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CHARTERED PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTANTS

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## GROW YOUR BUSINESS

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## How to deal with workplace conflict

In a small business setting, even the slightest niggle of conflict has the potential to affect everything and everyone. No matter how small it may seem, it is best practice to always tackle conflicts head on, if possible, before they have the chance to seep into the workplace.

Workplace conflict is one of the major factors in creating a stressful environment, directly decreasing employee productivity. So it is important to get some simple guidelines in place, for dealing with issues.

One of the best foundations for conflict resolution is deceptively simple: listening. We mean a few things here; we mean listening

to both/all sides of the story, we mean active listening and we mean listening without bias.

If you have a personal connection to the conflict at hand, or feel that an unbiased opinion is difficult for you to maintain, consider roping in a third party to run the resolution, someone neutral.

The idea here is to ensure a feeling of comfort and support for all involved.

Just like disaster preparation of the environmental kind, it can be equally as effective in conflict resolution to simply be prepared. Create a forum for feedback, on a regular basis, in an effort to offer employees a safe space for discussion and problem solving.

If the particular issue seems petty, make sure you play detective and seek out the real root of the problem. If you handle the surface issue, you will likely see the problem arise over and over again, until you fix the root issue.

Work toward finding common ground, and a solution that both/all parties can buy into. The solution is just the beginning of the process, you must be vigilant with follow up and ensure that all parties involved are keeping their end of the agreement.



## Signs of toxic work environment

Think of the game “Telephone”... one person whispers to another, then you carry the message one by one, whispering into each other’s ears, until the last person in the chain says it out loud. How often is the message the exact same as when it started?

**Hardly ever!**

This is the same way a toxic work environment begins. It starts innocent enough, showing no signs of distortion. But through the passing of the sieve, from person to person, the issue can fester and before you know it, its blown completely off course.

Don’t fall into a toxic telephone environment! Toxic workplaces are a cancer when it comes to

productivity and can loose you some of your best people, when not addressed.

Let’s look at some of the signs for early detection, to prevent toxins from seeping into your situation.

1. **Commiserating and complaining.** This is not your run of the mill, had a bad day type of venting. If you are constantly picking up on complaints and commiserations, you may be in a toxic workplace. Constructive criticism comes with a suggested solution, complaining merely brings people down.
2. **Closed-door mentality and top-down structures.** Boss’s

who know it all and lack transparency are dangerous. We see it more and more now, an open- door policy, literally and figuratively creates a space where employees feel included and discourages whispers and speculations, because everyone has all the information.

3. **Bureaucratic barriers and lack of kudos.** If everything takes twenty steps of approval, ten pieces of paperwork and a general air of incompetency wafted your way, this is not a good sign. Employees need to feel entrusted to accomplish their tasks, and feel capable of doing so with out helicopter bosses hovering. A simple recognition of a job well done goes a long way.



## Marketing Data Analysis for the Small Business

Big data may seem like a big time management issue, but with small businesses, it's possible to get the most of our marketing data analysis, without committing to a huge project, or a huge price tag.

Avoid information overload and embrace the data-driven-decision-making strategies being seen in big business. Let's look at how we can adapt the concept to work for smaller business models. With fewer employees, smaller inventory, less diversity among product lines and less cash flow, small business owners biggest challenge is actually changing their mindset.

So used to knowing all the information (data) 'like the back

of their hand', it can be hard to redirect thinking to understand and embrace that data means more than simply knowing the information.

*"Good data can yield good decisions, if captured, analyzed, communicated, and acted upon in a timely and efficient fashion. This is as relevant to SMBs as it is to large enterprises..."*

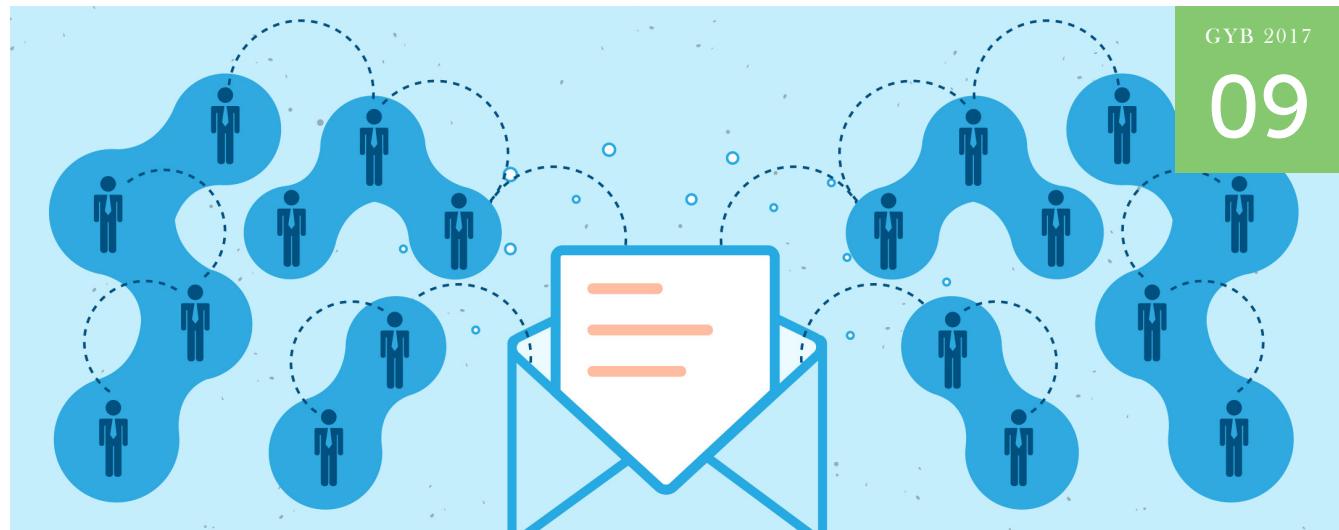
– Senior Exec at Deloitte.

With a rise in affordable data analytic tools on the market, small businesses now have the option to turn internal, rather than immediately assume outsourcing.

In general, analyzing data to assume market trends in your industry does three things for small business:

1. Increases customer awareness and creates the capability for more intimate relational experiences.
2. Provides foundations to take more chances, minimizing risks.
3. Boosts the effectiveness of loyalty campaigns and marketing strategies.

Without a measurement strategy, you might as well be throwing spaghetti at the wall, seeing what sticks!



## Benefits of an Internal Newsletter

When you have your hands full with so many projects and you are juggling all kinds of deadlines, crafting an internal newsletter can definitely see itself fall to the bottom of any business owner's to-do list!

This is a perfect example, though, of how a little effort can go a long way. Inter-office communication and transparency is important, no matter the industry or size of a business.

With an internal newsletter, you are offering timely, adequate information sharing, uniform across the board.

An announcement, changes, updates and more- all can be

addressed and information will be the same- it lessens the likelihood of the rumour mill churning out miscellaneous or inaccurate details.

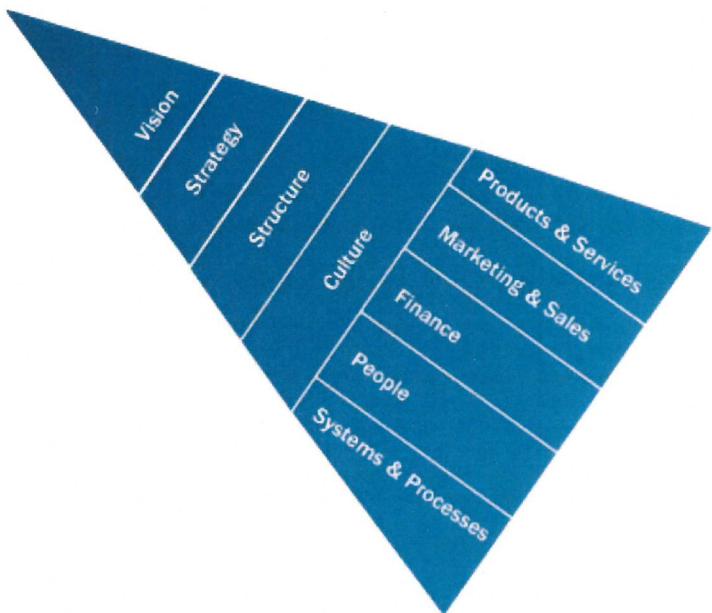
Additionally, employees like to be in the know. In order to foster a working environment that fosters an open attitude and transparent nature, a newsletter can be the perfect foundation.

This is a great step towards establishing trust and keeping people in the loop- something that surveys say is very important in keeping your team happy.

An internal newsletter is also a great way to supplement company culture. Take advantage of the many ways you can encourage

engagement and boost awareness of the intra-social aspects of the workplace that you feel are important to your company culture.

Ensure your newsletter has a universal voice, addresses employees, has a short but informative length, encourages engagement, share information and most importantly, communicates some personality!



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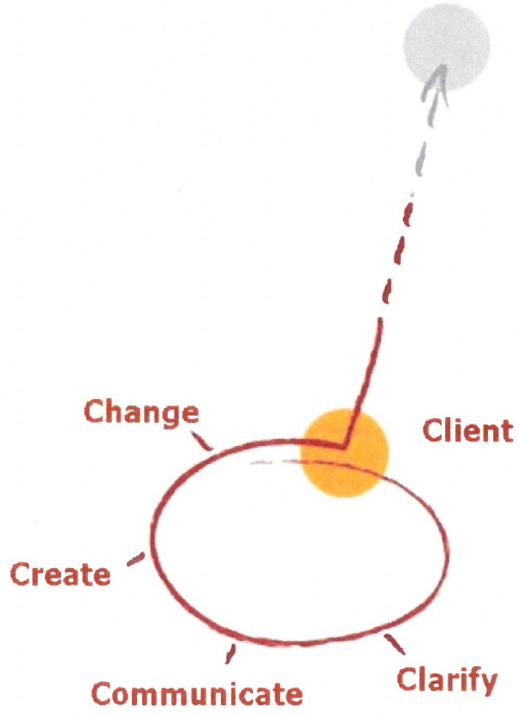
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