

Communication Response Time Guidelines

We need clear guidelines because **response time directly impacts efficiency, team trust, and customer satisfaction**. Managers must establish strong communication habits early on.

Communication Type	Target Response Time	Rationale (Why)
Text/Jolt	Within 1 Hour (during work hours)	These are for quick, urgent, or simple Q&A . They disrupt workflow less than a call but require a fast reply to avoid blocking someone else's immediate task.
Email/Asana	Within 8 Business Hours	Emails & Asana are generally for non-urgent requests, detailed information, or formal documentation . This timeframe allows the recipient to complete their focused work before checking and drafting a thoughtful response.
Voicemail / Missed Call	Within 2 Hours or Before End of Day (if received late)	A missed call with voicemail often signifies a more important or urgent matter than an email. A timely follow-up shows respect for the caller's time and prevents delays on key decisions or issues.
Urgent/Crisis Call	Immediate Answer (if possible) or Call Back within 10 Minutes	These are for time-sensitive issues that are actively impacting business (Health & Safety). The expectation is to drop non-critical tasks and address the emergency immediately.

The 'Why' Explained Simply

Understanding the **purpose** of each communication method is key to setting the right expectation:

1. Text/Jolt: Low Effort, High Speed

- **Purpose:** Interruptive communication for short-term, immediate needs.
- **Rule of Thumb:** If it takes longer than **2-3 sentences** to reply, it should probably be an email or a scheduled call.
- **The Goal:** Keep the conversation moving quickly. A slow response defeats the purpose of "instant" messaging.

2. Email/Asana: High Effort, Slower Speed

- **Purpose:** Non-disruptive communication for detailed discussion, attachments, and documentation.
- **Rule of Thumb:** Schedule **specific times** (e.g., 10 AM, 2 PM) to check and reply to emails instead of constantly checking. This preserves your focus time.
- **The Goal:** Provide a thoughtful, complete, and professional answer. We don't want rushed, incomplete replies just to meet a speed goal.

3. Phone Calls: Highest Urgency, Highest Attention

- **Purpose:** Synchronous communication for complex problem-solving, immediate decisions, or matters requiring personal interaction.
- **Rule of Thumb:** Only use a call when an email chain would be too slow, confusing, or emotional.
- **The Goal:** Show you value the caller's need for a direct conversation. A quick callback demonstrates professionalism and prevents an issue from escalating.

Converting Communication to a Scheduled Meeting

The goal is to save time and reach a decision. If a conversation stalls or becomes too complex in one channel, you must elevate it to a meeting.

Communication Channel	Conversion Trigger (The "Red Flag")	Rationale (Why Convert?)
Email/Text	More than 4 replies without a clear decision or solution.	This indicates the topic is too complex or sensitive for asynchronous (non-live) discussion. You are losing context and wasting time writing long responses.
Email/Text	The response requires more than 15 minutes to type or draft a reply.	The complexity or detail required means you need live, back-and-forth discussion to confirm understanding and move forward efficiently.
Voicemail/Call	The issue involves 4 or more people who need to provide input simultaneously.	You need to gather everyone's perspective at once to synthesize the best path forward, preventing "telephone tag" and ensuring alignment.
Any Channel	The issue is high-stakes, high-conflict, or sensitive (e.g., performance issues, organizational changes).	Sensitive topics require synchronous dialogue to manage tone, prevent misinterpretation, and build consensus face-to-face (or screen-to-screen).

The "Conversion Triggers" Explained Simply

1. The "Four-Reply Rule" (Email/Text)

- If you've gone back and forth more than four times, you are officially in a **"reply-all spiral."**
- **Action:** Immediately send a final message saying: *"This is getting complicated over email. Let's schedule 15 minutes to talk through this live. Sending an invite now."*

2. The "Time-to-Draft Rule" (Email)

- If you open an email and realize you need to spend 10-15 minutes researching or typing a long, detailed response, **stop typing.**
- **Action:** This level of effort means the topic deserves a meeting to ensure the reader understands all the nuances. Send an email saying: *"Great questions. This requires a detailed walkthrough. I'd prefer to cover it on a quick call to ensure clarity. Please accept the invite I'm sending."*

3. The "Multi-Stakeholder Rule" (All Channels)

- If you find yourself coordinating input from three or more people through different channels, you are wasting time.
- **Action:** Group meetings are the most efficient way to get immediate input, challenge assumptions, and gain sign-off from all necessary parties at once.

4. The "Tone & Sensitivity Rule"

- Never use text or email to convey sensitive news, discuss potential conflicts, or address a serious performance issue.
- **Action:** You need a meeting (in-person or video call) to allow for **non-verbal communication** (like tone of voice or facial expressions). This builds trust, shows respect, and minimizes the risk of someone misinterpreting written words.

Best Practices for New Managers

- **Communicate Delays:** If you receive a complex request (email or voicemail) that will take longer than the target time to **fully** answer, send a quick message: **"Got your email. I'll need a few hours/until tomorrow to gather the correct info, but I am on it."**This manages the sender's expectation.
- **Set an "Out of Office":** Always use an **Out of Office** for planned time away (vacation, training). Clearly state an alternate contact for urgent matters.
- **Model the Behavior:** Your team will follow *your* lead. If you respond consistently and professionally, they will too.