

# Communication Guidelines and Hierarchy of Response



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## Communication Guidelines and Hierarchy of Response

### Set Clear Guidelines for using Communication Channels, Recommended Response Times and System Statuses

To encourage transparency and reduce miscommunication within various channels and confusion around response times, Achurch recommends that organizations –

- Establish guidelines to use in their communication channels
- Outline the expected response times depending on the channel selected
- Emphasize the use of statuses in your choice of communication tools (e.g., Microsoft Teams, Slack, etc.) to show employee availability

The choice of channel is driven by the urgency of the information needed to be sent or received, which drives the suggested response time. Achurch refers to this as the "Hierarchy of Response."

### Communication Channel Response Time

The following is an example of a "Hierarchy of Response" approach:

Channel	Level of Importance	When to Use	Response Expected
Calls (via MS Teams or Cell Phone)	Critical / V. Important	For critical communications, when a response is needed quickly/urgently	Answer / Return Call ASAP
Text (via Cell Phone)	Urgent / V. Important	Reserved for off-hours communications, OR when you must reach somebody, they are not responding to a Chat, or they are set to busy or away	Answer / Return Call or Text ASAP
Chat (via Slack or MS Teams, etc.)	Moderate to Low	Daily communication	Answer before logging off for the day
Email	Low	Use for lengthier communications, not of an urgent nature	Respond within two business days

# Communication Channel Response Time - Hierarchy of Response Worksheet

Use this chart to establish organization-wide protocols and a hierarchy of response for those working within your organization.

Channel	Level of Importance	When to Use	Response Expected

## Supportive Communication Protocols

To facilitate optimal communications, consider adopting additional protocols as needed, so everyone in the organization is clear on what is expected and acceptable within your organizational culture.

Some additional standard protocols/practices to consider adopting include:

### ➤ **Keeping Outlook Calendars up to date.**

- Full calendar details do not have to be shared, but people should see when you are busy or free to meet.
- If you like to put tasks in your outlook calendar, make sure you click "free" when adding the task into your calendar.
- If meetings are for later in the day or the coming week(s), management should communicate that it is acceptable to schedule a meeting on a colleague's calendar without asking first.
- When working virtually, please be mindful of booking too many back-to-back meetings. Allow time for breaks by starting meetings 5 – 10 minutes after the hour's top or bottom.

### ➤ **Turning webcams on when participating in meetings.**

- While not necessary for *every* meeting, studies show video calls build more trust, a stronger relationship, and help you pick up on non-verbal cues. The more you encourage and reinforce this practice, the more comfortable staff will become, and the more managers will have visibility into non-verbal clues to employee well-being.

### ➤ **Asking first via chat before launching a last-minute meeting.**

- Be mindful of others' time. It's best to make sure someone is available before launching straight into a meeting.



*If you would like assistance establishing your own communications protocols, [contact us](#) today to learn how we can help.*