



Business: Being Away From Your Office But Still Offering Good Service

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Owning and operating a business can be a daunting task. Even though you might feel a strong responsibility to be there "all the time" in order to ensure that the client needs are met, you need breaks. There are several things that take you away from the business:

1. Professional development opportunities
2. Illness or accident
3. Personal commitments to yourself and your family
4. Vacation times

But, just because you are not going to be there, doesn't mean that your customers will suffer. There are several things that you can set in place so that when you are away, the client will be satisfied:

1. **Change your voice mail message** - State the dates that you will be away from the office as well as whether the voice mail messages will be checked during your absence. If not, make it clear that you will reply to them after you return. If there is someone else who is left in charge, clearly state their name and slowly give the contact information so the client can reach them easily.
2. **Use an email autoresponder** that will send a polite message to those who are writing to you with similar information to the above.
3. **Appoint someone to be in charge** during your absence - Make sure that person knows exactly what is expected of them and that other staff know what they can expect from that person while you are away.
4. **Set up a method for reaching you** in the event of a crisis or emergency - Make sure that the people who have this information know what the parameters are regarding when you are to be contacted.
5. **Meet all the deadlines** that you promised before you leave - If you agreed to have something completed before your time away, either ensure that it is delivered to the right person or communicate directly about the need to set a different completion date.
6. **Ensure that the person in charge has keys and access** to all the things that s/he might need. This includes telephone numbers, passwords, as well as physical areas or materials that might be needed.
7. **Make a list of any deliveries** that will arrive and how they should be handled.
8. **Plan if and how you might be involved in the business from a distance.** For example, you may schedule a few minutes each day to listen to your voice mail messages and read your emails but only reply to ones that are urgent and require attention that only you can give.
9. **Share a little information with your clients in person** before you leave so they know you will be away. When you are doing this you can also discuss options they might access if necessary.
10. **Prepare informational signs** on or in your business so that people who come to your office do not make repeated and frustrating trips because they didn't know that you were not going to be in the office for a period of time.

Communication is a vital part of any business. In fact, a little planning and a few words can provide you and your clients with a wonderful working relationship - even when you aren't in the office!