

## Is FaceTime Ever a Substitute for Face Time?

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When I started in this industry, business development was all about interpersonal relationships. Whether I met a contact for coffee, lunch, or a drink after work, I used that time to demonstrate value and build trust. My network is filled with people who watched me come up through the industry – as a result, they know and trust me.

Email, instant messaging, text messages, and video chat opened more channels for communication, but are they reducing the opportunity to create a real connection?

### Communication Is Digital

Some might argue that we're more connected than ever. We have various devices and programs that allow us to communicate anytime and anywhere with the touch of a button. Just today, I've used:

- Mobile phone
- Text messaging
- Instant messaging
- Email
- Social media
- Online video conferencing

These tools are all great ways to share information, but we face a risk of reduced interpersonal contact. We're all so connected to our devices, that sometimes the person standing next to us is the furthest from you.

### Enter COVID-19

The recommended social distancing guidelines to reduce the spread of the COVID-19 virus have put a (hopefully) temporary hold on in-person meetings. Fortunately, online meeting tools like Zoom and Microsoft Teams have allowed us to bridge the gap during this new normal.

To illustrate, Zoom launched in 2013 and had a million users within a few months and 40 million within two years. However, [in March of 2020 over 200 million people logged on to virtual meetings every day](#), and by April, daily users jumped to 300 million.

My mentors always taught me if you talk to a client – and they're in close proximity – get out of the office and go see them. I still do this today, although the pandemic has reduced my in-person meetings. I love the fact that digital communication tools help me stay connected to my clients and colleagues but it will never replace face-to-face meetings.

Every meeting I've had since March has been on Microsoft Teams video conference, and I've had my camera on for every meeting. It gives me the opportunity to get "in front" of people when I can't get into their office. Unlike emails or even phone calls, video allows us to see the person we're speaking with and pick up on facial expressions and other nonverbal cues.

## You Can't Text Negotiations

It's great that we can all stay in touch, share information, track communication effectiveness, follow up with the click of a button. But when it comes to finalizing a deal or partnership, getting together in person is best as nuance is often lost in text communications.

Essentially, deals are made when there is trust between two parties – if you haven't established trust or shared in a relationship-building experience, are you willing to buy from that person?

## Conclusion

Digital communications tools enable us to exchange information and stay connected despite geographic distance. With videos and interactivity, we can continue to engage with clients, contacts, and colleagues, but there's no true substitute for spending time with someone in person, especially when it comes to negotiating contracts and closing deals.

We can make do with phone calls and online meetings, but as soon as it's safe to be out and about again, I'm hitting the road.