

How to manage communications when on vacation

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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SPEAKERS

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Welcome to the SuperStar communicator podcast. My name is Susan Heaton-Wright, a leading impact speaking and communications expert. My aim is to show you how to make an impact. So you will be heard or listened to and respected for career success. Listen weekly to the podcast, and go to our website, www.superstarcommunicator.com. Hello, everybody, this is Susan Heaton-Wright speaking, thank you very much for tuning in today. I am actually in Wales on vacation. And it's been beautiful weather and I'm feeling very, very relaxed. And like everybody else with this pandemic, we've all been through it, we've all had to cope with so many things. And so being able to have a vacation is a real treat and is much needed. This brings me to thinking about how we manage our communication with our clients and colleagues and customers whilst we are on vacation. Now I know that a number of you are working in organisations, and I will come back to that in a moment. But there are also listeners here who are either self employed, or they run a very, very small team. And this is really, really crucial that you make sure that your customers are reassured that you're still there for them. I was prompted to discuss this really, because a business buddy told me a recent communication that she had received from her accountant. She's received a rather scary letter from HMRC, which was completely incorrect and required some assistance, some reassurance that she was okay, because she'd obviously paid HMRC all of the money that was due but they were questioning various things. And she had a monthly retainer with her accountant, she pays £125 plus VAT per month, she emailed the accountants and received an automated response. "As you know, it's a school holiday time. So our focus is on our families, we will be in touch with you in a few days time". In the meantime, she received her monthly bill. Of course, six working days later, she received a very short email saying "we're looking into this". Nothing more. And a week later, she is still waiting for further response from this. The reason why I shared this shocking story is that we have to be clear with our customers and clients when we are on vacation, which is good to have a break. And everybody understands that. But they need to know where they stand. And this is related to customer care. The main reason why people leave a company, or as being a customer or a client is because they don't feel valued. And if you as a business aren't showing that you value your customers and clients, they're going to move on. And certainly my friend, having received all of that does not feel valued in any way and is currently looking for another

accountant. In the case of professional services, there are occasionally inquiries such as my friend's that need urgent attention. And for a firm to respond in the way my friend had experienced does not reassure the client, particularly as she does pay a monthly retainer. An accountant could easily have checked emails once a day, had an automated response with "we will respond within 24 hours" or even had a call minding service where people could call and a message would be relayed to the accountant on call for an emergency. The thing is that people do have holidays. And we need to make it clear to our clients a), how they can get in touch b) how long they can expect to wait before a response. And c) a hotline, as I mentioned before, where a client can contact in emergency and leave a message for a quicker response. But also, it is worthwhile warning clients beforehand. If you are going on holiday. My regular clients know that I'm on holiday for a fortnight, because they can't watch coaching sessions. I have a very clear automated response, thanking people for emailing, stating dates the time out of the office. And if it is an urgent inquiry, a number to call, where I can then be texted the message and will respond within 24 hours. It reassures customers, it they know where they are. And certainly for professional services, it could be that if somebody is away, they give all of the information about their clients their workload to somebody else who is on call, so that at least they can respond in some way. Most of these questions that are related to professional services are going to be general ones related to HMRC. And they can be reassured quite quickly. Or they'll say, I will phone up HMRC on your behalf and ask the relevant questions to get the answer. But to fob off a client in the way that my friend has been fobbed off is not a professional way to do things. Having a backup and clear communications is so important and having a communications plan. But what about people who work in a team or as a consultant, or within professional services or another organisation having a handover beforehand, including showing where any specific information for projects or clients is located is crucial. In a world where we work virtually. And we have storage on the cloud, or within systems that people can easily access that information. It makes it much easier to do handover. But also for team leaders to manage the workload. While some was someone is on vacation to ensure the client's needs, services and expectations are still met. It's not an excuse to say that nobody's in the office because people are paying good money for this service. It has been a very long 18 months, and parents have had a particularly challenging time. homeschooling whilst holding down jobs, having a holiday is needed. And everyone understands that. But remember, your clients and customers also need to know and be reassured that you are doing their work that they can contact you easily when they can expect to receive a response. And if necessary, to talk to somebody in the team to reassure them if there is an emergency. So make sure that as part of your strategy, you create a communications vacation plan and put it in place in the holidays. I don't want you to lose customers or clients or for your colleagues to not value you as much as you deserve. Because you haven't handed over and you haven't let other people know that you're on vacation. All right. I hope you've enjoyed this master class because it really is an important one. And remember, if you would like more information about some of the masterclasses and lunch and learns that we do every month, we've got a lovely group of people that meet up on the last Tuesday of every month at 1pm. UK time. Just register at www.superstarcommunicator.com/webinar-interest and I will put that in the notes. So, I'm going to carry on chilling. And until next time, thank you very much for listening. Remember to like this to share it to recommend it, subscribe and do recommendation. Thank you. Bye. You have been listening to the superStar communicator podcast. Don't forget to subscribe and review the podcast on iTunes and APPS. Please contact us if you want to discuss any topic would suggest a topic for us to include or a guest who could come on to the podcast go to www.superstarcommunicator.com