

16 Partners expect efficiency and selflessness when communicating

Communicate in a way which makes it easy for a partner to do their work. Not your work. A key mindset change.

Efficient communication

When writing to partners, or anyone for that matter, be action oriented and focused. Long emails will not get read.

This is how I wrote emails back when I was an associate:

Title: Decision needed on focus interviews by 5pm Monday

Tom,

The client wants an update on the draft focus interviewee list by 5pm Monday

I am not sure if we need to add the competitors we wanted to interview, in the draft list I send?

Thanks, X

In other words let me know in the title what I am opening up and add a deadline so I know if I can read it later.

Also, **never ever** leave cryptic voice messages on my phone! Is there anything worse than long, vague emails with a 2-paragraph context?

Yes, vague voicemails.

Never leave a voice saying you need to discuss something urgent and then fail to tell me what that is, in the message!

If you do not tell me the purpose in the voice-message, I will need to:

- (1) See the flashing icon on my phone
- (2) Pick it up
- (3) Excuse myself from the meeting – since I cannot determine if your agenda is more important than the meeting.
- (4) Check my message
- (5) Call you since I cannot deduce if it is important

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(6) Call you since I cannot type my response since you did not tell me what it is

(7) Then take time discussing something which may not turn out to be important

Always leave a message stating the problem. Better yet, send an email like the one above.

This is about being productive and efficient. Time is tight on strategy studies and vague voice-mails and emails are a luxury we cannot afford.

When I was a partner in the firm I managed 7 studies simultaneously in the worst months and 5 at once in the average worst months. You cannot imagine what it must be like getting cryptic messages from team members across 7 different studies and multiple time zones all speaking different languages. My phone would die out by 5pm just from the incessant beeping and blinking!

I think overseeing so many studies is too much. I think it is tough to really generate value for a client if you are overseeing more than 3 studies.

Therefore, I am spending most of this week wrapping up other tasks so I can fully commit my time to the financial services study and upcoming electricity study.

It would be fair to say Bain is pretty gob smacked that a boutique firm, albeit one of ex-partners from their two main rivals, is undertaking the crucial market entry strategy study for the client.

It probably upsets them even **more** that we never ever discuss anything when we run into them or discuss anything about ourselves: a complete black hole of information.

Yet, Bain consultants are easily the friendliest consultants across all firms.

QUESTION(S) OF THE DAY: Try the approach above and let us know about the results. Did you notice a positive change?

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