



## GROW YOUR BUSINESS

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## Best Options for Inter Office Communication

Inter office communication (in this case we refer to communications within the office) can be viewed as the grease that keeps the machine running smoothly. Without it, everything can come to a grinding halt.

Inter office communication is a major function of the modern office and choosing the best strategies for maintaining open and seamless communication is vital.

With well-maintained communication, co-ordination between departments is seamless, office systems become routine and, overall, it projects a positive image of your company as a whole, in the eyes of your clients.

Often inter office communication is overlooked, as it is not dealing directly with clients. The first step to good communication within the office is to establish professionalism.

Email is the most commonly used inter office communication method. Dictate clear guidelines to your team and require that emails follow a specific protocol.

Develop an email format that is used uniformly throughout the office to simplify.

Many offices employ the use of an intranet- a network operating within an organization.

*“Benefits are increased productivity and the immediate delivery of information.”*

This private extension of the internet acts as a platform for posting office materials, announcements, files, directories, sales, projects, etc. Benefits are increased productivity and the immediate delivery of information, in a secure and efficient manner.

Intranet also encourages collaborations and builds corporate culture. It is built for your specific audience, has cross platform capabilities and is cost effective.

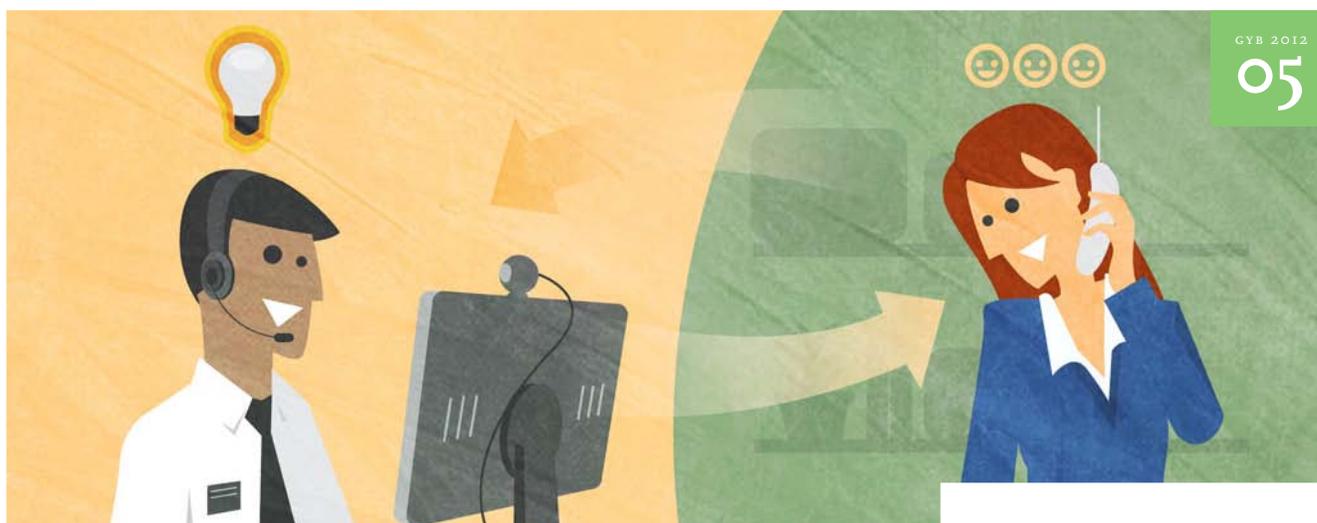
Employ the use of instant messaging systems that are simple and use friendly. These quick messaging platforms increase productivity and reduce time spent on tracking down answers.

We use a system called PowWow - an online collaboration tool, which allows a simple, clear and secure interoffice communication on projects and group tasks.

PowWow functions like a cloud, retaining files and allowing for multiple users to access and edit files, send messages, create milestones and to-do lists, etc.

This sort of system is useful because it encourages team members to utilize the same platform for all office communications and keeps things organized and fluid.

Regardless of the type of inter-office communication, it is important to stress the need for professionalism. Short, succinct and to the point should be standard.



## Customer Service, Awesome Service

Don't just boast about your awesome customer service- create a system and take the steps to really mean it.

Start from the ground up and adequately train your team members. Invest time in refresher courses, dedicating efforts to revisiting classic methods as well as fresh innovations.

Systemize your service. Consistency is the key - clients will come back when they feel like they are appreciated.

Nurturing your clients is low cost and effective. Make your clients feel valued.

Regular mailings (newsletters, articles of interest, thank you notes, holiday cards, etc.) and loyalty programs are the best ways to remain connected and to ensure your clients are being nurtured.

If you choose to make use of customer service strategies such as live chat options, social media outlets or email support, be sure to fully consider the ramifications.

Do you have the staff to support these options? Do these staff members have adequate time to devote to these channels?

Only offer services in which you can excel. It's better to focus on the 'less is more' model when it comes to support- unavailability is frustrating to a client.

*“Excellent customer service is a competitive business differentiator.”*

Select Client Relationship Management (CRM) software that will allow you to track all correspondence. Refer back to the CRM constantly to see where things stand, and take action to satisfy all client issues.

Make “please” and “thank you” a company-wide mantra. Studies show that these simple platitudes can help make or break a deal.

Know how to apologize when called for. Listen and be attentive. When dealing with clients, always use names and activate familiarity.

*“Your most unhappy customers are your greatest source of learning.” – Bill Gates*

Asking for regular feedback shows your client you are dedicated to their needs and value their opinions. It also allows you to get unique insight and create new strategies based on experiences.

Utilize satisfaction surveys, comment boxes and customer advisory boards to gather your client's feedback.

When in doubt, employ the **RETAIL** strategy:

**Really** welcome the client  
**Enquire** about their needs  
**Talk** in their language  
**Ask** questions constantly  
**Invite** them to decide  
**Leave** them on a high



## Warning Signs that Your Client May Be Heading Out the Door

Rarely do clients provide notice of their intention to take their business elsewhere. Learn to recognize some of the warning signs early and you may save yourself the headache of losing a client.

Often communication will start to slow down. Use CRM's to track communication with clients so you can be immediately aware of a lull or break in correspondence. Reactivate the relationship by sending a personal email, making a phone call, or stopping by in person.

You may notice that your discussions are focusing more on your prices than anything else. Consider a special offer or re-examine your value proposition to ensure the client understands the value of your solutions.

Clients may show a lack of trust, and begin questioning the quality of your product of service. In this case, gain as much information as you can into what specifically is causing their dissatisfaction. Devise a strategy to tackle the issues and present this solution to the client.

Clients may become difficult to contact. Excuses such as "too busy" will become the norm. Get face-to-face with your client. You may be able to salvage the relationship if you go the extra mile.

Late payments may signify a client is dissatisfied. Make the call and find out if cash flow is an issue and offer payment plans and other options that may alleviate this problem. Involve us in this process as it's important you are aware of just how much you can give away.

*"The best warning sign is to receive regular, in-depth client feedback."*

This insight will give you the upper hand in tackling issues and will result in better client retention.

Devise a checklist: do you and your team members arrive on time for meetings? How often are phone calls ringing through to voicemail? What is the average time it

takes for a client to receive a callback? How often are you in touch with your clients? Continue to ask the right questions and take preemptive steps to avoid losing clients over time.

### FOCUSING ON BRAND CONSISTENCY

When taking steps towards a more virtual business marketing strategy, ensure that you are creating a consistent brand image. Before venturing into social media and other web related areas, it is important to hone in and clearly define your image. Select colors that represent your desired image and use them across the board, your logo should appear on all materials and be sure to include your taglines.



## Things to Secure Before Taking a Holiday

Taking a much-needed break? Ensure that you will enjoy the peace and quiet by tying up loose ends before ditching your desk.

Start with your computer. Run a check and complete all software updates and then execute a full back up. For extra insurance, complete your back up on an external hard drive and store it in an off-site location.

Be prepared in case of emergency requests and last minute changes by completing a back up on an online storage site, allowing you to gain access to your files from any computer, at any time.

Create a few relevant folders and save to them on a cloud-based storage site like Dropbox, or on a USB drive that you can take along. Confirm that your email accounts are synced to your mobile, laptop or tablet device.

Leave your computer on if you think you might need to access it remotely and be sure to enable the 'Sharing' or 'Remote Access' modes before leaving.

Set up an Out of Office notification that automatically replies to emails and messages sent to your accounts.

*“Delegate responsibilities and have all your clients covered.”*

Helpful information to include are your dates of departure and return, details of who to contact for immediate assistance and your apologies for any inconveniences your absence may cause.

You may also change your voicemail and phone messaging systems to relay the same information. Whatever you do, don't leave your clients hanging.

These notifications will also save you the headache of sifting through hundreds of repeat messages upon your return.

If you are in the midst of a project or task, make sure to delegate responsibilities to a

team member and above all, ensure that you have covered all your clients. Assign a point person who can act as your stand in on all your accounts, and in the event that a deadline changes or a conflict arises.

Leave your assistant or another team member a list of emergency contacts, names and instructions, should you lose touch or be out of contact suddenly for unforeseeable reasons.

Organize your desk and office space before leaving. Not only will this make it easier should a team member need to find something on your desk, but it will be a calming and less stressful environment to return to.



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