

POLL: Email v. Phones

Hi there firm,

Quick informal poll. Do you prefer for your clients to call you or e-mail you?

You can take "you" to include you, your staff, and your office in general.

Please don't turn this into another "nothing is protected by atty-cl privilege" discussion. I am just curious what everyone prefers.

I'll start. I prefer e-mail.

Sincerely,

Corrine Bielejeski, California

---

It depends on the client and the message. For scheduling or quick questions, email is fine, but if it's substantive, I prefer phone. Some also talk A LOT on the phone....I would rather they email me and I can digest all of their issues in a more concise way at my leisure than be on the phone for 20 minutes.

And for me, typically "email" is my messaging system through MyCase.

Sharon Barney, Pennsylvania

---

I usually prefer clients e-mail me, particularly as I'm a true solo and I'm not always available to pick up the phone (plus I work in a co-working space, which can make phone calls tricky). Also, my practice is purely transactional, and there's never really an emergency that demands immediate attention. That said, I don't communicate that preference to clients and let them get in touch however they want to. Most of my clients are younger and seem to prefer texting and e-mail anyway.

Noel French, Michigan

---

If they want to schedule an appointment I prefer phone call to my secretary.

If they want a status, a call to my secretary or email to me.

If they have real questions for me that might involve factual information or figures, or a review of their file by me, I prefer email. In general I find email preferable.

Sincerely yours,

Michael D. Caccavo, Vermont

---

I like email as well, although I also have some clients who like to text for the small stuff. I tend to feel guilty if I miss the calls but I don't have that problem if I need to follow up on an email or text later.

Plus, if it is email or text, I can look something up if I need to without needing to tell the client I'll have to call him/her back with the information. I have some clients who prefer to call and the "simple question" that would have taken a little time by email turns into a big effort because the client cannot focus on needs to talk about all kinds of stuff that doesn't really apply to the question being asked or that I am already aware of.

Elizabeth A. Ferguson, Michigan

---

Anything but texting.

Roger Traversa, Pennsylvania

---

E-mail.

Cynthia Hannah-White

---

I prefer email with everyone -- clients, co-counsel, opposing counsel, etc -- b/c I like to have a written record of the contact/communication that I can easily search and use to calendar action items.

Tracia Y. Lee, Texas

---

Email.

Tom Almquist, Florida

---

Email, and it's not even close. I can accomplish in 1 minute over email in what would otherwise be a 20 minute phone call. Sometimes when there is a confusing matter and there are communication issues, then a phone call is necessary.

Stephen Charles McArthur, California

---

Depends.

If it's a yes/no thing, then email. If it's a complicated thing with reference to documents, then email followed by call.

But as I always tell them... if it's something that requires a dialogue, then there needs to be a call. Emails are merely exchanges of monologues.

Laurie Axinn Gienapp, Massachusetts

---

Email for me. Although it is nice to be able to bill those clients who like to talk for 30 minutes.

Ed Burcham, Kentucky

---

Wow, this is really surprising! I don't know, call me old school, but I think there is so much miscommunication that can happen over email (especially regarding tone). I find it easier to have a 2 minute personal phone call than taking the time to go through my inbox and respond to emails.

I also like how phone calls really set in stone my boundaries on when I'm available. I feel like with email (and the dreaded text), clients feel like they can send me anything at any time and I may answer at that time. Plus, it's too tempting for me to respond to an email at 9pm at night. If I know I'll chat with them the next day, I'll wait until I'm "open for business."

Sharon Barney

---

I prefer email.

Shell Bleiweiss, Illinois

---

It really depends on the client.

Lesley Hoenig, Michigan

---

I was going to respond, but Sharon said it.

- | so much miscommunication with email
- | (especially regarding tone).
- | easier to have a 2 minute personal
- | phone call than ... go through my inbox and respond to emails.

Either way, the reply was in-kind. If it was too complicated or intricate, I'd also follow up with an e-mail.

- | I also like how phone calls really set in stone my boundaries on when I'm
- | available. ... with email clients feel like they can send me anything at any time and I may answer at that time. Plus, it's too tempting for me to respond to an email at 9pm at night. If I know

I told clients to e-mail whenever they had time to be cogent. Not my words, but my intent. If they worked until 5:00, they usually couldn't take time from their jobs to call. Plus, we didn't know how long or complex the call might wind up being.

So they could e-mail 24/7 and I would answer during business hours. By the time we connected by phone, we had a very good idea what we'd be discussing and what we'd already handled. And they had a those e-mails in their computer record.

I was officially "solid gone" at 5:00 pm. I was not tempted to answer e-mails at 9:00. Ever.

But, then, I have a cold cold heart.

CJ Stevens, Montana

---

I'm with Sharon. I'm Gen X, but I prefer discussing case strategy in a phone call or in-person meeting. Aside from when I write them letters, almost all conversations with my clients are "dialogues" versus "monologues" (love that wording!). I also think it is too tempting for clients to forward an email from

me to a friend or family member. I don't mind emailing them a document or vice versa, but when clients sign up with me we discuss what's appropriate to talk about via email, text, or phone. Most everything substantive is phone. Texting is ok if they are running a few minutes late for court or something like that. Email and text are ok to use to make an appointment for a phone call or a meeting.

Once when I did a long group project in law school, we had a rule that there would be no bad news via voice mail or email. Negative things had to be conveyed in person or via live phone call only. I like this philosophy and have put it in place in my practice and in my family.

Monica Elkinton, Alaska

---

I've been an email addict since 1980. I also like talking on the phone.

If a client wants me I don't care which they use. Unless they are total grammar Nazis. Then we'll talk.

I'm also a nut about returning calls and emails. Generally if I haven't responded in 24 hours I'm in a coma in some hospital. As one sezzer found out a few years back.

John Davidson, Pennsylvania

---

It depends on their retainer!

I find that when I first get a big retainer from a new client they call me all the time. Then they get the first bill and they never call me again. They just use email.

Email is quicker but of course divorces you from the personal contact you need from clients.

Sterling L. DeRamus, Alabama

---

I'm disabled, and use of a telephone is painful and complicated. I avoid phone wherever possible.

Mikki Barry

---

Email - along with caller id - two of the greatest inventions of the 20th century. The parties can express themselves free of static or other system interference and distraction. Each party can contact and respond on their own schedule. I've found that clarity is more likely when in writing.

Cheers!

Patricia M. Joyce, Rhode Island

---

preference-schmeference. Whatever the client dictates, except when something MUST be in writing. My convenience is trumped [pardon the expression] by the client's.

Miriam N. Jacobson, Pennsylvania

---

I really dislike talking on the phone for a number of reasons; primarily because I hear too often you said "x" on the phone, when I actually said "y". I know this because I always say "y". Emails can be reviewed over and over again. I can also take more time to choose my words carefully. If verbal communication is called for, I schedule an in-person meeting. Then I get to observe their visual cues too; can't do that over the phone.

Duke Drouillard, Nebraska

---

email...

I can respond faster and usually more effectively by email then by phone.

If they call they run the risk of having to leave messages and playing phone tag with me.

Email I can check on the go, in court, and so forth

Erin M. Schmidt, Ohio

---

Email.

Bob Gasparro, Pennsylvania

---

Whatever the client wants since they are paying my bills.

Jonathan G. Stein, California

---

Definitely email (or on occasion text for certain clients). Having minimal face-to-face and voice contact with clients has so far been very pleasant to say the least!

...that's not to say I don't enjoy occasionally meeting with clients. For those that I do, it is usually the entertainment clients, and for the most part it's been an enjoyable experience.

Best,

Joshua M. Biletsky, California

---