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Small Business Bulletin

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Overcoming Summer Workforce Challenges

Summer brings both opportunity and complexity for small businesses. Warmer weather and seasonal demand can boost business activity, but these months also introduce unique talent management challenges.

Common Summer Workforce Challenges

Business continuity and performance are often impacted during the summer months. Here are some common seasonal workforce challenges:

- **Increased employee absences**—Summer is a popular time for personal commitments and travel. When multiple employees request time off, it can strain operations and place a burden on those who remain during that time period.
- **Seasonal turnover**—Businesses that rely on temporary workers, students or seasonal staff often experience frequent onboarding and offboarding cycles. This can result in reduced efficiency, inconsistent service and increased administrative workload.
- **Reduced productivity**—Distractions and fluctuating workloads can lead to a decline in focus and output, making it more difficult for workers to maintain routines or energy levels.
- **Increased demand in customer-facing roles**—Summer often brings heightened customer volume to industries such as retail, hospitality and tourism. A mismatch between customer demand and staffing can negatively impact service quality and employee morale.

Strategies for Navigating Talent Challenges During the Summer

Consider these best practices for overcoming talent challenges and boosting employee productivity and satisfaction:

- **Implement early vacation planning.**
Encouraging employees to submit vacation

requests in advance allows managers to anticipate coverage needs and adjust schedules.

- **Crosstrain key roles.** Cross-training employees ensures greater flexibility when absences occur. This approach minimizes disruptions and supports employee development by broadening skill sets.
- **Leverage temporary and on-demand talent.** Partnering with staffing agencies or freelance platforms can provide additional workforce support during peak periods. These options are especially useful for businesses that need seasonal help without long-term commitments.
- **Enhance staff onboarding.** Clear expectations, concise training and regular feedback are critical for integrating short-term employees. Well-prepared seasonal staff can contribute meaningfully, reduce the load on permanent team members and maintain service quality.
- **Use technology to maximize efficiency.** Digital tools can help automate scheduling, streamline internal communication and reduce administrative burdens.
- **Maintain regular communication.** Frequent check-ins and open communication help managers stay informed about team capacity and morale. Listening to employee concerns and recognizing contributions are key to sustaining engagement throughout the summer.

Conclusion

Employee absences, workforce fluctuations and shifting productivity patterns can disrupt operations. By approaching the summer months with strategic foresight, small businesses can mitigate disruption, maintain performance and foster a supportive work environment.



How Small Businesses Are Using Artificial Intelligence

Small businesses across industries are increasingly using tools and applications driven by artificial intelligence (AI) to streamline operations, enhance customer experience and improve decision-making. As small businesses are often strapped for resources, AI can offer accessible and scalable solutions to help them stay competitive.

Nearly 3 in 5 small businesses are already using or planning to implement AI within the next two years, according to insurance provider Hiscox.

AI for Small Businesses

AI tools can help small businesses improve their day-to-day operations. Here are some practical applications:

- **Customer service**—Chatbots and virtual assistants can handle customer inquiries 24/7, reducing response times and improving service quality without increasing headcount.
- **Routine task completion**—Generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT and Copilot) can handle tedious tasks. These free tools can help write emails, generate marketing content, create spreadsheets, organize data and more.
- **Data analysis**—AI can help small businesses make sense of large amounts of data, providing insights into customer behavior, inventory needs and pricing strategies.
- **Task automation and productivity**—AI tools can automate administrative functions such as scheduling, invoicing, expense tracking and recruiting, freeing up time for strategic work.
- **Cybersecurity and fraud detection**—Some AI applications monitor networks for suspicious activity, helping small businesses safeguard data and systems without an in-house IT team.

Benefits and Advantages

Small businesses exploring AI may experience the following advantages:

- **Cost savings**—By automating routine processes, small businesses can reduce overhead costs and redirect resources to higher-value activities.
- **Increased efficiency and speed**—AI tools often work faster and more accurately than manual methods, enabling quicker decision-making and faster service delivery.
- **Scalability**—Many AI tools are cloud-based and scalable, making them accessible to employees in more than one location.

Risks and Considerations

While AI can create efficiencies, it also comes with risks. Consider the following:

- **Data privacy and security**—Mishandling customer data, whether intentional or not, can lead to legal and reputational consequences.
- **Reliability and accuracy**—AI tools may produce inaccurate outputs or reinforce existing biases.
- **Overdependence**—An overreliance on AI can result in the loss of personal touch, something that often defines small business service.
- **Integration costs**—Although many tools are free and user-friendly, implementing more advanced AI requires time, money and training.

Conclusion

AI offers great potential for small businesses, empowering them to operate more efficiently and compete more confidently. However, small businesses should factor in risks when using AI.

While these examples offer current use cases, the application of AI will continue to grow. Reach out today for more resources.