

Communication Vehicles. What to Choose?

In the fast-paced corporate world, communication is the key to success. But with the variety of communication options expanding like never before, how do you know what method is the best way to communicate your message? Regardless of whether you communicate via mail, telephone, fax or e-mail, here are some simple rules to keep in mind.



1. Know Your Work Environment

Your place of employment may have some very clear rules as to how you communicate both externally and internally. Check these standards out before you send out any information.

2. Know Your Audience

How many people will you include in this correspondence and how do they prefer to be contacted?

3. Be Clear and Professional

Any correspondence you send out is a representation of you and your company. You wouldn't meet with a new client wearing ripped sweats and grass-stained shoes, so why send out a meandering, poorly spelled document or leave a rambling, ill-thought-out voice mail?

4. Don't Waste Anyone's Time

Plan what you're going to communicate and be succinct, but provide enough context for the message to be meaningful. Be prepared for questions or responses by having all the necessary information at your fingertips.

5. Select the Appropriate Medium

Here are some basic pros and cons of the four main methods of corporate communication.

Telephone



(+) The most personal choice when you can't meet face to face. This is the only method that allows you to carry on a meaningful conversation.

(-) Telephone tag and time zones

Mail/Courier



(+) Great for sending confidential, formal or legal documents. How else are you going to get a signature on that original contract?

(-) Slower and more expensive; difficult to reach large numbers of people simultaneously

Fax



(+) It's in writing and signed. No file-compatibility issues.

(-) More paper to file, potential problems with reproduction quality and awkward for many pages

E-mail

(+) Quick, easy to organize and can reach many people at the same time



(-) It's a conversation without the advantages of body language (signals can get crossed easily and emoticons only go so far). The speed can trick you into getting too casual.

Now that you've got the basic communication etiquette and methods down, you're off to the races. Remember, there's an appropriate way to communicate everything. With a little common sense and planning, you should have no problem getting your message across.

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