

# 10 Tips for Virtual Communication\*

(\*and they'll work in-person too!)

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## **Pick the right medium.**

Is this discussion an email? If it has emotions attached, maybe not. Perhaps it's time to pick up the phone. Is it business as usual? Then, a text or email would be fine. Is it a conversation that will have to be repeated? Sounds like a virtual meeting. Consider the content, emotion, and the audience before picking the method of communication.

⇒ 2

## **Ask the person.**

Now is the time to ask every person you work with the following questions:

- What is your favorite way to receive information? (e.g., email, phone, text, video call)
- What is the best way to contact you with urgent information?
- What is your least favorite way to communicate?
- What could I do to communicate with you more effectively?

Use these to tailor your communication for that person.

⇒ 3

## **Schedule communication.**

Just because it's the right time for you to talk, you can't assume it's the best time for someone else. Always ask, "Do you have time to talk now or would you like to schedule this discussion for later?"

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## **Use all parts of communication.**

Even in virtual communication, you've got a tone. Work on using positive words in your written messages and good facial expressions in virtual meetings. A true professional can convey that professionalism even through a camera.

⇒ 5

## **Ensure a common vocabulary.**

Every set of letters used in social media and texting is not universal. Unless you're sure the person understands a phrase or emoji, don't use it.

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## **Edit before sending.**

It takes a few extra seconds to proofread and edit your communications. It's just one more way you can represent yourself and your agency in a professional manner.

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## **Check your emotions.**

Don't respond immediately to messages that have an emotional effect on you. You need to allow any emotions or anger to cool before you compose your response.

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## **Evaluate and adjust.**

We are all still learning virtual communications. The best way to keep getting better is to evaluate each meeting. Ask:

- What worked well?
- What do we need to do better?
- What would you like us to try next time?
- Any other comments?

⇒ 9

## **Communicate just to check in.**

In a time of remote work, it's important to ensure that not every communication is task-based. We, as leaders and coworkers, need to occasionally take time to connect with the person, rather than the employee. This allows a period of separation to become a time of improved connections.

⇒ 10

## **Laugh at mistakes.**

A training team and a cat named Ralph walk into a webinar. No, that's not the start of a joke. It's a real occurrence from our recent webinar. And it's a great example of what can happen as we learn new technology. It's also a great reminder that we're going to laugh at those mistakes someday, so why not start now?

