

What are the Benefits of Online Appointment Scheduling?

Introduction

If Appointments are the vehicle that moves a service organization forward, scheduling is the fuel. Vroom, vroom.

How are you currently getting that fuel into your Ferrari? Are you using a paper appointment book? Do you have clients and prospects calling all day, leaving messages to schedule appointments? Maybe they're sending emails or filling up your cell phone with text messages asking about your availability?

Chances are if any of the above methods hit home, your process is not as efficient as it could be.

It may be time to check into online appointment scheduling.

Online scheduling is quickly gaining in popularity. Service organizations ranging from massage therapists, to universities, to tennis centers all seem to be moving to online scheduling.

So, what's behind this movement? Turns out, a lot! Read on and learn about all the great benefits that online scheduling can provide.

Benefits

When you implement an online appointment scheduling system, you get to experience a host of pretty cool benefits. These are just a few:

Fewer no-shows

Many businesses that make the switch to online scheduling see a 50% (or greater) reduction in no-shows. In the healthcare industry alone, [no-shows cost organizations billions of dollars](#) every year. Sometimes getting just one less no-show a month can pay for the monthly fee for an online scheduler. Sounds like a no-brainer to me!

Better decisions

Trying to manage the growth of a flourishing, small business? Or, are you with a larger organization looking to improve your operational efficiency? Regardless of the size of the business, the detailed reporting available in online scheduling systems will help you to make better decisions.

Common reporting capabilities include:

- Number of no-shows per day, week, or month
- Number of completed appointments by staff member
- Comparison of productivity by location
- How many appointments were booked as a result of a marketing promotion
- The full appointment history for a customer

Most scheduling systems also allow you to run reports on daily or periodic sales and customers. This quick and easy access to key business data can help support both daily and longer-term strategic decisions for your organization.

Considering how some people dress when going to the mall, I think we could all stand to improve our decision-making abilities!

More clarity

Picture yourself on a boat on a river. Scratch that. Picture yourself sitting on the couch at home and watching your favorite TV show. A commercial comes on. You have a solid 5 minutes to surf other channels or grab a quick snack. I am going to suggest you do neither. You don't need the calories and you don't need to see 3 minutes of Honey Boo Boo. Instead, I suggest you log into your mobile appointment app and check the schedule for tomorrow. Go ahead and check:

- The appointments booked for you tomorrow
- The appointments booked at any location for tomorrow
- The appointments booked for each of your staff for tomorrow

It's a good feeling when you have a handle on all appointment activity in your business or department at any time. Now, go back to your show. And, no Honey Boo Boo.

More appointments

When you add the convenience of online booking to your organization, something magical happens: You get more appointments. This is not a gift from the Internet gods. This is the way your customers show you how much they appreciate you making their lives a little easier.

People are getting used to doing everything online. On average, we spend [23 hours a week just communicating online](#) (email, Twitter, Facebook). If you combine that with how much time we spend working and researching online, there aren't many hours left for sleep.

Offering online scheduling is a natural extension of your business, and your customers will take to it like a fish to water.

More time

While some businesses have moved 100% to online booking, that's not realistic for many businesses. Some clients will always want to call in and talk to a live person. And, it makes sense to accommodate that. But, even if a smaller percent of your clients book online, you'll recognize a substantial time savings. Organizations commonly report saving 10-20 hours per week when they implement online scheduling. You could learn a new language in a month with that kind of time!

Reallocate some of that time that your staff used to spend booking appointments. It could now be used in other ways to help propel your business forward.

More revenue

Online booking can help your business generate revenue. If you are a for-profit business, by definition, you are in business to make money. Don't get me wrong, making money is not the only reason to be in business. Indeed, many individuals love what they do and get a high level of satisfaction in serving others, regardless of the finances.

But, money is important for many reasons. And finding a way to generate more is a good thing for businesses.

So, how can online scheduling help your business bring home the bacon? Here are a couple ways:

- Allow your customers to pay when they book online.
- Capture customer credit card data when they book to hold an appointment or for late cancellation or no-show fees.
- Let your customers purchase gift certificates or packages online.
- Allow new customers to book initial consultations or other types of appointments right through your web site or from your Facebook page.

So, if you are in business to make money, online scheduling can definitely help you to fatten up that bottom line.

Centralized scheduling

If you run a multi-location business, scheduling can be a real buzz-kill. Why not centralize it with an online scheduler? Think about it. All the calls come into one call or scheduling center and each operator has the ability to book for any staff member at any location. All booking is real-time and the staff member is immediately notified when an appointment is scheduled for them.

Centralized scheduling can really streamline your operations. Plus, you'll save money and eliminate a lot of headaches.

More control

Any growing or larger business knows how important it is to control what users can access in a system. Schedulers have various ways of allowing and restricting access. Some include:

- Having different logins and passwords for each user
- Assigning users to access groups
- Allowing staff to have access to their assigned customers only
- Allowing staff to see certain customer data only
- Restricting mobile access

Controlling system access protects your business, your staff, and your customers. It's a necessary evil in today's business world.

Conclusion

Online booking is definitely gaining steam. And, there are a lot of good reasons why. If you don't yet use online appointment scheduling in your business, check into it today. You'll quickly start to experience some of the super-cool benefits it can offer.