

Using Technology to Facilitate Meetings

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WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn some benefits of and strategies for conducting meetings with technology. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. Why Technology?

Given the widespread availability and increasingly low cost of electronic communication, technologies that once served to bring people together across continents and time zones are now also serving people in the same geographic area.

Rather than traveling (by plane, car, or even elevator within the same building) to a central point for a face-to-face interaction, busy and cost-conscious professionals often choose to see and hear each other via one of many different electronic interface technologies.



Productivity: Apply Your Skill

You need to meet with a colleague about an important project. You only have a few questions, but they are critical to you being able to move forward on your portion of the work. Your desk is on the 6th floor while your colleague's is on the 22nd floor. What makes the most sense? An email? An instant message? An online meeting? A face to face meeting? What should you consider when deciding the best way to meet with coworkers?

It is important to be aware of the dimensions of nonverbal communication that are lost in a virtual meeting compared to an in-person meeting. Nevertheless, these technologies are a boon to today's business organizations, and knowing how to use them is a key skill for all jobseekers.



Technology: Why Employers Care

Strong technology skills put you at an advantage in the job market. As more and more companies recognize the cost and time savings of using technologies like Zoom and Microsoft Teams, they will seek individuals who can come in and be ready to use them on day one.

2. Audio-Only Interactions

The simplest form of audio-only interaction is, of course, a telephone call. Chances are that you have been using the phone all your life, yet did you know that some executives hire professional voice coaches to help them increase their effectiveness in phone communication?

When you stop to think about it, we use a great many audio-only modes of communication, ranging from phone calls and voice-activated telephone menus to radio interviews, public address systems, dictation recording systems, and computer voice recognition technology. The importance of audio communication in the business world has increased with the availability of conference calls, web conferences, and voice over Internet protocol (VoIP) communications.

Your voice has qualities that cannot be communicated in written form, and you can use these qualities to your advantage as you interact with colleagues.

➞ **EXAMPLE** If you are sending a general informative message to all employees, an email may serve you well, but if you are congratulating one employee on receiving an industry award, your voice as the channel carries your enthusiasm.

If you are leaving a voicemail, state all the relevant information in concise, clear terms, making sure to speak slowly; don't forget to include your contact information, even if you think the person already knows your phone number.



Imagine you are writing down your phone number as you recite it, and you will be better able to record it at a "listener-friendly" speed.

Don't leave a long, rambling voicemail message. You may later wish you had said less, and the more content you provide, the more you increase the possibility for misunderstandings without being present for clarification.

3. Audio-Visual Interactions

Rather than simply call each other, we often call and interact in both audio and visual ways via the Internet. There are several ways to interface via audio and video, and new technologies in this area are being invented all the time.

➞ **EXAMPLE** VoIP software allows the participants to see and hear each other across time and distance with one-on-one calls and video conferencing. The audio portion of the call comes through a headset, and the callers see each other on their computer monitors, as if they were being broadcast on television. This form of audio-visual communication is quickly becoming a low- or no-cost business tool for interaction.

If you are going to interact via audio and visual signals, make sure you are prepared. Appropriate dress, setting, and attitude are all required. The integration of a visual signal to the traditional phone call means that nonverbal gestures can now be observed in real time and can both aid and detract from the message.

If you are unfamiliar with the technology, practice with it before your actual business interaction. Try out the features with a friend and know where to find and access the information. If the call doesn't go as planned, or the signal isn't what you expected or experienced in the past, keep a good attitude and try again.

4. Social Media

Humans seek interaction, and this has led to new ways to market, advertise, and interact; however, caution is warranted when engaging in social media online.

When you use these media, remember a few simple cautions:

1. Not everything is as it appears. The individuals on the forum may not all be who they represent themselves to be.
2. The words you write and the images you send, regardless of how much you trust the recipient, may become public and can remain online forever.
3. Always consider what you access and what you post, and how it represents you and your employer, even if you think others cannot know where you work or who you are.

Business and industry organizations may also incorporate posts and threaded discussions, but often under a password-protected design on a company's intranet or other limited-access platform.

Employees may use their business-provided computer equipment to access sites that are not business-related (if not specifically blocked), but all information associated with a business-provided computer is subject to inspection, archival, and supervision.



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned **why technology** has an important role in business communication. Technology both improves workplace productivity and can serve as a basis for evaluating an employee's desirability. Business communication can take place through **audio-only interactions** like the telephone, radio, or PA system, or through **audio-visual interactions** like video conference calls or recordings. In recent years, **social media** has become an additional channel for business communication.

Best of luck in your learning!

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