



Exploring Leadership

COMMUNICATION: VIRTUAL COMMUNICATION

Virtual communication is everywhere—texts, emails, video calls, and more. While these tools make it easier than ever to stay connected, they also come with challenges. Unlike face-to-face conversations, we miss out on tone, body language, and instant feedback. Have you ever sent a message that was completely misunderstood? Without these social cues, miscommunication happens easily. That's why learning how to choose the right communication method is essential.

CONVERSATION STARTER:

"LOL" means "laughing out loud," but is anyone really laughing? Often, it's just a filler or feels out of place. Without tone or facial expressions, virtual communication lacks emotion. That's why we use emojis and shortcuts—to help others interpret how we feel. But do they always work?

We may live in a digital world, but we're still human. Clarity, connection, and understanding matter as much online as in person. Effective virtual communication means choosing the right tool for the situation. A quick text may work for updates, but serious news might need a call or video chat. Let the message determine the method. Choosing wisely ensures your words have impact.

EXPLORATION ACTIVITY:

Would you text or call? In this activity, you'll match real-world scenarios with the best virtual communication method and discuss why it fits.

- Watch the YouTube video "[Setting Communication Standards for Virtual Teams](#)" (3:26 minutes). Before playing, explain that while the video focuses on business communication, the concepts apply to everyday interactions.
- Distribute the "Virtual Communication" handout (see Appendix) and read the opening paragraph.
- Have participants match each scenario with the most appropriate virtual communication method.
- Pair up to compare answers and discuss their choices.
- Ask each pair to explain their reasoning. For example, if they chose a personal phone call for delivering bad news, why might it be better than a text or email?
- Bring the group back together to compare answers, discuss differences, and refine their understanding of virtual communication.

FACILITATOR TIPS:

- Let participants know the YouTube video focuses on business communication, but the same principles apply to everyday interactions.
- Remind them to consider the purpose of the message before deciding which digital tool to use.

KEY OBJECTIVES:

- Identify the differences between virtual and in-person communication.
- Choose the best virtual communication method based on the message and audience.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- Copies of the "Virtual Communication Scenarios" handout (see Appendix)
- Pens or pencils
- Computer and projector to show the [YouTube video](#)



REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- Have you ever received a confusing digital message? What happened, and how did you figure out what the sender meant?
- Have you ever used the wrong digital tool to share information? How did it impact the conversation?
- When discussing the scenarios, did you and your partner agree on the best virtual communication methods? What factors influenced your decisions?

APPLICATION DISCUSSION:

- What is one thing you learned today that can help you communicate better online?
- Can you think of times when virtual communication works better than face-to-face communication? Why?
- How does choosing the right communication method help prevent misunderstandings?



CONCLUSION:

Virtual communication isn't going anywhere—it's only growing. The more we understand how to communicate effectively online, the better we can express ourselves, prevent misunderstandings, and strengthen relationships. Whether you're texting a friend, emailing a teacher, or joining a video call, always consider which tool best suits your message. Digital communication is powerful when used wisely—so make it work for you!

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REFERENCES

- Five Problems with Virtual Communication & What to Do About It: https://www.leadershipnow.com/leadingblog/2018/12/five_problems_with_virtual_com.html
- Setting Communication Standards for Virtual Teams: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eisfFx20FdI> (3:26 minutes)



APPENDIX:

VIRTUAL COMMUNICATION

Not all messages are created equal. Some situations call for a quick text, while others require a phone call or video chat to ensure clarity. Choosing the wrong method can lead to misunderstandings and frustration, so always consider your audience and the best way to communicate your message.

YOUR TASK

Match each communication tool to the situation where it fits best by drawing a line to connect them. Think about the purpose of your message and how the recipient might interpret it.

DIGITAL TOOLS

Personal Phone Call
Group Phone Call
Text Message
Personal Email
Group Email
Personal Video Call
Group Video Call

SCENARIOS

You need to announce a free flu-shot clinic happening next Monday morning.
Your boss is in a meeting, and you need to inform them that the online presentation they requested is ready to share.
Your grandma got a new laptop and hasn't seen you in over a year. You want to let her know you miss her.
Your cousin is submitting their college application and needs you to review their essay one last time.
You're delivering a presentation with a video clip to an online class.
You have to deliver difficult news, like ending a relationship or letting someone go from a job.
Your team won an award, and you want to quickly share the exciting news.