

# Monthly Newswire

Welcome to our monthly newswire. We hope you enjoy reading this newsletter and find it useful.

June 2019

## Connect effectively in the digital age

### It's time to rethink how we connect with customers, suppliers, colleagues and the business community.

The way we work is becoming increasingly digital. Today it is pretty normal for people to work remotely at least one day per week and this is just the tip of the iceberg.

As the future of work looks set to become more and more focused on digital, it's going to be the fundamental human skills that remain most relevant. Skills like being able to seek out and learn from someone who already possesses the skill you're looking to acquire; being able to display value through a meaningful conversation; being able to pick up on and understand people's pain points without needing them to be pointed out in the first place. Despite the focus on all things digital, the most important business skill of all will continue to be having the ability to spot a commercial opportunity.

The shift to a more digital focus has seen people become increasingly isolated. As such, people who understand how to form meaningful connections will have the advantage. Tools such as LinkedIn, Twitter and Instagram are useful, but they are just that, tools. The most meaningful business connections still come through genuine conversations and physical meetings. When it comes to success in business, we are all familiar with the phrase "it's not what you know, it's who you know." Many of the most valuable skills in business are soft skills: communication, relationship management, leadership, etc. which means that the way to

succeed, regardless of the type of business you work in, is to make meaningful connections with people who have influence.



As the world continues in this direction of social media, online connectivity and remote working, it's likely that over time we will see closed or vetted social networks adding more value for business people. This is already happening on platforms such as LinkedIn through Groups, etc. More importantly, it's going to be the individuals who invest in bringing these online connections, offline, that possess the greatest professional advantage. In business, "people buy people". People want to do business with individuals that they like and respect.

## Project Management Software Tools

**If you are running various projects across your firm simultaneously, you may need some type of project management tool to help you to keep track of progress, manage emails, deadlines and so forth.**

Projects are a specific type of work. Every project has a start and end date, and a deliverable. For example, launching a new service is a project and building a new website is a project. However, cash collection is ongoing work. In theory, you could manage cash collection from each client as its own "mini-project", but if

the turnaround time is quick and only a few people are involved, using full-scale project management software for that would be overkill.

Businesses tend to turn to project management software because they're overwhelmed by working via email and spreadsheets. The right project management platform can help to reduce email traffic, although that won't happen overnight. It takes time for employees to learn the software, and for your firm to figure out how best to use it for current and future projects. The very best project management tools are designed to help teams handle common problems, such as managing deadlines, workload, etc. These tools can also generate reports that give managers insight into which team members have too much or too little work to do. Many of the most popular project management tools can track time spent on projects and integrate with invoicing and billing systems.

Choosing the right project management tool for your business is key. Tools such as Teamwork Projects, Zoho Projects, TeamGantt and many others offer a free trial of their systems so you can see if they will fit with the needs of your firm. Most can then be purchased either as online software as a service (SaaS) or you can host the software and all your data yourself on your own servers with an enterprise license. The version that you choose largely depends on whether your business hosts data in the cloud or on its own servers. The SaaS tools tend to cost between £20 - £50 per user per month.

The enterprise pricing varies depending on the number of users, etc. but the total cost will tend to be a one off license fee and the upfront costs are therefore higher.

## Setting Up a New Hire for Success

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**No one has a bigger impact on a new employee's success than the manager who hired them. Here are some tips on how to set your new hires up to succeed.**

Investing time in onboarding brings new employees up to speed faster, which means they're more quickly and efficiently able to contribute to the business. Effective onboarding also dramatically reduces failure rates and increases employee engagement and retention. The time between someone accepting an offer and starting their new role can be used to jump-start the process.

But even if new employees are already in their new job, there are many ways to get them up to speed faster. The starting point is to take care of the "onboarding basics" - such as documentation, compliance training, office space, support, and technology. Fortunately, most firms do a reasonably good job of these elements. The real work begins with integrating new hires into the business.

### Understand the challenges

Starting a new job is challenging. Even experienced professionals can struggle as they are unfamiliar with the business, don't understand the culture and aren't fully aware of how things really work. New employees have to learn a lot and may be feeling quite vulnerable, even when they seem outwardly confident.

### Managers need to get involved

Managers have a vested interest in onboarding their new hires effectively. They need to coach their new recruits, check-in with them regularly and be ready to intervene if things look like they might go off-track. This requires an investment of time and energy but can help the new hire to secure some early wins, which can boost their confidence, their credibility within the firm and will increase the likelihood that they will succeed in their new role.

### Make them part of the team

New hires need to build effective working relationships with their peers. The arrival of a new employee should be communicated prior to their start date so that the team understands who the new person is, why they have been hired and the role they will fulfill.

Once they join, a team lunch or social get-together is a good investment as it helps to connect your new hire with others in the team, in a more relaxed setting. Outside of the new hire's immediate team, there are likely to be other stakeholders who will be critical to their success in the job. A good manager will take the time to set up introductory meetings with key stakeholders so that the new recruit gets connected with the right people from the start.

### Direction

From the beginning, a manager should explain to the new hire what the expectations of the role are and set some key objectives for the first 100 days. The new recruit should be clear on what they need to do, how they should be doing it and what the purpose of the role is within the context of the wider business.

## Focus on managing your energy, rather than your time

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**You can only spend your time in a productive, effective manner if you have enough energy to do so.**

Most people respond to the increasing demands in their day to day jobs by putting in longer hours. This takes a toll on us physically, mentally and emotionally. Over time this can lead to increasing levels of distraction, burn-out, mistakes being made (which can cost a business money) and high staff turnover rates. Most people talk about being too busy. Being too busy implies not just a shortage of time but a lack of equilibrium and wellbeing.

To effectively re-energise their teams, businesses need to shift their

emphasis from getting more out of people, to investing more in them. This ensures that your people are more motivated and come to work feeling more energised and ready to



succeed at whatever it is that they do. Businesses need to equip their people with the tools to re-energise and motivate themselves, to recognise energy-depleting

behaviours and take responsibility for changing those behaviours in order to achieve a more positive outcome.

To ensure that your team are energised, you could ensure that they have adequate exercise, rest / sleep and nutrition. Whilst it isn't the firm's responsibility to police this, educating your team can help them to change their approach in order to exhibit the right behaviours on their own terms. On top of this, you could equip them with the tools to manage their emotions and focus their attention when they are working.

Many view multitasking as a necessity in the face of all the demands they juggle, but it actually undermines productivity. Distractions are costly: A temporary shift in attention from one task to another - stopping to answer an e-mail or take a phone call, for instance, increases the amount of time necessary to finish the primary task. This is known as "switching time." It's far more efficient to fully focus for 45 to 60 minutes, take a true break, and then fully focus on the next activity. Once people see how much they struggle to concentrate, they can make efforts to reduce the relentless interruptions that technology has introduced in their lives and focus on working more effectively rather than just putting in more hours at the office.