personalize each interaction. For example, you can use a tone that matches the client's personality. A customer who enjoys sharing opinions and having longer conversations differs in personality and buying preferences than one who prefers short, formal conversations.

A staggering 80 percent of customers prefer to buy from brands that offer highly personalized experiences. Furthermore, nearly half of buyers have made impulse purchases after receiving personalized recommendations from a brand.

Another strategy is to deliver personalized content to your customers. If you're sending out promotional emails, customize them for each client. Consider using customer communications management software to track customers' preferences across all channels. This will allow you to learn more about your target audience and deliver individualized messages.

Use clear and concise language

Tone of voice: Are you writing a formal piece of copy that calls for sophisticated vocabulary, or would your audience respond better to a more casual, conversational writing style?

Technical jargon: Too much industry 'jargon' could end up alienating audiences unfamiliar with such specific terminology. Instead, use technical terms where necessary, but aim to keep your content as accessible as possible. When using acronyms always write the full phrase out in full the first time you use it followed by the acronym in brackets – eg search engine optimisation (SEO). That way, readers will know exactly what you are referring to later in the text.

Break up your text: A long page of unbroken copy is likely to put many readers off. Use subheadings, bullet points, and lists to break up your content into digestible chunks that look less daunting on the screen. From an SEO perspective, a well-structured web page is also far easier for spiders to crawl and index.

Use Respectful Language

If you wouldn't do it to the face of anyone who might conceivably see what you write, don't write it. This goes for any social media site, forum, chat room, or email message, even if you think it can't be traced back to you. It can.

It's not just what you say and how you say it, it is also WHERE you say it.

And it's not just what you say, but how you say it. Either take the trouble to use the shift key for capital letters, or write in all lower case, but don't use caps lock. Text in all caps is generally perceived as yelling. Please don't forget to say please and thank you as appropriate.

Company culture is important. Some business culture does not allow for exclamation points, or emojis, while others can support these deviations from business language.

Website or Blog

Your website and blog are both great avenues for external communication. While your website can share useful information about your company through an About page, brand manifestos, and so on, your blog is a great way to educate people about your products and services or announce upcoming changes. With a comment section or contact page, you also give a voice to the other side of the conversation. Remember, communication goes both ways.

Email

Email is still one of the most effective external communication methods around. 86% of business professionals prefer to use it when communicating for professional reasons and its marketing ROI is through the roof. With segmentation, you can group each of the people you're communicating with into their own specific groups, from customers to shareholders, and potential partners.

Social Media

Social media has emerged as one of the best forms of communication available. It also helps you to establish relationships with your audience. Remember, for social media to be an effective part of your external strategy, you shouldn't just be talking at your followers, but communicating with them. Offer customer service through your social channels and respond to comments or questions.

Press Releases

The press release is still a great component of an external communications strategy. They are a great way to get your voice heard when you're announcing important updates. They also build business credibility, are great for SEO and are shareable on social media to build engagement.

Conclusion

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Takeaways

1. Know your audience
2. Choose the right platform
3. Make it worth it
4. Allow for feedback
5. Be relatable

Resources:

[Press Releases Still Matter](#)

[Internal vs External Communication](#)

[Business Communication for
Managers](#)

[Top Ten Communication Trends in
2020](#)

Questions?

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