



## The most effective communication channels at work

By Joel Garfinkle

Today's workplace is not only a fast-paced environment, but also one that is increasingly more fragmented, with ever-changing technologies and hybrid and distributed workplace models. With so many competing priorities and so many communication channels, how do you make an impact with senior leadership? How do you even go about making sure they know who you are, much less what you do for the organization?

As the world settles into a new way of working together, it will be more important than ever to maintain your visibility. In my presentation "The Invisible Leaders: How to Find Them and Let Them Shine," I discuss how leadership and visibility benefit from each other. When you utilize both qualities, others see you as individuals with power, influence and authority.

There are many ways to communicate. Learn how to use each of these five communication channels to their best effect. For each channel, I've provided specific strategies on how to use each for the greatest advantage.

### 1. In person

Whenever it's possible and safe, face-to-face communication is the best way to develop a rapport and establish a connection. You're most likely to have the other person's full attention, and you'll both benefit from being more able to read body language, facial expressions and other non-verbal cues. Whether the conversation is casual in the normal course of business or a scheduled meeting, you will be best able

to make the most of your time and leave a good impression if you're well prepared to discuss your key talking points.

This method is best for:

creating a connection

establishing a relationship

staying top of mind

Leverage this method with:

social/hallway conversations

short scheduled meetings

longer meetings with prepared questions

## 2. Video communication

The pandemic brought an unprecedented rise in remote meetings, and the technology is likely here to stay. Whether it's because you work in different buildings, different cities or are conferencing with more folks than can fit in a single meeting room, virtual meetings are a new part of daily work for many of us. Knowing how to show a strong executive presence on video is vital for a successful communication.

While video communications are not as effective as meeting in person in terms of being able to gauge the interest and attention of your audience, it still can help to see the faces of those you're talking to.

Make the most of video call opportunities by being ready to discuss or update on any of your current action items, using crisp, clear language and having good enunciation. Check your technology in advance of any meeting and make sure you have quality sound, microphone and video. Be sure to dress professionally, have good posture and be attentive to the meeting — it can be very obvious that you are looking at another monitor or your phone. Try to have a neat and tidy space around you within view of the camera.

This method is best for:

distance/remote working

presentations

quick check-ins

Leverage this method with:

professional but friendly demeanor

well-prepared presentations

crisp, clear language and enunciation

clean workspace and background

### 3. Phone

Without the benefit of the visual clues available in in-person conversation, it can be harder to gauge the interest or reaction of your audience and adjust your messaging.

Still, the phone can be a useful tool in communicating and leaving a good impression. Just be sure to be direct, polite and to the point, especially if it isn't a scheduled time for the call.

Make every effort to make sure you have their attention and they aren't distracted or rushing to their next obligation. Ask if it's a good time to talk, and if not, schedule one. If they are ready and willing to chat, try to keep your conversation short and on a single topic. Be very respectful of using their time, and if at all possible, only use the phone for subjects directly relevant to the person you're talking with — this will maximize your chances of capturing their time and full attention.

This method is best for:

single topic discussions

brief questions

Leverage this method with:

items of direct interest (their project, department, etc.)

respectful, punctual use of their time (starting and ending call)

#### 4. Voicemail

Sometimes, leaving a voicemail is a necessary and effective means of communication. Voicemails can be ideal when you have a brief and relatively uncomplicated summary of something specific. Be sure to include the timeline in which you need it — i.e. "I need your signature on the updated contract by 2pm Thursday."

If you call and receive a voicemail greeting but you're not prepared to leave a succinct message, consider hanging up and calling back in a minute or two when you've had a moment to gather your thoughts. It really leaves a much better impression of your professional abilities when you can clearly and efficiently leave your name, number, message and any calls to action or deadlines.

We've all stood with someone while they tapped their foot and impatiently waited through a long voicemail full of "um" and "err." Make a great impression by being clear and direct in the message you leave.

This method is best for:

summaries of your need or request

direct calls to action

Leverage this method with:

clear, concise language

a prepared message

your name and contact number

## 5. Email

Email is usually my last choice for communication for a few reasons, except in certain cases. The volume of email we all get, especially senior leaders, is so large that we're

lucky if an email gets more than a cursory glance and a quick skim. So much of what lands in our inboxes goes unread or unaddressed as the next wave of communication lands on top.

It's also the first thing to fall by the wayside when we're too busy, too tired or too distracted. Still, it can be a useful tool in some instances. Try to stick to using email strictly for summarizing or recapping previously covered topics and communicating key action items.

You might also use email to briefly introduce yourself and give clear context that compels the receiver to return your message and accept a request for a more direct communication. Avoid dense wording and many paragraphs; if possible stick to bulleted points and brief summaries.

This method is best for:

giving context and setting up direct meetings

summaries and meeting notes

listing key action items

Leverage this method with:

great spelling and grammar

brevity

clear messaging

Whenever a need or opportunity to communicate arises, be sure you're leveraging technologies and communication channels to their advantage while putting yourself in the best light. Whatever your message, use the medium at hand to present your most competent, efficient and professional self.

If you make an effort to be prepared and appropriate for the channel you're using, you'll be ahead of so many in communicating positively in the modern age.

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