

Best Practices for Successful Business Communication After COVID

In the spirit of spring cleaning, it's time to take stock of your [business etiquette](#). We've become acclimated to relaxed, work-from-home attire and style during the COVID-19 pandemic, and it is easy to transfer that relaxation to other areas of our business communications – but that is not a good idea. As vaccinations, relaxed restrictions and other adjustments are allowing people to go back to the office, we are entering another, hybrid “new normal,” and our communication styles have to remain consistent and appropriate for both the home and professional office atmospheres. These tips may help.

Zoom Etiquette

Over the past year, I have seen more nose hair and awkward camera shots than I would like. When you are [meeting with someone virtually](#), please make sure that the angle of the camera is directly at eye level and not below your face. Your clients and colleagues might thank you! I also recently learned that if you look at the little light next to your camera (mine is green), it will look like you are making eye contact.

Be mindful of what is behind you when you are on a call, especially now that people are transitioning back to the office and have more-traditional backgrounds. Please don't show a basket of laundry, messy bed, or disorganized stack of books and papers behind you. If you can't control your surroundings, opt for a professional-looking virtual background – such options are included in programs like Zoom and don't incur a cost.

Also be mindful of background noises – kids, dogs, vacuums, music and lawnmowers. You may be comfortable working in the middle of a three-ring circus (or not even notice it any longer), but it is probably better if the person with whom you are speaking is not aware of it.

Reporters Are Just Like Us

Be mindful that reporters are people, too. They are managing the same personal issues that all of us are juggling, and sometimes things fall through the cracks. If they haven't gotten back to you, offer understanding and suggestions to help everyone stay organized. I like to start a new email thread with a subject line that reflects the topic of the article I'm pitching. I also try to send calendar reminders with the relevant phone numbers or dial-in information.

In the same vein, it is important to be sure that your pitches are concise, well-written and relevant to reporter beats. I wrote a blog offering tips for [best pitching practices](#), and my colleague Randy Labuzinski has shared his thoughts on [PR during the pandemic](#).



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Check Yourself

It is our job to position sources and thought leaders, so [get your grammar right](#): they're/their, who's/whose, you're/your, it's/its. Learn it, live it, love it. Sure, we all can make mistakes and we can blame them on autocorrect, but there are some basic grammar rules that legal marketers should know. Nothing makes a reader cringe like receiving an email filled with improperly used words. PR Daily put together a great list of [pervasive grammar gaffes](#).

Also, tighten up your sentences. For example, "I thought I would connect with Jane to discuss X," should be "I will call Jane to discuss X" or "Jane and I are going to discuss X." Be direct.

Be Reachable

Always include your phone number in your email signature, even on a reply. So much of our business is conducted without ever hearing someone's voice, but sometimes actual talking is the best way to communicate. It is terribly frustrating to have to dig through old emails, files, and paper notebooks or business cards to find a phone number.

If your law firm doesn't already have a standard email signature protocol, now is the time to institute it (see [this article](#) for some guidance). Use the signature to market your law firm, being mindful not to overwhelm readers with too many ways to reach you. If you are including a graphic, make sure it can be viewed on a mobile device, and that it does not make an email too large to open.

Do you have any tips for how to freshen up your communications? Email me, Stephanie Holtzman, at sholtzman@jaffepr.com.