

Effective Remote Communication Best Practices Series: Virtual Communication Types



There are a lot of communication technologies available to you as a virtual worker, but sometimes it can be difficult to determine which one to use and when. Let's take a look at some of the main types.

Email

- **Pros:** Email is best for simple communication. It is perfect for creating a record of a conversation or a decision. It should be used for correspondence that takes 5 minutes or less to conduct.
- **Cons:** Email is really difficult to use when collaborating. It is hard to keep track of the most current version of attachments and multiple strings get tangled and confused. There is also risk of misinterpretation.

Telephone

- **Pros:** Telephone is best used when the situation is complex and/or emotions are involved. It works well for one-on-one serious discussions, group status updates, and brainstorming. The conversation is relatively private.
- **Cons:** Body language information is not conveyed so misinterpretation is a risk. Sound quality, cell service, and background interference can be issues. It is not easy to make a record of what is being said, so things may be forgotten. Only spoken information is conveyed; files can't be transferred.

Instant Messenger

- **Pros:** Instant Messaging (IM) allows people to communicate instantaneously with pop-up messages. It provides the ability to have conversations with multiple people at once. It is a great tool for informal communication.
- **Cons:** IM can be distracting and lower productivity levels. Messages can appear over documents that are being worked on, which may throw off concentration. IM users often use text jargon, which may be confusing for people who are not familiar with it (e.g., lol, brb, etc.) There is also a risk for misinterpretation. Both receiver and sender need to be online at the same time to converse.

Web conference

- **Pros:** Web conference technology is great for brainstorming and collaboration since notes can be captured on the screen and documents can be shared. Many have the added bonus of video capabilities, which allow participants to both hear and see each other, so body language is conveyed. It provides face-to-face interaction without travel expense and time.
- **Cons:** Web conference platforms are susceptible to technology vulnerabilities such as internet and server problems. Each participant may have different streaming levels resulting in delays and inconsistent experiences. Everyone in the meeting needs to have suitable hardware and software.