

How small business teams can communicate with clients around the world

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On the eve of 2021, even if you're a small business team that's based in one spot, it's probable that you rely on services from and provide value to clients based all around the world.



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Maintaining clear and proactive communication with these stakeholders involves unprecedented challenges. We're all used to interpreting cues and context visually, and communicating with global clients means sometimes you have to work together without being in person.

Especially when you're dealing with clients, it can feel like a high-pressure situation, where one slip-up or misunderstanding can cause you to lose needed business. So how do you make sure that your team can communicate well, easily and happily with your clients, no matter where they're based?

This guide walks through some effective communication tips that you can implement today.

The exciting truth is that every business, no matter how small, now has the opportunity to operate on a global scale. Here's how you can make sure you're communicating well as you do so.

1. Check out asynchronous communication options

When we look to replace in-person communication, we often turn first to video conferencing – with good reason. It's the best replacement, as it at least allows some visual and audio cues we typically need to fully interpret meaning. It's definitely a must for any company.

However, sometimes it just isn't possible for all of your team members and clients. Whether you're dealing with mismatched time zones or a busy schedule, sometimes relying on live video or other real time modes of discussion can be tough.

That's why you should check out async communication. Using threaded chat apps Slack or collaborative project management tools like Trello can be a quick and easy substitute for some of your videos. You and your client will probably even save time by not making everything a meeting.

2. Invest in the best conference call services

You'd never show up to a client's business in a shoddy suit. When it comes to video communication, do yourself the same favour and invest in software that will do you proud.

There are plenty of conference call companies to choose from, so consider your situation and needs before investing fully in one particular conference call service. Even if you think you're familiar with the options available, as one of the most in-demand industries right now, these companies and their offerings are constantly in flux.

This is the most basic of the tips, but it's worth some serious thought. Give yourself the time and space to really research the best conference call service to communicate with your clients, no matter where they're based.

3. Experiment with flexible work hours

It is an unfortunate fact that some of your clients will be in incompatible time zones with traditional working hours. No matter how you get around it, there's no single hour in any South African's 9-5 that overlaps with a Californian's 9-5 workday.

But there are occasions you can't relegate to text communication. Meeting clients for the first time, wrapping up projects, or even just quarterly check-ins can be really valuable to do on video.

You don't want to ask your client to get up at the crack of dawn or stay up late, so just accept you'll have occasions when you'll be the one up early or late. The best solution to this is simply to embrace it. Instead of working late or early, check out how flexible work hours could affect your team's work-life balance. If you have a late meeting one day, permit late starts the next morning. Even better, consider letting your team set their own schedule.

4. Lead with patience, empathy and honesty

No matter if async, on live video, at regular working hours or not, emails and video calls are fraught with the possibility of misunderstandings. Tone is hard to parse, videos can be dropped due to bad connection, while interruptions, missed messages and more technological mishaps can derail an otherwise productive conversation pretty quickly.

That's why, with team members and clients from all around the world, it's critical to lead with patience, empathy and

honesty. If a client says something surprising or offensive in an email, give them the benefit of the doubt. If someone is late to a video call, offer them a second chance. Assume the best of your contacts, because otherwise it is easy to make a communication mistake.

Equally, if you didn't hear something on a garbled video, or you aren't sure of the meaning of an email, don't be afraid to ask for clarification. Honesty is the best policy at all times, but especially when communicating with global clients who have a serious impact on your livelihood.

5. Make the most of the global business opportunity

It is such an incredible time in the world when small businesses can reach an enormous pool of clients, no matter their location. Technology to make that happen is accessible and straightforward. The biggest mistake small businesses can make is to forget that communication needs to be your priority.

By following these tips – investing in a solid conference call solution, checking out async communication options, giving your employees the option of flexible work hours, and leading with patience, empathy and honesty – you're on your way to ensuring effective communication with all your clients, no matter where in the world they may be located.

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