

# SET UP FOR VIRTUAL SUCCESS

If possible, establish the best possible setting for your virtual meetings and maintain it in a state of readiness. If you don't have the dedicated space or equipment to do this, create a temporary virtual meeting setting that works. Take measurements, notes and/or photos so you can replicate it with minimal fuss.

- **Place your computer on a stable surface.** Sure, you're probably using a laptop computer...but don't put it in your lap.
- **Make eye contact with the webcam lens.** That said, position the webcam so the lens is even with – or slightly above – your eye level. Avoid looking down into the lens.
- **Don't get too close to the camera.** Filling the screen with your face can seem aggressive or intrusive. Frame yourself from about mid-chest up and leave a little space above your head.
- **Let there be light...but not too bright.**
  - Light from in front of you, not behind. Webcams automatically adjust to the brightest source of light. If that light is behind you, you may end up completely silhouetted. Don't sit in front of a window!
  - Position your main source of light behind the webcam, directed at your face.
  - Balance your lighting. Use multiple light sources from different angles.
  - Over-lighting can make you look washed out. You may need to move your lighting sources further away from your face or use a diffuser. You can make a diffuser using items like wax paper or facial tissue.
  - While you don't need professional lighting equipment, it will create the best lighting for webcam scenarios when properly deployed. "Ring lights" are particularly popular with vloggers looking for a naturally balanced light source.
  - Spend time testing and adjusting your lighting. It's worth it!

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- **Background can make – or break – you.**
  - Pay attention to what's behind you. See what it looks like on a computer screen *before* you put it online.
  - If you're joining a virtual meeting from your home, keep in mind that you're probably granting access to people you'd never have as social guests. Eliminate anything that's too personal.
  - Cut down on visual clutter.
  - The color of the wall behind you should contrast – but not clash – with what you're wearing. You want to stand out, not blend in.
  - If you're set up in front of bookshelves, vet what's on them.
  - Test your position vis-à-vis your background. You don't want that plant you've placed behind you to appear to be sprouting out of the top of your head.
  - If the meeting platform you use allows you to create a virtual background, consider doing so. That said, unless it's appropriate to your business "brand," don't go overboard with the imagery. Keep any virtual background consistent and professional.
  
- **Sound**
  - Use the best equipment available to you.
  - Test and adjust *in advance*.
  - If you're doing a phone conference, avoid speaker phones.
  - Minimize outside audio distractions as much as possible.
  - Soft surfaces – furniture, rugs, curtains – can help minimize echoes.
  - Headsets may look strange, but if they are the most effective way for you to hear what's being said...consider using them.

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- **What you wear**

- Norms about what is and isn't considered "appropriate" work attire vary. Keep in mind other people's expectations. Colleagues may cut you some slack. Clients – especially ones with whom you don't have a strong relationship – are less likely to.
- It's probably better to dress up than to dress down.
- Avoid patterns, shocking colors and stark white.
- Attention-grabbing accessories can be distracting.
- For more formal meetings, dress head-to-toe. There's a temptation with virtual meetings to go "business" from the waist up and "whatever" from the waist down. This approach can undermine the professionalism you want to convey. Besides...you never know when you might need to stand up.

- **What about my hands?**

- It's okay to gesture, if that's your natural style. That said, try to keep your hands below your shoulders and within frame.
- Raise your hand to signal a desire to speak if that's part of your meeting's ground rules.
- Beware of gesturing with something in your hand.
- Don't point.

**Behaviors that may seem like no big deal in a face-to-face meeting may create a very different impression online.** For example, if you lean over to look into your briefcase in real life, it probably won't matter much. But if you suddenly disappear from the screen to grab something, it may convey a nonverbal message that you're scattered or unprepared. Similarly, if you tend to look away when you're thinking, you may seem disconnected or distracted online.

# VIRTUAL DELIVERY AND DEMEANOR

“Ninety percent of what you’re saying isn’t coming out of your mouth.”

- Will Smith in *HITCH* (2005)

Nonverbals are a key part of communication. Whether you are leading a virtual meeting or attending one, pay attention to your own...and to other people’s as well.

If you are running the meeting, know that participants may react more to your body, face and/or voice than they do to your actual content. Your nonverbals may well determine whether your facilitation is effective.

## VIDEO MEETING TIPS

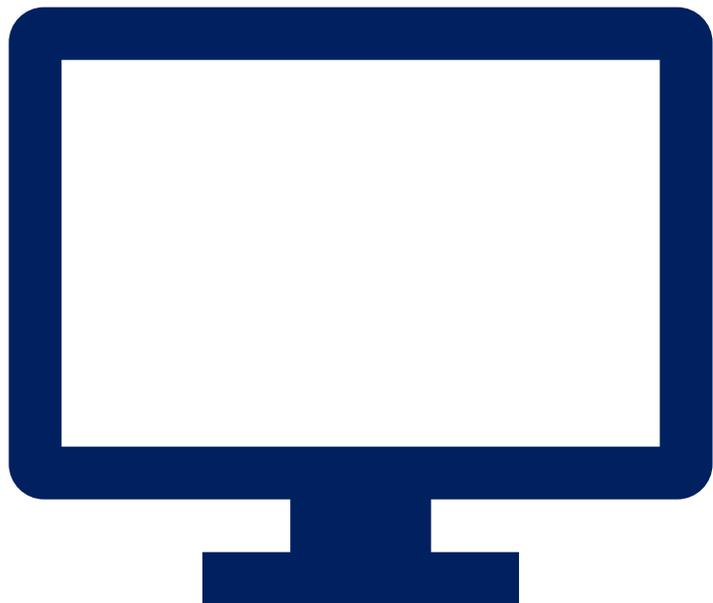
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- Behave as though you are “on” from the moment you log into a virtual meeting until the moment you log off.
- Sit or stand up straight. Keep fidgeting, squirming and slouching to a minimum. If you are sitting in a swivel chair...don’t swivel!
- If your natural “resting” expression creates an impression of unhappiness, tension or boredom, work to develop a more neutral one.
- If only some of the meeting participants are attending remotely, split your eye contact between them – by looking into the webcam lens – and the people in the room. If everyone is attending remotely, make eye contact by looking consistently into the webcam lens.
- Be focused. Do everything you can to mitigate against distractions for the duration of the meeting.
- Speak clearly and concisely.

# VIRTUAL DELIVERY AND DEMEANOR

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- Pause. It is especially important to pause once you've made a point to allow what you've said to sink in. Don't rush forward.
- Use "verbal flags" to alert meeting attendees that they should pay particular attention to what you're about say. Phrases such as "The most important thing to remember is..." or "The key reason we must do this now is..." can be effective. Asking rhetorical questions such as, "What happens if we don't complete this task...?" may also be helpful.
- Smile when appropriate.



# VIRTUAL DELIVERY AND DEMEANOR

## CONTINUED

### PHONE MEETING TIPS

- It's all about your voice. Vary your pitch, pace and inflection. If you tend to speak very quickly, you may want to make a conscious effort to reduce your verbal speed. If you tend to speak...very...slowly, try picking up the pace. Likewise, if you are prone to dropping your voice at the end of sentences, work to break this habit.
- Some people find it's helpful to conduct phone meetings standing up.
- Avoid speakerphones whenever possible.
- Identify yourself before speaking and request others do the same.
- Use shorter words and sentences. Beware of repeatedly using "and" to link a run-on series of what should be separate points.
- Limit jargon.
- Enunciate. The more syllables a word has, the more careful your pronunciation should be.
- If you're leading the meeting, demonstrate your attentiveness to participants' comments by the judicious use of verbal nods including phrases such as "Interesting point," "I understand," "Tell us more..." etc.
- Deploy verbal flagging – including rhetorical questions or references to the agenda -- to focus people's attention and maintain the meeting flow.
- Smile, when appropriate, even if there's no one there to see you do so.