The Top 21 Red Flags That Signal Your Scheduling Process is Inadequate
Introduction

Scheduling and managing appointments and reservations is as much a part of the daily operations of many businesses and organizations as assigning staff responsibilities, meeting with customers and clients, and processing payment for services performed. It’s so intertwined, customary and routine that it’s oftentimes overlooked, even if the manner in which it’s conducted is inefficient and both a monetary and time drain on resources.

All of the signs of an inadequate scheduling process may not be apparent. The following document lists the most common ones and why they can attribute to inefficiencies for both staff and individuals booking their appointment or reservation times.

The Top 21 Red Flags That Your Scheduling Process is Inadequate

Regardless of whether an organization or business books appointments or reservations over the phone, by e-mail or in-person, there are common “red flags” that exist that signal an inadequate method of managing and scheduling appointments. These are indicators that a different manner of scheduling is in order.

The top 21 red flags that a scheduling process is inadequate are:

1. **You spend too much time on the phone.** Answering phone calls and returning voice messages from individuals looking to book an appointment or reservation time can take up to several minutes per phone call. Multiply that by the number of appointments and reservations booked daily, and it quickly adds up to a significant amount of staff time.
2. **Your employees can’t focus on other tasks.** Appointment-booking is usually just one of numerous responsibilities most employees have. The more time needed for this task, the less time focused on other pressing responsibilities. This can cause strain on employees and may even require the organization or business to assign overtime hours to complete tasks they are unable to get to during the workday.

3. **You’ve had to hire someone to manage appointments.** The fallout from an unmanageable appointment process is the necessity of hiring someone specifically for this task. This instantly adds an operating expense to the business or organization.

4. **Your customers/clients/students/patients can only book during normal business or office hours.** Not everyone has the option of scheduling an appointment or reservation during this time. Businesses and organizations that do not offer a 24-7 booking option may not only be inconveniencing their customers, clients, students and patients, they may be losing business.

5. **Your customers/clients/students/patients can’t view availability and services without calling in.** More and more individuals are connected to the Internet 24 hours a day, and they want the ability to view services and available appointment and reservation times without having to pick up the phone or send an e-mail.

6. **You manage your appointments/reservations in a paper appointment book, spreadsheet or folder.** This requires manual entry of information every time an appointment or reservation is booked, changed or canceled, which tacks on time for every scheduling transaction. It also includes a risk of error for information entered or changed incorrectly.

7. **You schedule appointments during your off-hours or on your personal time.** This is the side effect of not being able to get to this important task during normal business hours.
Besides cutting into personal time, it could also require overtime hours for employees, as mentioned above.

8. **You can’t see your schedule from anywhere you are.** Appointment and reservation information confined to an in-house network, spreadsheet or paper appointment book can be difficult—if not impossible—to access from outside the office. Many professionals need the ability to view appointment and reservation details at a moment’s notice.

9. **You’re constantly over-booking appointments or reservations.** Another side effect of manually managing appointments and reservations in a paper appointment book, spreadsheet or file, as the probability of errors and mistakes is always present.

10. **You have “no-shows”.** These can result from insufficient or missing reminder procedures. Missed appointments and reservations not only impact staff schedules, they also result in a loss of revenue, as other individuals could have utilized those time slots.

11. **You spend too much time making reminder phone calls or sending reminder e-mails or postcards.** Essential in keeping down the “no-show” rate, these nonetheless require a substantial time commitment from staff, especially if done manually without an e-mail application that quickly sends out personalized, mass e-mails.

12. **You don’t remind customers/clients/students/patients about their upcoming appointments or reservations.** A lack of resources or staff time is the primary reason organizations and businesses do not initiate or cease to continue this important task. The end result is a much higher “no-show” rate.
13. **Your customers/clients/students/patients complain about the inconvenience in scheduling an appointment/reservation with you.** Unhappy individuals are not conducive to a successful operation, especially if they seek the services of competitors who do make it easy and convenient for individuals to book an appointment or reservation.

14. **You find it burdensome to manage your employees’ schedules.** Booked appointments and reservations oftentimes dictate daily staff schedules. Rummaging through paper appointment books, spreadsheets and files to locate scheduled times and the staff member assigned to them is tedious and time-consuming.

15. **You can’t instantly accept payments when an appointment is booked.** Some organizations and businesses require or allow for payment when a service is booked. This can help reduce the “no-show” rate, as individuals who pay for services beforehand are less likely to miss their scheduled times. Collecting and processing payment info, however, can be difficult when an appointment or reservation is booked over the phone or by e-mail.

16. **You aren’t immediately notified of a new appointment or a change in the schedule.** Operators and staff not on-site when a new appointment or reservation is booked or an existing one is changed or cancelled may not be immediately aware of it. For some, this knowledge is vital, as they may to adjust their existing schedules and calendars.

17. **You’re losing money with your current scheduling method.** A quick calculation of all time commitments, unused time slots, and “no-shows” can reveal if the scheduling method utilized by a business or organization is a monetary drain.
18. **Your competitions have a better scheduling process.** If they do, this will ultimately have an impact on the success of a business or organization, if it hasn’t done so already. Conduct a quick search of nearby and local competitors and examine how they accept appointments or reservations.

19. **You have too many open slots.** Unused time slots means lost revenue. One factor contributing to this may be the method of scheduling and managing appointments and reservations.

20. **Your customers/clients/students/patients can’t instantly book an appointment from your web site, social media page, e-mail messages or e-newsletter.** Web browsers no longer visit web sites and social media pages to gather information and view photos. They also expect to conduct transactions on them as well. The same is true for e-mail messages and newsletters, which can include action links that prompt individuals to take an action, such as scheduling an appointment or reservation.

21. **You’re not able to schedule appointments 24 hours a day.** Traditional scheduling during normal business hours is not only an inconvenience to customers, clients, patients and students. It can also impact a business or organization’s bottom line, as limiting appointment- and reservation-booking to normal business hours excludes many individuals interested in booking during off hours.

**Conclusion**

The above list shows just how impactful the simple process of scheduling and managing appointments and reservations can be. The solution is online scheduling software, which can completely transform the booking process. Standard with such functionality as online self-scheduling, automated e-mail and text message reminders, record-keeping and reporting functionality, and online payment processing, online scheduling software applications such as Appointment-Plus make it easy and affordable to automate and streamline the process, making this one-time difficult and tedious task an afterthought.
To learn more about online scheduling software and how it can improve your booking processes, visit www.appointment-plus.com.

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