

PROFIT MATTERS

Helping you realise your full profit potential



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Improve your communication

Now is the time for small businesses to take advantage of new tools and technologies available thanks to the rapidly expanding nature of the online communications world.

The ability to successfully communicate with clients and colleagues plays a vital role in creating strong business relationships and proactive work environments. When there is little or no communication, projects can break down, contacts may dissipate and relationships start to fall apart.

Today, the methods of communication on offer to small businesses are almost unlimited. No longer confined to verbal form, communication between clients, employees and more can now take place through file sharing platforms, instant messaging and social media applications.

With the door wide open to such opportunities, now is the time for small businesses to take advantage of these connections to improve their methods of communication.

Intranet platforms help small businesses achieve maximum efficiency when organising their files. They enable employees to share, search and file information in a safe and protected environment that is interactive and accessible 24/7.

Gone are the days where employees lost themselves wading through clogged up inboxes searching for files attached to emails. Employees can now find and view any file type in a secure location by using a file-sharing platform. They can also work simultaneously together on separate computers to review, edit or comment on documents.

Because there are quite a few intranet platforms on offer, it's important to consider the reasons

why a particular platform is right for your small business. An intranet platform should complement the communication structure of the business that is already in place.

Since businesses offer different services, it's essential that the right file sharing platform is chosen that addresses the needs of your employees and clients.

Email is considered to be the most convenient method of connecting employers, employees and clients. It is free and is also an easy to use method of online communication. However, the flexibility it once offered is slowly deteriorating.

The design of emailing works perfectly for short-term communication, but as soon as conversations develop into long and complex exchanges, most email platforms can't cope with the amount of information shared.

In response to this problem, there are now several new communication applications designed to reduce email overload. They do this by neatly organising conversations into communication threads that can be accessed through almost any internet browser.

By combining these conversations into the one window, employees and clients are able to maximise their communication without sacrificing their inboxes to a profusion of messages and files.

Finally, maintaining your small business records can be made a whole lot easier when using an online file-sharing system. Since keeping business records is an important aspect in any of organisation, companies should consider investigating systems that could complement and improve their methods of organisation.

Keeping your balance in life

Finding the right balance between work and home life can sometimes become a quite tricky tightrope to walk across.

It's just one of the numerous balancing acts you'll find in the 21st century. Trying



to juggle a successful career with a vibrant social or happy family life is a task facing almost every staff member in the workforce.

Unfortunately for a number of workers, this balance in their lives isn't level. Too often the scales are tipping, resulting in stressed, worn out and overworked employees, who are too tired to enjoy other aspects of their lives.

Even though there's nothing wrong with wanting to be a good family role model or having a successful career, it is important to maintain the equilibrium in your lifestyle. Remember that you are the one that's in control of your life, so it's your responsibility to make sure you remain happy and healthy.

Prioritise your time

Maybe you're lagging behind in a group project because you left work early to catch a movie with a friend. Or perhaps you miss your daughter's soccer games because you're in the office every Saturday. Set aside some time to determine your top five priorities and plan your schedule based on that.

Make sure you learn how to manage your time in the most effective way possible so you don't have to miss work deadlines, family outings or social gatherings.

Remove bad habits

Continuing bad lifestyle habits can have serious repercussions on your goal of achieving a balance in life. Lack of sleep, a diet lacking in nutrition, bad exercise habits or engaging in time-wasting activities are all factors that contribute to an unbalanced lifestyle. By removing or improving upon these habits, you're more likely to achieve a balanced lifestyle in the long run.

Don't be afraid to ask for help

If you feel like you're truly struggling, remember it's never too late to ask for advice or support. Speak to your employer about the problem you're having at work, or communicate with your partner about any family issues you are facing. If you don't address the issue, it won't go away. The sooner you confront it, the better.

Dealing with a difficult employee

For some, it's an easily handled situation. For others, it's one of their worst nightmares. And the chances are, it's bound to happen to every employer at least once during their career.

Having to deal with someone in your team who just isn't coping in the office is not a pleasant situation for anyone.

There may be a variety of reasons for this, including (but not limited to) a personality clash between you and the employee, or between the employee and someone else, the employee having a bad or lazy work ethic, the workload may be too much to handle, the job isn't what it was expected to be like, or maybe external factors like the employee's home life are significantly affecting his/her work.

Whatever the reason, it's a situation that no employer wants to find themselves in, for it can severely affect the working environment of your office, as well as the quality of work expected from your clients.

As much as many of us would like to think, this kind of problem does not just fix itself, so although discussing the issue may be daunting to some, the sooner action is taken, the sooner a solution can be reached.

Here are some tips to get you started on what you should prepare before addressing the issue with your employee.

Be specific

You need to know the exact reasons why

you have decided to call a meeting with this particular employee. It's no good just telling them that you're not happy with their work attitude or quality of work produced. You need to explain to them exactly what it is you are not happy with. They may be incredibly rude to other employees, but never miss a deadline. Or they may always offer to do the coffee run, but somehow manage to send an email to the incorrect address repeatedly. Make sure you are clear with what is displeasing you.

Record everything

Before you call a meeting, try to maintain a record of the problems that have arisen due to the employee. This will then form the basis of your evidence if the employee denies anything that has happened. Or it could even give you a better understanding of why they behave in a particular way if you see a pattern forming.

Take the time to listen

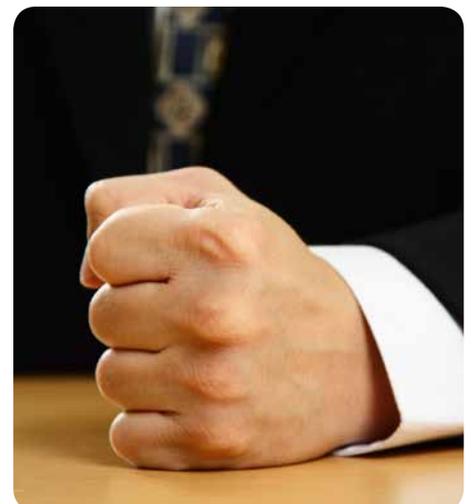
If an employee has been underperforming for quite a while, many employers may eventually find themselves focusing solely on the bad behaviour or quality of work produced. Instead, they should be stopping and paying attention to what may actually be the cause of the bad work.

Sometimes just listening to your employee can make all the difference in the world. Perhaps they noticed a change in their quality of work as well and were too afraid to say anything, or perhaps they just needed a quick chat with the boss to let them know what was going on in their life.

Give clear feedback

Instead of always complaining about the employee, give them some clear feedback on their work. Again, some employers may find this to be a difficult or uncomfortable task, but it's something that needs to be done.

Remember, it's more difficult having an employee in the office not pulling their weight and negatively affecting those around them. Giving the employee specific information targeted at helping them improve their work quality helps them firmly understand exactly what you want from them, and increases the chances of a positive outcome for all.



What does your leadership say about you?

Do you have what it takes to make sure everyone in your team makes it to the finish line?

How do you motivate your employees? What kind of leadership style do you think will work best for a particular project?

To be an accomplished leader, you need to have a certain set of skills and attributes that serve to inspire and motivate others. Leaders are driven and committed individuals who have ambition, and are willing to work hard to achieve their aspirations and goals.

There are many different approaches that can be taken to achieve success in a leadership

position. So it is important to know which approach and which skills should be utilised in different project ventures.

Start thinking about what kind of leader you want to be, by first identifying your own strengths and weaknesses. This can help to determine how you can play to your strengths and overcome your weaknesses, before taking on a team of individuals. Also, start to consider the kind of leader you would readily follow or look up to when working in a team.

Think about how you plan to motivate your team. Will you act as a role model and lead by example or find what motivates each individual and encourage that manner of thinking? Everyone is different, which means they respond to different forms of motivation. Be prepared to try out different methods before you reach success.

No matter what kind of leadership style you choose, every leader must be organised so they are prepared for anything when completing a project. Incorporating a consistent and systematic approach to the project makes it easier to delegate tasks, set deadlines, evaluate progress and meet expectations.

Lastly, just because you're in charge doesn't mean you know everything. Having this kind of attitude can limit your ability to grow and develop as a leader. Being open to learning new things, especially from your team, can serve to improve your knowledge and skills.



Creative thinking

Creative and critical thinking aren't often associated with one another. But here's why the two work perfectly together when exploring innovative ways to improve your workplace.

Being creative doesn't just mean thinking up 'outside the box' ideas. It also means keeping an ear to the ground for new ways to do something within your field or industry.

Creative and critical thinking intertwine when new ideas evolve over a process of time. Because first time ideas aren't always perfect, they need to be looked at with a critical eye. This is so they can be evaluated and tested to ensure maximum success.

This kind of thinking may work wonders in your workplace, if you feel like your services are beginning to lack in creativity. Ways to boost your creativity levels at work include:

Expand your knowledge: New ideas or ways of doing things are often based on newly acquired knowledge. Always strive to be learning more in your field of expertise.

Gain experience: Exposing yourself to new experiences can help to develop your creative and critical thinking.

Look elsewhere: Looking in places that have been overlooked or not previously considered may give you the upper hand in a competitive industry.



Wise Words

One of the greatest mistakes you can make in business is continually fearing that you will make one.

- Chris Teske

Maintaining your health in the workplace

Continue to produce a high-quality standard of work by maintaining a high-quality standard of healthy living.

There's no denying that when you're not feeling 100% healthy, work becomes a whole lot harder. Sitting for long periods of time at a desk five days a week definitely takes a toll on the body. To counteract some of the strains or pressures felt from working such long hours, try out some of the following activities.

Drink more water

When you hit a brick wall at work, put down the sugary snack and pick up the water bottle. This lull in concentration isn't due to needing an afternoon sugar hit. It's probably because you're dehydrated.

Go for a walk

If you're cooped up in an office all day, one of the best things you can do for your body is to go for a walk during your lunch break. Not only will you be burning calories, you'll also have a chance to de-stress and refresh.

Clean your work space

Your desk may be home to thousands of germs. So make sure you regularly get out the disinfectant and clean your workspace, to avoid catching any nasty colds or flus.

The importance of keeping track

Make sure you don't ever have the wool pulled over your eyes by staying organised, up-to-date, and keeping track of all your paperwork.



Small businesses in Victoria were recently alerted to a particularly nasty scam that cost many owners hundreds of dollars. Authorities apparently received around 300 reports of businesses being threatened to pay for advertising that didn't actually exist.

Having no time to check their records, many businesses unfortunately fell for the scam and paid these non-existent bills before realising exactly what had happened. This is why small business owners should make the seemingly laborious task of filing and organising the paperwork a top priority in the office to avoid these kind of scams.

Here are some ways to make organising and keeping track of your paperwork as simple and easy as possible:

Add some colour

Try adding some colour to your filing system. By using different colours, tabs or labels to distinguish between the subjects and topics, it is more appealing on the eye, and can

make it a lot quicker and easier to find what you're after.

Use more than one basket

The saying 'never put all your eggs in the one basket' can apply to your paperwork too. Having all of your documents in the one place is likely to create disorder and clutter. Alternatively, try having four separate sections; a to-do basket, to-pay basket, to-file basket and a to-read basket.

Make it a habit

If you make filing the paperwork a weekly habit, it will soon become just that, and no longer an avoided or hated task. The more you do it, the less time it should take as well; around 15 - 20 minutes per day should do the trick.

About us

Social media: which one is for you?

There is now a widely held belief that to increase your company's presence online, you must incorporate the use of some kind of social media platform. But this might not always ensure the success you expect.

Social media platforms have opened the door to a whole new range of online opportunities for small businesses. These opportunities include, but are not limited to, new ways of increasing brand recognition, presence and communication by advertising products and services online.

With such a large range of social media

platforms readily available and accessible, there are very little restrictions placed on which platforms you can and cannot use. But just because there are so many platforms out there, does not mean you have to be active on every single one of them.

So before small businesses take the plunge into the world of social media, it's very important that they first determine which platforms will serve to be most beneficial to their company.

Uploading content to every social media platform does not necessarily gain likes, friends or followers, for each platform is specifically designed to host certain kinds of content for certain kinds of users.

Some small businesses may also find that they don't have the manpower or time to handle the responsibility of actively using more than one social media platform. This is not necessarily a bad thing; it just means that they need to be selective in the social media platforms they do choose to use.

Small businesses should always begin by researching both social media use and their target audience. Think of the behaviour of your target audience or clients. If their personas do not fit within the certain requirements or behaviours of a social media platform, then it's probably best not to use it.

As stated before, there's no point uploading content that no one is going to be viewing.



Even once your company has chosen one or two social media platforms to use, make sure you stay up to date with how the other social media platforms grow and develop. Just because they may not offer the services you need now, does not necessarily mean this will still be the case in years to come.

The online world will continue to grow and evolve, and so platforms will always be developing to become more accessible and usable for all.