How can I track managers' comings and goings to keep office organized?

Question: "I work in an office of all men and I'm at my wit's end! In order to keep track of the comings and goings, I have put up a travel/vacation board that I fill out monthly, a daily out-of-office board for when they leave the premises, a meeting room board to keep track of the 12 managers who use the conference room. They do NOT feel they need to "participate" in my efforts to keep this office organized. I don't know what else to do! Any advice?" *—Sally*

Comments

Cassie July 23, 2011 at 11:13 pm

It's unclear whether the OP has the authority to be docking people's pay or time or putting vacation hours for when the managers are not in the office. I kind of doubt it.

Use a shared calendar (Outlook or Google can work) and they will fill in their travel plans as necessary. Or not. It's up to them whether they want to be "kept track of". (I'm assuming any concerns in regards to hours worked is not of the OP's concern – meaning she's not the time keeper or the payroll office).

If someone calls to speak to someone who is apparently out, just tell the person that Manager ABC is currently out of the office but you can take a message. No need to say "I don't know where Manager ABC is", because, as others have mentioned, you want to project a professional attitude. Of course, to Manager ABC, you could tell him that Customer XYZ was looking for you but I wasn't sure when you'd be back (hint, hint, next time maybe you should let me know).

Susan June 1, 2011 at 12:07 pm

Here's a good article on the topic:
http://www.businessmanagementdaily.com/articles/26331/1/Keep-the-workplace-running-like-clockwork/Page1.html#

Amber May 6, 2011 at 2:43 pm

I don't agree with some of these responses, while it is important that everyone is informed and try their best to keep the office organized, team approach should not be thrown out the door. It is everyone's responsibility to sell the organization and when one person looks bad, so does everyone else. If someone is out of the office and I'm not sure where, I ALWAYS tell a client they are in a meeting and would be happy to take a message and have Mr X get back to them as soon as they can.

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Tara May 6, 2011 at 12:18 pm

M. Glass has it right.

Susan May 6, 2011 at 11:03 am

This is an important issue so I would not be this subtle: "client complaints will mount and they'll get the hint." I think not only would it be ineffective it would just add the managers' frustration to yours! (… not to mention hurt the bottom line and lose client good-will).

Nowadays w/ BlackBerries, Smartphones, laptops etc. most everyone is reachable via email … And good sales people/account managers WANT to be "bothered" (i.e., reachable) –even on vacation– if it means a possible sale &/or keeping their customers happy!

If you "let things descend into chaos" you risk being seen as the OPPOSITE of the team player you're trying to be!

Since the whole point of getting them organized is to help improve company workflow, do not give up until you find the best solution or combination of solutions for their/your personalities/ organizing skills & abilities!

Let technology help you. I find it's much easier to respond to an email query/text msg at my desk than to physically get up and write my name on a white board (or check same when I'm on phone trying to plan a meeting/timing a conference call, etc.)
Thus I like idea of a shared Outlook Calendar (and the auto reminder msgs help me greatly) Personally, I ALSO need a monthly wall calendar for important meetings… so don't give up on low tech ideas too.

Outlook is easy for everyone to use. If they don't know how, you can be their teacher, explaining your goal is to help them get organized in easiest way possible for all…

Diane is right that msgs like this: "Client X was looking for you and I had to tell them I had no idea whether you were coming in or not… or when you would be reachable," should get their attention and impress upon them the importance of finding a solution…esp. if it is put in an email, cc'd to all w/ a plea for help/cooperation/ideas for implementing a better system…proposed not with a scolding tone, but with your own best suggested solution included.

Mary May 2, 2011 at 8:54 am

Make it a policy they have to be accountable for their time. If they decide they don’t want to be ,dock their pay for the time they haven’t been accountable for. Let them know you assume they haven’t been working and you will pay them accordingly. That might start making them accountable.

Jurney May 1, 2011 at 7:29 pm

Have you thought about using Groupwise or Outlook carlendars and have them all shared. This can also be used with their blackberry or Iphone so it would make it really convenient. We even have the conference rooms on the shared calendar and its easy to do a busy search when scheduling meetings the room etc.

Sarah April 29, 2011 at 4:50 pm

I agree with both Diane and Jackie. Start by using Jackie’s suggestions with shared calendars then if (when) they

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don’t use them, go with Diane’s.

I would add to the shared calendar e-mail why you’d like to know when they are out of the office (clients are asking, manager/supervisor asks, etc.). Past experince tells me that if it’s a client wondering, the employee won’t want to have that information made “public”, so to speak, so you may want to ask what they’d like you to say if/when a client asks.

Kit April 29, 2011 at 3:49 pm

We have a shared outlook calendar that everyone is required to put their appointments on. If an appointment isn’t on the list and they are out of the office, assume they are on vacation, and have their time card reflect the same. Wasting a few vacation hours for failing to put items on the calendar will teach them.

M. Galass April 29, 2011 at 3:42 pm

Stop trying. If they are not interested, let them bear the consequences when they cannot be reached. A method I have used in the past is emailing all who need to know on a daily basis, whether folks are in or out. Something simple such as: the following folks are not in today: and then list.. or some variation of that text. Once folks realize that you will no longer enable them or attend to things without their involvement, they become more involved. I also use emails as a tracking communication tool (i.e. just checking if you will be in today), saving all or no response and then referring to them if you are questioned as to whereabouts or why you have not communicated with someone. Hope this is helpful.

Jackie April 29, 2011 at 3:36 pm

I never found a daily in/out board to be very helpful. I just keep vacation time listed in my Outlook calendar as a “All day event”. Then when I need to know who’s here and who’s not, I just look at my calendar for the day. As for the meeting room, make a calendar in Outlook for that room and give them access to it. Then talk to each one saying “in order to keep from scheduling problems with the conference I have created a calendar that you can use to help schedule your meetings.” I have alot of calendars to manage and that is the best way to do it. Then post the calendar printout at the door of the conference room each morning.

Diane Johnson-Hung April 29, 2011 at 3:31 pm

This is going to sound just awful, but maybe it’s best to let things descend into chaos. They’ve indicated they do not want to help you or themselves (they’d be doing so by supporting you in this effort). After a few times of, “I’m sorry, but I do not know where Mr. So-n-so is or when he’ll return. Is it alright if I take a message?” client complaints will mount and they’ll get the hint.

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