



Amy Vetter

How to stop virtual communication burnout

Many of you have been communicating almost entirely via digital platforms for more than a year, so I don't need to tell you **Zoom fatigue** is real. When hours of every day are spent communicating via videoconference, chat, text, email, and more—all without so much as one in-person conversation—it's only natural for burnout to set in.

And when it does set in, **stress** and anxiety are sure to follow.

Now that a return to in-office work is finally on the cards, now is the perfect time to devise a strategy that will mitigate the negative effects of too much time spent talking and listening through a screen. Slack, Teams and Zoom are here to stay, even if remote work will no longer be mandatory, so it's on you to develop a method to keep them from overwhelming your life. Instead of banishing them entirely, you need to find a happy medium between not enough and too much virtual communication. The best path forward will vary slightly for every individual and business, but there's some ironclad advice that I think will help everyone manage their virtual communication regiments.

Starting getting back in person, but do it slowly and safely.

Depending on where you live, many of your team members may be vaccinated already. If that's the case, there's little harm in inviting people back into the office when they are ready to return. Want everyone to return en masse soon? Set a timetable that allows everyone enough time to get vaccinated. Many companies are

aiming for around **September** as a time to test a full return to in-office work. Plans are subject to change, but if you set a goal in advance, you give your team time to prepare for a return to the office.

In the meantime, there are still ways to start cutting back on virtual communication. If you have a small number of vaccinated team members who want to return to the office, you shouldn't feel guilty about joining them. In a warm part of the country? Why not start taking a few outdoor meetings when the weather's nice? Some of these conversations may happen on an ad hoc basis, but it's still worth the effort of squeezing them in. Not only do they pull you away from the screen, but they also allow you to get your feet wet with regards to meeting folks in person.

Set Zoom parameters

For a while, you had no choice but to conduct all of your important meetings via Zoom. I don't even want to know what the record for most Zoom meetings in a week is, but I'm sure it's too many. Many of us have spent the last year taking meetings at times we're not used to and from places we'd never thought. Flexibility has been the name of the game, but if we want to develop healthy habits going forward, we have to set some boundaries now.

While it may not be possible to put a hard cap on Zoom meetings or limit them to a specific set of hours, it's a great idea to develop some guidelines so you're not moving from meeting to meeting day after day. As clients may still want to meet via Zoom, the best place to target for limitations is internal meetings. Block off a couple of hours every day where no internal Zoom meetings can

happen to give everyone a rest from the screen time.

Encourage pop-ins

In a world before the pandemic, we often dropped into a coworker's office to ask them a quick question. These days, you probably do the same thing via Slack or another messaging app. Once you're back in the office, don't lean on an app for these types of chats. Instead, pop in on the person who has the answer you need.

There's so many benefits to this approach. It gets you up and moving, taking you away from the screen for a minute, it allows you to build camaraderie in the office, and it creates for more dynamic conversations. Getting back to the office also means recreating the culture of the place, and pop-ins can play a huge role in doing just that.

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About the Author

Amy Vetter is an accomplished entrepreneur, business executive, national speaker, CPA, and yoga practitioner. She is also the author of *Business, Balance & Bliss: How the B³ Method Can Transform Your Career and Life* available in June 2017. As a third-generation woman entrepreneur, Amy has launched and sold multiple businesses including yoga studios, an accounting practice, and other business ventures. Amy has also held corporate leadership roles overseeing customer, sales, education, and marketing functions. Throughout her 20-plus years in business, Amy has learned valuable insights on how to achieve work-life harmony and live a more purposeful life.

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