

Stop. Time Thief!

Lack of Straight Talking costs UK small business owners
3 million working hours a week

T-Mobile Research Key findings:

- More than one in three small business owners waste 45 minutes or more on long-winded conversations each day
- Small business owners switch off within five minutes unless you get to the point

London, 17th November, 2010: Over a third (35%) of UK small business owners spend over 45 minutes a day or nearly 4 hours a week talking to suppliers, customers, colleagues and partners who don't tell it to them straight, according to a national survey of 2,000 small business owners released today by T-Mobile. These long-winded conversations collectively cost the small business owners almost 3 million¹ working hours a week, or over £36 million² in line with the average hourly wage in the UK.

As a supplier to small businesses across the UK, T-Mobile commissioned the research into Straight Talking* to better understand the time pressures business owners are under and determine how they prefer to communicate in business. Eighty-six percent of small business owners said they waste time every day talking to suppliers, customers, colleagues and partners who don't get to the point. The vast majority (91%) see themselves as Straight Talkers and have very little patience for those who do not take this approach. Almost three quarters (74%) admitted to switching off after just five minutes if they feel someone isn't Straight Talking and one in five (19%) will not listen at all. One in ten even prefer to skip pleasantries altogether and get straight to the point in all business meetings.

Small business owners identified overuse of jargon, clichés and too much small talk as the biggest giveaways for knowing when someone isn't Straight Talking enough. "At the end of the day", "blue sky thinking" and "out of the box" were uncovered as some of the most hated phrases used by business people.

Alex Polizzi, Channel 5's The Hotel Inspector, is renowned for her direct approach to discussing and tackling business issues. Commenting on the research Polizzi said: "I've always advocated a straight talking approach in business and T-Mobile's research shows just how much it matters to small business owners. It has nothing to do with being rude to people and everything to do with saving time and ultimately money. No matter what the market conditions, small business owners simply don't have the time to waste and, in tougher times, straight talking is all the more important. Suppliers to small businesses have an important role to play here."

Martin Lyne, Director of SME Marketing at T-Mobile comments: "Thirty percent of the small businesses we polled stated half or more of their suppliers are not straight talking. As a supplier to many of these UK businesses, it's important to us that we know how to best engage with them and this research clearly highlights the price being paid for a lack of straight talking in business. We recognise the importance of allowing them to get on with what they do best and not waste their time with jargon or complex products and services."

The **Straight Talking** research was commissioned to highlight the need to take a direct approach in UK small business. To tie in with this, T-Mobile is currently running a Straight Talking Business Pitch competition on its website. Alex Polizzi will judge the competition to help identify the UK's most straight talking small business owners. A prize of £2,000 is up for grabs for the winner and £1,000 for each of two runners up.

T-Mobile will also be hosting a series of small business events in Manchester, Newcastle and London in the week of the 29th November. For more information please visit www.t-mobile.co.uk/events

¹ On average, micro business owners stated they wasted 35 minutes time in an average day talking to people who are not straight talking. 1019605 (number of small businesses) x 2.92 hours (average amount of time wasted per week) = 2.97 millions hours per week. Calculated by Opinium Research²

² 2.97 million hours wasted per week x £12.34 (average hourly wage) = £36.7 million wasted per week.

Regional breakdown

Newcastle

- Those from Newcastle have the least patience with waffle, with 78% switching off after 5 minutes or less if they feel someone is not straight talking, compared to a national average of 74%.

Liverpool

- Small businesses in Liverpool and Manchester are more likely than anyone else in the UK to give people time to talk, with 67 per cent switching off after five minutes or less if someone is not straight talking, compared to a national average of 74 per cent.
- Liverpool's small business owners are the least tolerant of workplace jargon, with 71 per cent saying they dislike it or dislike it a lot.
- In Liverpool, over two thirds (68 per cent) of small business owners prefer to do business deals and discussions in person, compared with only 55 per cent in the rest of the UK

Manchester

- Small businesses in Liverpool and Manchester are more likely than anyone else in the UK to give people time to talk, with 67 per cent switching off after five minutes or less if someone is not straight talking, compared to a national average of 74 per cent.
- Those from Manchester prefer a direct approach – 15% of Manchester business people would prefer doing business with someone who gets straight to the point, skipping initial pleasantries. This compares to 8% of Brummies and 6% of Geordies.

London

- When it comes to jargon, people with 'blue sky thinking' and 'out of the box' ideas would do well to steer clear of London businesses, with 68 per cent of the region disliking or disliking workplace jargon a lot, against a national average of 67 per cent.

Birmingham

- It would appear that Birmingham businesses are full of 'blue sky thinking' 'at the end of the day', with just 59 per cent disliking or disliking workplace jargon a lot.

Opinium Research carried out an online survey of 2,000 UK micro business owners (businesses with between one and nine employees) and sole traders between 28th October and 3rd November 2010

* Straight Talking was defined as someone who is direct, straightforward and gets to the point during business discussions in order to save time, effort and ultimately money, while still being polite.