

# The Five Sense Solution

In our technology-driven world, we can communicate with minimal engagement of our human senses. Email, texting and chat platforms are primary ways many connect with their teams. It's not uncommon to have relationships with colleagues you've only ever met via Zoom, and in many ways virtual work has expanded our capacity for cross-boundary collaboration and efficiency.

These tools, however, are just that – tools. No app or innovation can single-handedly help us accomplish all we need to with less time, money and stress. That takes discernment. All organizations are networks of conversation, so which method of communication is best for which conversations? Have you ever tried to resolve a misunderstanding via email or text and been surprised at how quickly it devolved into a full-blown argument? Having an interaction in the wrong venue risks wasted time, compromised goals and damaged relationships.

*The Five Sense Solution* is based on a simple rubric: **the greater the misalignment, the more senses should be engaged in an interaction.** If there's clear and strong alignment, we can rely on fewer senses. As the likelihood of disagreement increases, so must the number of senses involved.

There are **four components of alignment**:

1. Values
2. Purposes
3. Methods
4. Specific, measurable results

For each of these areas, rate your confidence that there is strong alignment on a scale from 1-100. Note that new, unknown relationships will have a low confidence level simply because we lack a basis for assessment.

- If you're above 75 in all four areas, email or chat is a great tool to use. If you're below 75 in any area, start adding senses.
- If you rate any alignment component below 50, a live phone call is the minimum sensory environment. Let others hear your mood and a respect for their view, which avoids misinterpretation.
- If 2-4 of the alignment components are below 50, ask whether the issue is important enough for a face-to-face meeting. Even if it doesn't feel critical now, keep in mind that this may be what we call a [Point-Easy Conversation](#). If these relationships impact your goals, now or in the future, it's worthwhile to invest in your alignment. If you've already seen criticism, triggered tempers and pointed fingers, emails and even phone calls will not heal the rift. They might even make things worse.
- If you're about to launch a high-stakes project with a new team, consider investing in a dinner. Get all the senses engaged. The more human you are to one another, the more you can depend on those connections when times get tough.
- If you're managing [Zoom fatigue](#), don't add more senses than you need to. Take advantage of strong relationships and situations where alignment is high by taking walking phone meetings or communicating via email when it's sufficient.

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