



Virtual Reception – not just for start-ups!

What do you think when you hear the words “virtual receptionist”? Most businesspeople think of small businesses, staffing crises, and a desire to “look bigger than we are”.

Nothing could be further from the truth!

It's true that start-ups, sole traders and SMEs can get significant benefits from virtual reception services. However, a growing number of medium and large businesses are realising that virtual receptionists can provide them with a number of advantages over the competition.

Let's take a look at three myths about virtual reception being “just for start-ups”, and how the capabilities of phone answering services can be applied to larger organisations.

Myth: Start-ups need virtual receptionists to compensate for a lack of staff.

Reality: All businesses can benefit from greater front-desk availability.

Many larger businesses may assume that low headcount is an issue only experienced by their smaller counterparts. But what about after-hours or holiday periods, when most employees aren't available; and peak demand windows, when staff may face more inquiries than they can handle? Failure to maintain adequate phone answering service during these times can result in lost leads, missed opportunities, and reputational damage – no matter the size of the enterprise.

Professional virtual receptionists, like those provided by OfficeHQ, can be “on stand-by” to take overflow or cover for times when regular employees are unavailable. In other words, a call answering service doesn't have to be running 24/7: it can scale to your business' capacity requirements whether you're a start-up or an ASX-listed enterprise.

Myth: Only start-ups need to work on having a good “phone manner”.

Reality: All businesses can benefit from more timely and refined telephone responses.

How often have you let the phone ring simply because you were working on something else? Or gotten a tetchy email from a customer when your colleague didn't pass on a message? The phone is the “first impression” of your organisation: prompt answering and reliable message-taking are only two elements that you need to put your best foot forward. This helps start-ups look like larger, more established outfits, but also sustains the reputation of larger businesses.

Virtual receptionists are, above all else, timely. The best virtual reception services will respond to 90% of calls within 10 seconds, reducing abandoned calls and generating higher rates of customer and stakeholder satisfaction (OfficeHQ, for example, offers uptime guarantees similar to the best hosting providers).

They'll also offer a range of message delivery options, from email transcripts to SMS notifications that summarise the caller's details and get them to you as quickly as possible. They can even notify the caller that a message has been delivered for that extra touch of customer service. It's the little things that count.

Myth: Start-up owners can't afford to lose a lead while they're out of the office.

Reality: Neither can CEOs.

Mobility is a big part of business today; we travel and engage in meetings far more frequently, in more locations, than ever before. Both small businesses and larger ones need to ensure their people stay readily contactable without reducing their mobility. Losing a sales lead from a missed call hurts, no matter whether you're a bootstrapping entrepreneur or top-tier executive.

Virtual reception services do more than simply answer calls on behalf of the business. They can also centrally manage the number of channels which someone might use to contact an individual. Virtual receptionists can receive calls from both landline extensions and mobile numbers, for example, allowing them to eliminate duplicate messages and inform the caller of the employee's situation.

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