

Interpersonal Communication is the Commodity of the Future

Clients don't care how much you know.... until they know how much you care!

Electronic communication platforms are forcing us to lose our ability to relate to each other in meetings, staff rooms, socially and professionally and even worse to our hard fought for and very expensive client portfolio? In the name of technological advancement businesses are sacrificing the very thing our clients crave, real human contact?

Take a look at your lunch room, how many people are on their smart phones messaging people who aren't in the room. Try making eye contact in an elevator, train, bus when you next step in. How many times do we complain to anyone who will listen about the call centres overseas and their emotive-free impersonal scripting?

Remember back in the good old 80's and 90's when we had to remember our home phone numbers, get up to change the TV channel and look through an entire encyclopaedia to find the information we needed? The numbers of all our acquaintances were stored in a "rolodex". It was a different time. Communication was less intense and when you left the house until you sat in your office you were in blissful unadulterated silence, the only fall back was you actually had to remember things like stopping by the shop on the way home to get milk.

Was this better? Was this more productive? Short answer is NO!

It was more personal - it had to be. People didn't have the luxury of sending out bulk automated emails or cookie cutter newsletters instantly to a specifically targeted email list or get a conversation going with a few savant tweets and wait for reactions from the online community trying to avoid eye contact in the staff lunchroom or on the elevator, train or bus.

The new technologies at our disposal no doubt save us on wages. However, be careful not to substitute substance for technological gimmicks. The good thing is that to solve the issue is one very simple task. You only need to call your clients and have conversations. Through a phone, web or face to face conversation your understanding of your client's needs, wants, fears and frustrations help you develop a stronger and longer relationship. A five minute conversation is worth a thousand emails, texts, tweets, posts, likes or photos.

Remember buying a home for most of us is the biggest expense we will ever have and is generally the biggest expense on everyone's budget. Also remember uncontrolled finances (ie. bad debt such as credit cards) are one of the major causes of stress which can even lead to marriage breakdown. So riddle me this: How can your staff possibly understand your clients' personal situation through an email, text, tweet or post on social media? If they can, bottle it and sell it for a fortune. Like most of us mere mortals however 93% of our communicative interactions with each other are non-verbal through tone, inflections, responses actions, expressions, silent pauses and sometimes even just plain old honesty in a conversation where you might get "I need help....." from your client.

Tips

Schedule constant and regular verbal, face to face or web based contact with your clients to understand their situation even if you leave a well thought out message they don't return. they know you still care. But be aware when you call make the conversation relevant and useful to them, don't waste theirs or your time.

Promote collaboration between employees to improve customer relationship management by speaking to each other regularly in discussion groups.

Reward the right behaviours rather than punish poor ones. With a positive staff culture people would rather follow great leadership than run from tyranny.

Have a no email day to stimulate conversation with clients and other staff i.e. pick up the phone and communicate.

Creative active and regular Think-tank's to get staff to think about their role and collaborate verbally with each other rather than create another list or electronic suggestions box. Increased interpersonal relationships within your office creates teamwork. It also gives you more time selling, building and developing your business and less time managing.

You can also include a photo and a bio into your external email signature to let your clients know you are human too. Try something different like staff laughing out loud as the photo is taken and see the results from your clients when they see genuine smiles. Just sayin..