

Conduct A Quick Telecommunications Checkup

by Jane Applegate

(NAPSA)—Do you ever wonder whether you are missing out on new business because customers or clients can't get through to your office? Then, it's time to stop worrying and conduct a quick telecommunications checkup.



Applegate

Personal

First, review your personal communications needs. If you are one of the few business owners without a mobile phone, you might want to consider taking the leap. Even if you limit the number of people who have your mobile number, it pays to be accessible, especially if you are out of the office.

Next, listen to your outgoing voicemail message. Try to update it frequently, if not daily. Callers appreciate knowing when they might expect a return call. Return all calls within 24 hours. If you are a consultant, it's especially important to let clients know how to reach you on an urgent matter.

Employees

Second, review the telecommunications needs of your employees. Plan to meet with your entire team, or, if you have more than 20 employees, invite key representatives from each department. Ask someone to take detailed notes as you determine the answers to these important questions:

- Do we have adequate phone lines to handle incoming calls to your department?
- Do you need a mobile phone

or pager to do your job better?

- Is your Internet connection fast enough to keep up with your needs? If not, upgrade to DSL service.
- What suggestions do you have for improving telecommunications around the company?

Customers

Third, ask your team to review how customers get through to your business via telephone, e-mail and your Web site:

- Do we have enough incoming lines so no one ever gets a busy signal, including a separate line for the fax machine?
- Do we have a toll-free number for customers, allowing them to call at no charge to them?
- Do we respond to every e-mail promptly?
- Is our Web site updated frequently with new information, product offers and staff changes?

Pick a reliable communications provider that has a diverse product portfolio and can be a one-stop shop for all your needs. An integrated communications provider like Sprint, for example, provides data, local, long distance and wireless services in addition to recognized levels of customer service and satisfaction.

Finally, remind yourself and your employees to smile when answering the phone. It really makes a difference in voice quality, energy and enthusiasm.

Jane Applegate is America's leading small business expert and author of *The Entrepreneur's Desk Reference*, published by Bloomberg Press.