

Listen, See, Or Read?

Getting the right message across depends on your method of communication. Evan Thompson shows you how to choose wisely



How do you know if you are really getting through to a person when you email, phone, text, write, or speak with them? Are you engaging them or just ticking the boxes in passing along information? If you are just sending information, you would be wise to revisit your communication choices to make yourself and your message more memorable while expanding your influence.

Marshall McLuhan's observation that "the medium is the message" means that the medium, not so much its content, dictates how an audience will receive a message. We communicate effectively only by taking into account our audience's needs, the urgency of the message, and the desired next steps our communication will trigger.

When seeking to collaborate with others, weigh your choice of communications vehicle carefully. For example, some clients may insist on only communicating over the telephone, or face-to-face. You may get faster responses from colleagues who prefer to communicate by email only.

A recent study by the *Harvard Business Review* showed that successful organizational collaboration was the result of many skills, including appreciating others, being able to engage in purposeful conversations, and productively and creatively resolving conflicts.

The communication method you choose will influence the power of your message and presence.

Hello, Operator

Despite a myriad of sophisticated innovations including email, instant messaging, social networking, and mobile technology, the telephone remains a powerful way to communicate when it comes to quickly resolving difficult situations and uncovering peoples' emotions. While a lot of younger people dislike chatting on the telephone, that medium is still paramount in financial services, especially when communicating with older clients. Real-time phone conversations are often more desirable than Skype as some participants feel uncomfortable being observed in their office space, which can be distracting to both parties. So use the telephone when you want to make a connection that is more personal. The telephone also allows you to better gauge a person's responses to your request or suggestion, and may be a better fit if the matter is sensitive or confidential.

Consider a situation between Rick, the manager of the Halifax branch of an Ottawa-based wealth management firm, and Katherine, who managed the Vancouver branch. They were planning a cross-country tour for senior management and couldn't