

Instant messaging

MSN and Yahoo Instant Messaging services are combining in a scheme to offer chatting for members of both communities. What value does Instant Messaging (IM) have in the business world?

1 Which of the following services do you use? Circle B (for business use) and / or P (for personal use). Compare your answers with a partner.

email	B / P	texting	B / P	instant messaging	B / P
-------	-------	---------	-------	-------------------	-------

2 Skim the article. Match the paragraph headings (a–d) with the appropriate paragraphs (1–4).

- (a) Disadvantages of IM (b) The future of IM (c) Partnership (d) Advantages of IM

Instant messaging and business

[1] Text chat. You may be forgiven for thinking that everybody's doing it. Communicating in real time through the keyboard, using MSN Messenger or Yahoo Messenger, is especially popular with the young, internet-literate generation. Until recently, anyone wanting to 'chat' to friends using different systems had to maintain separate accounts. However, a recent experiment may change all that. IM users with the latest versions of Windows Live Messenger and Yahoo Messenger can now send messages each other. This Yahoo-Microsoft partnership, being trialled across nineteen countries, would create a strong competitor to AOL, currently the No. 1 ranked IM service in the US.

[2] Can IM really help businesses? The ability to communicate with colleagues in real time can sometimes be a benefit. IM is good for exchanging quick information about a project, meeting times, or where someone is. Multitaskers can get information from a colleague via IM while they are on the phone with a customer, without having to interrupt the

telephone conversation. IM can also be useful for quick communications in emergencies.

[3] The biggest concern is security. For example, external users can send files that might contain viruses, or employees can send confidential documents to competitors. Users may think that the 'chat' can be deleted. However, one of the parties in a conversation can copy and paste the entire transcript into a notepad or Word document. One side-effect of the growth of IM is that companies are drawing up user guidelines, in the same way they did for emails. Such guidelines could advise, for example, that personal 'chatting' is done during breaks or the lunch hour. But are such rules enforceable?

[4] Some of the biggest mobile phone networks are now pushing for instant messaging over mobiles. The mobile phone industry is clearly keen to repeat the success of text messaging. How will things develop? Will businesses continue to explore the possibilities of incorporating Instant messaging in the workplace, or will it just encourage employees to waste time?

3 Read the whole article. What are the pros and cons of using instant messaging in the workplace?

4 Complete the following tables. There may be more than one possible answer. Create sentences using the words.

NOUN	VERB	ADJECTIVE
(a) network		
(b)	(to) partner	–
(c)		secure

NOUN	VERB	ADJECTIVE
(d)		competitive
(e) communication		
(f) success		

5 Discuss the following questions in small groups. Be ready to report back your ideas to the class.

- Are there any ways in which instant messaging could be used in your business? Would it be abused?
- What company policies exist connected with using the Internet and emails? Are you happy with these?
- Would you sign up to use an instant messaging service on your mobile phone? Why / why not?