

How to succeed with your web-based

# In/Out Board

...Issues, Answers, and key Success Factors

Many thousands of companies have successfully implemented electronic In/Out Boards, but many more have tried and not succeeded. If you are ready to implement InOutBoard for your business, then this article is for you! There are a few simple things you can do to make the product a success for your business and deliver the benefits you are expecting.

First of all, let's discuss the business value that the InOutBoard.Com provides. The question is:

## Why do I need an In/Out Board?

Commercial businesses, Government agencies, and Non-Profit companies all get key benefits with the InOutBoard – better Customer Service, improved Management controls, better Employee Collaboration, and better Security. Businesses achieve a competitive advantage by doing better in these areas, while Government agencies and Non-Profit companies are able to serve constituents better and faster.

- **Customer Service.** When a customer calls to speak with one of your employees, they expect you to know the current status of the employee, where he or she currently is, when they will return, and how to get a hold of them right now. Customers want this level of service, especially if they have an important or urgent issue that only your employee can handle.
- **Management.** Managers should know the current status of their employees at all times. Managers typically know employee schedules and have some facts on time and attendance, but knowing real-time status is much more challenging. A manager without these facts cannot effectively make real-time decisions on resource utilization or plan meetings, nor can he or she answer simple inquiries like *"When will Bob be back?"*



- **Employee Collaboration.** Businesses that have a high degree of collaboration or inter-dependence of their workforce rely on In/Out Boards to prevent delays and inefficiencies in business processes. If one of your employees needs a quick answer from another employee to complete a task, the task stalls until they connect. Cell phones and pagers are certainly valuable here, but what happens when they are not available, out of range, or turned off? What happens when the employee is in an important customer meeting and should not be interrupted?
- **Security.** Government Agencies and many large businesses need real-time tracking of employees for security reasons. In some cases, these are mandated by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. Rapid mobilization or emergency response require real-time tracking of employee status, location, and contact information.

### Why not just use a manual In/Out board?

In many business office environments, this is a daunting challenge. You still see many of these old-style manual in/out boards around town, but how many have you seen that are kept up-to-date? The problem is that employees rarely make the effort to go to the board to update it. Receptionists usually have to hunt down employees and update their status for them. Managers berate employees for not keeping the board current, but without constant badgering, it quickly falls into disuse.



Another problem with manual boards is they exist in only one place. If you want to know the status of an employee, you have to physically go to the board to learn what their status is, or you have to interrupt the receptionist to get the information. In either case, it's inefficient and cumbersome.

The InOutBoard has a big advantage – you can see employee status from any PC with access to the web site. Employees can update their status from where ever they are – no need to trudge over to the pegboard system or bother a receptionist to update their status. These facts alone make the InOutBoard much more likely to succeed than manual pegboards.

### How much employee involvement and training is needed?

There are two answers to this question, depending on how your business operates. If you have an office environment with a receptionist, and if you plan to have the receptionist enter everyone's status, then very little employee involvement is needed. The receptionist just needs to make sure that they have the current status of everyone, so employees will need to be diligent in providing status information on a real-time basis. This method works well in Real Estate Offices, Marketing or Engineering Companies, and other professional services.

If your environment is too fluid to have a single person do all the entry, then everyone needs to get involved. It's easy and intuitive for employees to update their own status, but it does require commitment and it's easy to forget. That's the reason that the InOutBoard offers the IOB Agent – a desktop pop-up that as easy as an Instant Messenger to use.

Government Agencies, Churches, Field Service Companies, and companies with a distributed workforce find the IOB Agent to be an invaluable tool in keeping the InOutBoard current.

### How can I assure a successful implementation?

Leadership is part of the equation, but simply compelling employees to use the system rarely works. Here are the other main success factors:

- **Make InOutBoard very convenient to use.** This is an important step in gaining rapid adoption of the system. Among your choices are to automatically run InOutBoard when a user logs onto their PC, or to make the InOutBoard Agent always run in the background. See InOutBoard Start-up Options on the InOutBoard.Net Help page for other options.
- **Get Employee Buy-In and Socialization.** Your employees need to know the purpose and value of the InOutBoard. They will cooperate and keep the system current if they understand why the business needs employee tracking and how it helps with Customer Service, Management, Employee Collaboration, and Security. They will buy-into the system if they can see how your business gains a competitive advantage by doing better in these important areas.
- **Overcome the “Big Brother” Syndrome.** Employees often perceive Employee tracking as intrusive, unnecessary, and an invasion of privacy. Employees need to understand that the purpose is not to watch them; the purpose is to help the business run better.
- **Overcome the WIIFM Syndrome.** “What’s in it for me?” is almost never said but almost always thought by employees in one form or another. If your employees are frequently providing information about their status and location, but never get anything back, then the process becomes a chore with the information flowing in only one direction. Especially if there is no consequences to doing it poorly or not at all, employees will soon figure out that the system is not working “for them”.

### JCI Industries keeps tabs on staff with InOutBoard

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“For JCI Industries, having a way to track staff is a necessity. As a sales organization that prides itself in personal service and prompt responses to our customers, knowing a staff member’s availability is vital. If a staff member is out on call, in a meeting or on vacation, we can route a customer inquiry appropriately without “wasting time” hunting them down or leaving messages that won’t be immediately answered.”

“InOutBoard.com gives us communication alternatives we didn’t have before and a great deal of flexibility to meet both user and business requirements.”

“I would highly recommend the service to anyone with a large, diverse staff that is always “on the go” like we have. It helps to facilitate both internal and external communications and increase customer service.”

John J. Riedl, IS Manager  
JCI Industries, Inc.

Communications is important here. Let employees know that how the system is working for them and for the business. For example, use the InOutBoard phone message feature when answering customer inquiries.

- **Relying on the InOutBoard.** This is a crucial success factor. Employees and Management must rely on the InOutBoard as their only method of employee tracking. If it's inaccurate or out of date, it can't be relied on. Conversely, relying on the InOutBoard

actually forces it to be accurate and timely. Your employees will soon figure out whether or not you are relying on the system, and if you do, they will realize that they are letting you down when they don't keep their information current.

- **Eliminate Redundant Systems.** Another important issue is that legacy tracking systems and methods have to go. Remove manual In/Out boards. Eliminate employee sign in/out sheets. Eliminate any other spreadsheets for employee tracking. If there are two ways to track employees, then there is no way that both will be reliable. A new system has little chance of succeeding if legacy systems are still maintained.
- **Commitment.** Leaders will implement systems with the best of intentions, but getting a system to be self-sustaining requires both time and patience. Leaders need to stay committed until the system becomes part of the culture of the business. For the first few weeks or months, leaders need to champion the system – use it, rely on it, encourage others to use it, and eliminate lingering resistance. The payoff will be a competitive advantage and the other benefits that you expect to achieve

## Summary

The InOutBoard can provide your business with some excellent benefits in Customer Service, Management, Employee Collaboration, and Security. By addressing the InOutBoard implementation success factors, you can achieve the benefits the InOutBoard provides and make it an integral part of your business.

The InOutBoard often requires a slight change in the company culture. Changing the culture is not easy, but by championing the system, remaining committed, and by sharing and reinforcing the InOutBoard value proposition, you will join the thousands of companies that are successfully using electronic In/Out Boards.

Please contact Brian Yale at [BYale@InOutBoard.Com](mailto:BYale@InOutBoard.Com) for questions or comments regarding this document.