Instant messaging for business is a trend you could hardly describe as new. Yet despite the growing maturity of the technology, there somehow remains a stigma more closely associated with preteen social groups than professional teams.

Instant messaging for business can help teams be more productive, wherever their members are located.

Instant messaging is clearly an effective way to keep your internal office communication running like a well-oiled machine. However, what are some of the potential pitfalls? Better yet, how can your organization take advantage of instant messaging technology without the corresponding headaches?

Nobody Likes a Gossip

Before going too far down the proverbial rabbit hole, it's important to set the record straight: The instant messaging we're talking about here are the comprehensive platforms purpose-built for business communication, not the WhatsApps and Facebook Messengers of the world. These types of platforms allow colleagues to communicate quickly, efficiently, and privately from any number of devices.
However, instant messaging for business can bring with it some very subtle (and not-so-subtle) pitfalls: namely, distractions. Just like the water cooler of yesteryear, these tools serve as a surprisingly convenient forum to discuss such enlightening topics as yesterday's episode of "The Bachelorette" or excruciatingly detailed summaries of Timmy's latest soccer tournament. You get the point.

Worse yet, any unmoderated venue for communication can be a prime breeding ground for office gossip. This can be especially true given the perceived privacy of such technology. Depending on the instant messaging platform that's used, family members and friends outside of work circles can quickly make their way into daily chats. And, let's be honest, nothing kills productivity quite as quickly as a message with pictures depicting your dog's most recent kitchen redecorating job in pursuit of the treat jar.

**Everything in Moderation**

All that being said, instant messaging for business offers too many benefits to simply ignore it based on a few potential concerns. First and foremost, instant messaging technology gives your office a more flexible way to communicate. It's as fast as talking in person, incredibly convenient, and can convey more than simple speech. Furthermore, business instant messaging provides a platform nearly every user will be familiar with right out of the gate.

There are two things anyone looking to deploy a successful instant messaging platform would do well to consider: accountability and education. Fortunately, these two concepts are fairly easy to accomplish with a little know-how and some digital wizardry. To tackle the accountability aspect, one of the best deterrents to instant message abuse is to simply keep a record. It's surprising how integrity tends to increase when someone's keeping tabs. Modern instant messaging services make this an easy affair by automatically logging every message that's sent and received.

Going hand-in-hand with accountability is education. By making it clear to users exactly what's expected of them — yes, policies will need to be drafted — you can nip most distractions in the bud before they become an issue. In a similar vein, it's also quite effective to simply lead by example. The fewer cat memes you send out to your team, the fewer you're likely to see from others as well.

In the end, instant messaging is an incredible tool that requires a touch of responsibility. With a little foresight, education, and the right platform, your organization may just find its way to a new level in communication.

*Visit Vonage Business to learn more about better communication for your business.*