



## BEST PRACTICES GUIDE FOR CLIENTS

# COMMUNICATION

*Create leverage, freedom and scalability in your business*

The biggest breakdown we see in the VA/Client Relationship is communication - or a lack of!

With great communication you can ensure that the VA/Client relationship is built on a foundation of clear communication, mutual respect, and trust. This will lead to a more productive and enjoyable working relationship for both parties.



# Why Communication is Important

Clear and consistent communication is the lifeblood of any successful relationship, and the VA/client relationship is no exception. Effective communication can:

- Boost productivity and efficiency: When expectations are clear and both parties are on the same page, tasks can be completed more quickly and with fewer errors.
- Build trust and rapport: Open and honest communication fosters a sense of trust and understanding between the VA and the client.
- Prevent misunderstandings and conflict: Timely communication can help to nip any potential problems in the bud before they escalate into bigger issues.
- Increase satisfaction for both parties: When both the VA and the client feel like they are being heard and understood, it leads to a more positive working relationship.





# Life Happens: Navigating Unexpected Situations

While we strive for smooth sailing in the VA-client partnership, occasional bumps along the road are inevitable. Life throws curveballs, and it's crucial to have established protocols for handling unforeseen circumstances like:

## Sick Leave:

- **Communication is Key:** The VA should inform the client as soon as possible if they're unwell and unable to work. This allows the client to adjust deadlines or delegate tasks temporarily.
- **Transparency and Proof:** Depending on the situation, the VA might offer a doctor's note or explain the nature of their illness (without oversharing personal details). Open communication builds trust and helps the client gauge the situation's severity.
- **Catching Up:** Upon returning, the VA should prioritise catching up on urgent tasks and communicate any potential delays to the client.



# Life Happens: Navigating Unexpected Situations

## Power Outages and Internet Drops:

- Proactive Preparation: Encourage the VA to have a backup plan in place for potential outages. This could involve having a secondary internet connection or a mobile hotspot setup.
- Immediate Notification: If an outage disrupts work, the VA should inform the client promptly and explain the situation.
- Rescheduling Tasks: Depending on the outage duration, the VA might need to reschedule tasks or adjust their working hours to complete them on time.



# Life Happens: Navigating Unexpected Situations

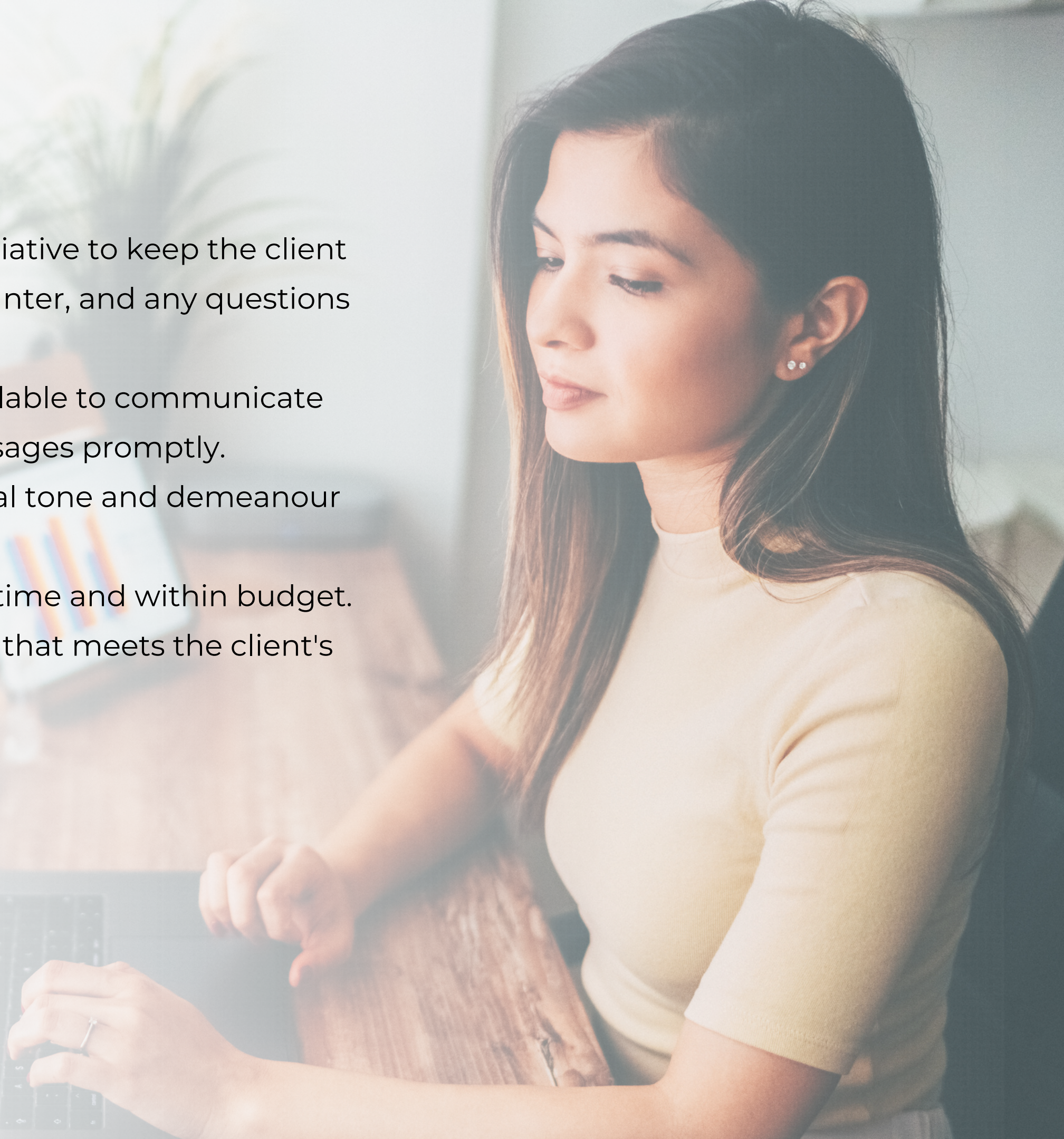
Running Late or Requesting Time Off:

- **Timely Notice:** The VA should inform the client as soon as possible if they're running late or need to take time off. Early notice allows the client to adjust their schedule and avoids disruptions.
- **Reason and Availability:** Briefly explain the reason for the delay or leave request, while respecting privacy boundaries. If possible, suggest alternative arrangements for covering urgent tasks during their absence.
- **Clear Communication Channels:** Establish designated channels for requesting time off, such as a specific email address or online form. This streamlines the process and ensures clear documentation.



# Expectations for the VA

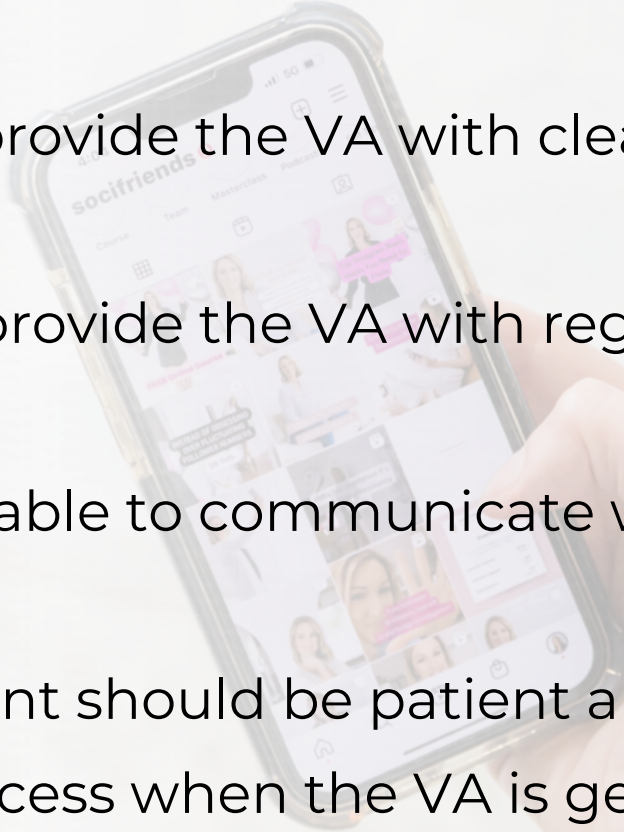
- Proactive communication: The VA should take the initiative to keep the client updated on their progress, any roadblocks they encounter, and any questions they have.
- Timeliness and responsiveness: The VA should be available to communicate with the client on a regular basis and respond to messages promptly.
- Professionalism: The VA should maintain a professional tone and demeanour in all communications with the client.
- Meeting deadlines: The VA should complete tasks on time and within budget.
- Quality work: The VA should deliver high-quality work that meets the client's expectations.





# Expectations for the Client

- Clear instructions: The client should provide the VA with clear and concise instructions for each task.
- Regular feedback: The client should provide the VA with regular feedback on their performance.
- Availability: The client should be available to communicate with the VA on a regular basis.
- Patience and understanding: The client should be patient and understanding, especially during the onboarding process when the VA is getting up to speed.
- Respect: The client should treat the VA with respect.





# Tips for Great Communication

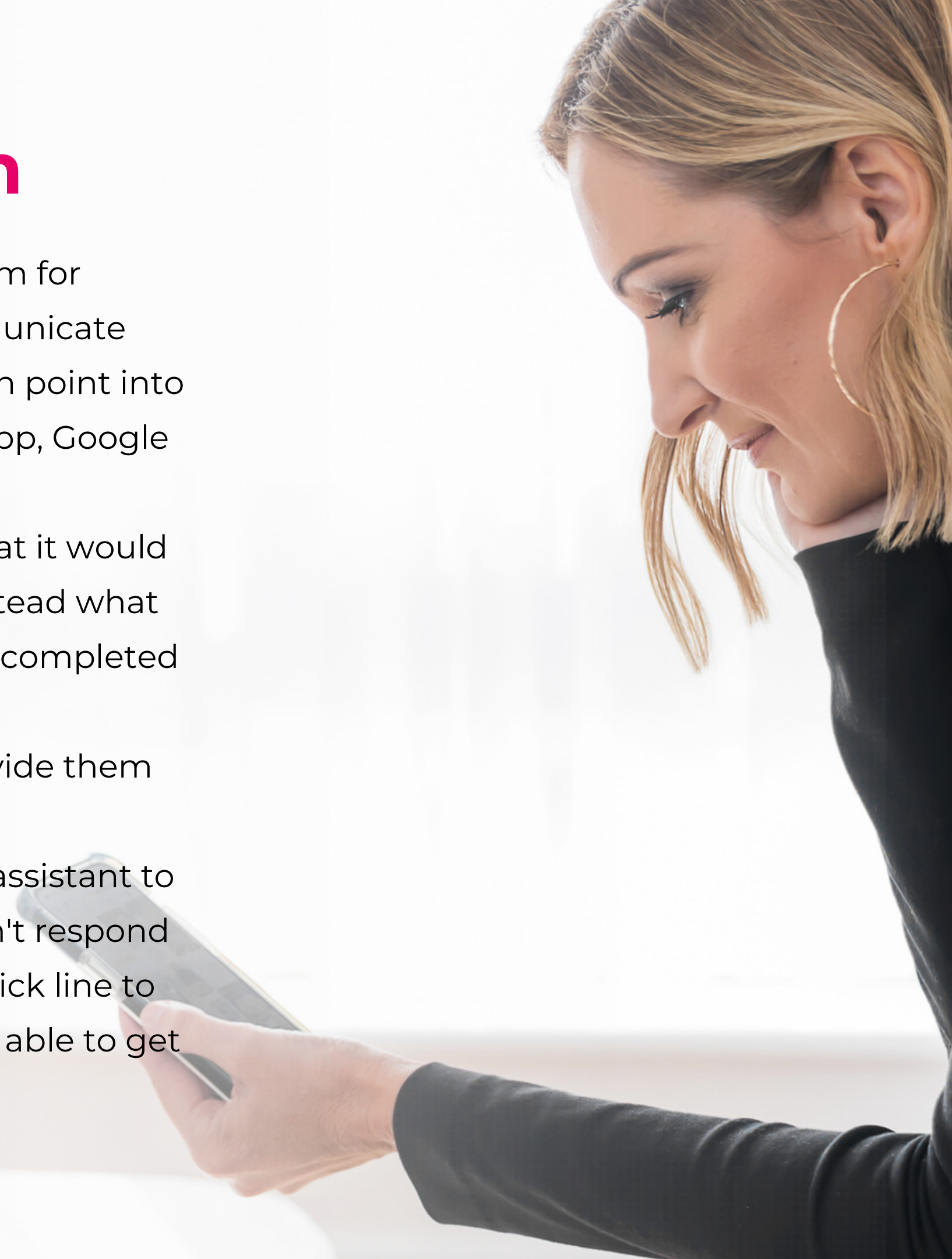
- Visual Communication: If you want to build a great working relationship, try and create opportunities to use visual as well as verbal communication. A quick video call or screen share can be a great way to clarify instructions or troubleshoot problems.
- Communicate Regularly: It's important to talk on a regular basis, not just when you want a progress update or have new instructions to share. A weekly—or even better—daily call to check in will help you both connect and work well together. This allows you to build a rapport similar to that which you'd have with a co-located team-member.
- Over-communicate: In the early days of your outsourcing arrangement, there is really no such thing as over-communication.
- Task Trackers: Use an online task tracker that clearly shows what the tasks are and what success looks like (KPI's). Check in daily to see if these are Done/Not Done/ In Progress This is the perfect opportunity to see if these are any roadblocks or issues and resolve them immediately





# Tips for Great Communication

- Use Instant Communication Channels: Email is not the ideal medium for effective client/VA communication. It's not the fastest way to communicate online, nor is it the most efficient. Instead of turning every discussion point into an email chain, use online chat tools such as Skype, Teams, Whatsapp, Google Chat, or Slack. Something that is encrypted and secure.
- Be Generous with Feedback: One thing we hear a lot from VAs is that it would be nice if their clients provided more feedback on performance. Instead what tends to happen is that clients only speak up when a task has been completed—and then only if there are problems with the delivered work.
- Ask for Feedback Too: Encourage your VA for feedback - in fact provide them the ability to do so and be open to receiving it.
- Be Available: We've mentioned the need to encourage your virtual assistant to communicate, but that's only beneficial if you're available. If you can't respond fully to your VA's email or chat message right away, drop them a quick line to acknowledge their contact and give them an idea of when you'll be able to get back to them.





# BONUS TIPS

## Visual Aids:

- **Infographic on handling unexpected situations:** A visually appealing infographic can summarise key points like communication protocols, notification timelines, and backup plans.
- **Flowchart for requesting time off:** A simple flowchart can guide VAs through the process of requesting leave, outlining approval steps and alternative arrangements for covering their tasks.
- **Performance Reviews and Goal Setting:** Schedule regular performance reviews to discuss progress, address any concerns, and set new goals for the VA. This helps maintain clear expectations and motivates continuous improvement.
- **Conflict Resolution:** Outline a process for handling any disagreements or conflicts that may arise. This could involve setting a framework for open communication, identifying escalation channels, and emphasising problem-solving over blame.



# Cultural Awareness

Cultural Awareness for Working with Filipino VAs

Embracing cultural differences can significantly enhance your working relationship with Filipino VAs. Here are some key points to consider:

Communication:

- **Indirectness:** Filipinos often favour a more indirect communication style. They might hesitate to offer criticism directly, focusing instead on suggesting alternative solutions or highlighting potential concerns politely. Be patient and listen for underlying meanings.
- **Respectful Tone:** Respect and politeness are highly valued in Filipino culture. Address your VA with respectful titles like "Mr." or "Ms." and maintain a courteous tone in all interactions.
- **Non-verbal Cues:** Filipinos might subtly express agreement through head nods or smiles, so pay attention to non-verbal cues alongside spoken words.





# Cultural Awareness

## Work Ethic and Time Management:

- Strong Work Ethic: Filipinos generally demonstrate a strong work ethic and take pride in delivering high-quality work. They are often willing to go the extra mile to meet deadlines and satisfy clients.
- Flexible Schedules: Filipinos may be more comfortable with flexible work hours compared to strict 9-to-5 schedules. This can offer you greater flexibility in scheduling meetings and tasks.
- Personal Time and Family: Family and personal commitments hold significant importance in Filipino culture. Respect their need to attend to personal matters or take leave for family obligations.





# Cultural Awareness

## Decision Making and Feedback:

- Collaborative Approach: Filipinos often appreciate a collaborative approach to decision-making. Encourage their input and ideas, and value their contributions to the process.
- Positive Feedback: Filipinos highly value positive reinforcement and constructive feedback. Acknowledge their achievements and provide clear guidance for improvement when needed.
- Saving Face: Public criticism can be embarrassing in Filipino culture. Offer feedback privately and focus on solutions rather than blame to avoid causing potential discomfort.





# Cultural Awareness

Additional Considerations:

- **Holidays and Celebrations:** Be aware of major Filipino holidays and adjust your workflow expectations accordingly. Consider offering flexible schedules or alternative arrangements during these times. Holidays will include Christmas, New Year & Easter (Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Black Saturday and Easter Sunday)
- **English Proficiency:** While English is widely spoken in the Philippines, there may be variations in fluency and accents. Be patient and clarify any misunderstandings to ensure effective communication.
- **Sense of Humour:** Filipinos are known for their friendly and humorous nature. Don't hesitate to share a laugh or engage in lighthearted conversation, but be mindful of cultural sensitivities to avoid unintentional offence.

Remember, cultural awareness is a continuous learning process. By being open, respectful, and willing to adapt, you can build a strong and mutually beneficial working relationship with your Filipino VA.

