

SWM When You're in Business Table of Contents

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1. Why Is Communication So Important To My Business?

"A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver." Proverbs 25:11

Everything you do and say as a business person communicates something about your business to your customers and your potential customers, from the way in which you speak to customers on the phone to the image you present in cyberspace! Everything that is associated with your business makes an impression one way or another from your ads and promotional materials to your phone messages and return policy. Even the condition of your car when you pick up a prospective client can give them a picture of how you run your business.

Consider how you would feel if you received a phone call from someone wanting to sell you life insurance if they were not listening to your needs. Instead of mailing you what you asked for, they sent you something you had no need for. What would you think of his company? What would you think of him as your representative?

What would you think if you received that information on very cheap white paper with no letterhead and the type smeared off onto your hands when you touched it as you were reading? Would you trust them to provide your family with the protection they would need? Or would you fear that they may not be around tomorrow for your family to collect?

How would you feel if a doctor showed up to your appointment wearing street clothes and had no stethoscope because they were just starting out and couldn't afford them? Would you have trust in them to diagnose you or would you want a second opinion?

Some of you are treating your business this way in some form or another. Many things may seem small to you, but they are the very things that can make or break your image! Many companies start out small because they have small budgets. I want you to keep in mind that it is not the size of your budget that will create an image that you are a long term, successful business; it is how your customers perceive you. There are many things you can do that will lend credibility to you and your business. This whole e-book is designed to show you how to communicate to your customers an image that conveys that you know what you are doing, that you are an expert in your field and that you will be around for a long time to come!

Before we begin, let's look at some universal truths about communication and how you can [say what you mean](#) in your business.

12. How Do I Gain Support From My Family And Friends?

"Honor your father and your mother and love your neighbor as yourself." Mathew 19:19

I will now discuss a subject related to small business that almost nobody addresses, yet it is something that almost everyone has to deal with. How do you gain support for your small business from your family and friends? For some inexplicable reason many of our family members and friends think that a small business is "cute" but not as valuable as a job. Some of your family members think this is a hobby. Some think that since you are doing it from home it is easy. Still others think that you are making a big mistake spending money in order to fund your business.

Do any of these responses sound familiar?

- "Why can't you do these things for me?...You don't work!"
- "That's cute!"
- "I couldn't stay home all day with my kids. I'd get bored!"
- "It's not like you are working!"
- "So do you have a job?"
- "Why don't you just get a 'real' job?"
- "I wish I could stay home all day and not have to work!"

Many small business owners don't get the respect from their loved ones that their employee counterparts do because their relatives and friends just don't see them as business people or their business as anything more than a passing fancy. The reasons for this are twofold: 1) either the relatives don't understand exactly what you do all day or 2) you don't present an image of a professional business person. Fortunately both can be cured by a little thing I like to call "Effective Communication Skills". Here are some tips to help you communicate to your loved ones that you are a serious professional in business.

64. Act like a professional business person.

If you aren't serious about your business, your relatives and friends will not be either. If you are actively working on your business every day, it will show! How do you do this?

- Keep regular business hours. I don't mean that you should clock in at 9am and out at 5pm. I mean create a schedule for yourself and stick to it.
- Work on your business every day. Keep track of what you want to accomplish and plan out what you will be doing.
- Get organized. Get a planner or a calendar. Write down your goals. The more you do this the more you will communicate to yourself that you are a professional and then you can communicate it to others.
- Answer the phone like a professional business person. Even if you have only one phone line, you should begin answering the phone with your business name or with your name instead of hello. For example: "This is Kim." This communicates to your loved ones who are calling that you are serious about your business.

65. Explain to them how your business works.

The more your loved ones know about what you are trying to accomplish and why, the better they will understand what it takes to get there and how hard you are working. They will also be able to see you as a professional instead of a hobbyist.

66. Don't gloss over all the work you put into your business

Especially with Aunt Sally who lives across the country and can't see all that you do.

- Tell them what a typical day is like for you.
- Tell them how much time things take to do.
- Discuss with them the accomplishments you have made even if they are small at first.

67. Don't tell them everything!

If you tell your disgruntled loved ones every time you are struggling to get things done or each time you have a setback, they will say things like: "See! I told you this wouldn't work!". If you wait until you have overcome the struggle to tell them, they will say things like: "Wow! What an accomplishment!". Every start up business goes through struggles. I have read many success stories and they are all peppered with early disappointment. The difference between them and you is that you haven't gone through it yet.

68. Do you want feedback or do you want support?

Make sure you know the difference before you go tell Uncle Joe! Uncle Joe is the one who is jealous of you because he wanted to start his own business, but was too afraid to go through with it. He looks for every opportunity to make your business look like a failing hobby. You know that if asked for his opinion, it will not be favorable. So why do you ask for his input?

Now Cousin Norma is so supportive of you and she just loves to help. She has lots of knowledge in the area you are struggling with. From which one should you ask for help? Kind of a no brainer, huh? But you have no idea the number of times I hear people say that they told Mr. Negativity about their plans and couldn't believe it when he squashed their ideas! Remember that feedback is asking for someone's opinion about something to gain knowledge before rendering a decision. Support is what you seek when you have already made your decision, and you want them to help you achieve your goals or simply wish your loved ones to leave you alone to achieve it!

Here is what you do to obtain feedback or input:

- Ask only those who might either have the answers or know where to find them.
- Don't ask anyone who cannot help you make this decision.
- Don't ask Uncle Joe!

Here is what you do to obtain support:

- Wait until you have received all your input and have made your decision. I repeat...**Wait** until you have received all your input and have **made your decision!**
- Next tell your family and friends. Notice that I did not use the word “ask”. I did not say ask your family and friends what they think about that. I said **tell** your family and friends of your decision. Make an announcement. It is no longer up for discussion. The decision has already been made. If you walk into Thanksgiving dinner having made your decision and forget this little part you will be in for a long meal! Communicationally speaking, if you ask for someone’s opinion, they will give it to you. If you tell them what you intend to do, they are less likely to give it to you because it isn’t an open invitation.
- Make sure you sound decisive when you make your announcement or you will unwittingly be inviting Uncle Joe to give a 45 minute dissertation on the value of having a J.O.B.!
- If you have done all this correctly and Uncle Joe is about to give his unsolicited advice about your financial future, you may suddenly hear the dog barking and be forced to investigate. Just because you have not solicited input, doesn’t mean that it will not come. It just decreases the likelihood of them and lowers the chance of the input going on for as long as it would otherwise. A good thing to do if Uncle Joe just can’t keep from admonishing your obvious stupidity is to simply thank him for his concern, but tell him that you will be just fine. This gets the point across that you have already made the decision and you are sticking to it.

69. Invite them to help you.

Some of your relatives may not be supportive because they don’t know what is involved in your day to day business dealings. Sometimes if you just tell them about it, they will not truly understand. If, however, you invite them to help you, they may feel involved and will most likely have a new appreciation for the difficulty in running a small business. Not only will they understand you better, but you can actually get some valuable help!

Now, I am not saying that they will have the expertise to do all that you do, but here are a few ways in which you can get Aunt Irma involved:

- Stuffing envelopes
- Addressing labels
- Folding brochures
- Brain storming ideas
- Handing out flyers
- Packaging orders
- Organizing the office
- Making dinner while you handle some phone calls
- Watching the kids while you are out with clients/customers
- Picking up the inventory from the supplier
- Calling about the printing to see if it’s ready

This frees you up to handle the things that no one else can do for you. And since Aunt Irma is involved, she feels like she is a part of things instead of on the outside.

70. One word of caution here (okay more than one word...)

- Don't abuse Aunt Irma! I know it's a great thing to have help and, after all Aunt Irma did volunteer for this, but if you don't show your appreciation and ask each time instead of expecting her to be available for you, you may find Aunt Irma on the payroll! Or you could find that Aunt Irma is on strike!
- Make sure that Aunt Irma doesn't begin to believe that she is your partner! You want to make it clear to her that she is "helping" you and is not your business partner! You will know that this has gone too far when Aunt Irma begins to override your decisions and tell you how you will be doing things from now on!
- Refrain from confiding in Aunt Irma about things that may not look favorable to your business until you feel that she has become a supporter of you. You will be working closely together after all, but remember that she was against you doing this in the first place! If you relate these things to her, she will have the confirmation she needs that this business thing wasn't such a hot idea after all.