The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Video Conferencing Presenters

Etiquette for Presenting & Teaching

1 MAINTAIN EYE CONTACT

Probably one of if not the most important habits is maintaining eye contact. To help remote participants feel a connection with you and feel included, relate directly to them by looking directly into the video camera. If you do not look into the video camera, they feel as though they are just watching television and are not really involved. Envision the video camera as a person and talk to them. It is okay to occasionally watch them to get a feel of how they are responding or to see their facial expressions when they are speaking, but keep in mind unless you are looking into the camera, they feel you are NOT looking at them. Place the remote participants video as close to your camera as possible on your screen to make maintaining eye contact much easier.

2 SHOW INTEREST IN ALL PARTICIPANTS

Since videoconferencing participants are spread across distances, speakers must make a point of communicating with remote participants and keeping them engaged. Whenever possible, solicit response by calling on someone by name or by a distinguishing queue. For example, sir in the front row with the green shirt, my I ask… Video conferences can have a slight audio delay, so lengthen your usual wait time after asking a question or soliciting comments. Lastly, bring participants into each interaction by restating every question or comment a person makes to ensure that all participants and multiple sites can hear.

3 DRESS APPROPRIATELY

Wear **solid** colored clothing (including ties) rather than complex patterns. Stripes or busy patterns, especially hounds' tooth, cause the camera's focus to oscillate which make the article of clothing look as though it's swimming. Consider the background behind you. If it is dark, wear a rich colored shirt like cobalt/royal/sky blue. If it is white, don't wear white or you will blend into the background. Some conferences darken the stage when you are speaking. If you are in a dark suit or pants, you lose any contrast and fade into the background. If you are using a green screen, make sure you do not wear green otherwise that article of clothing will become the background design making your hands or head appear to

float in the air. Keep in mind cufflinks, jewelry, or even buttons on your jacket can hit against the table, desk or podium causing irritating clicking at the far sites.

4   MOVE AND GESTURE SLOWER AND SMOOTHLY

Gestures can seem more exaggerated over video. Reduce or restrain yourself from using too many gestures. Keep in mind that the bandwidth at which you are connected can impact the quality. If the receiving site cannot handle high definition, rapid movements means loss of picture quality. Move in a fluid, non-distracting way and gesture normally to a degree. As video amplifies gestures, consider doing them less often but more deliberately to emphasize a point, moving in a smooth fashion. Deliver speeches by standing so that you have more energy in your presentation, however, avoid swaying, rocking, or pacing. Constantly moving across a stage is a greater distraction for the audience, as well as the camera person trying to track you.

5   MAINTAIN APPROPRIATE ON-CAMERA POSITIONING

Know the parameters of the camera range. If you like to walk around be intentional. Know exactly how far you can go. If sitting, position yourself on-camera according to the elbows and wrists rule for news anchor style close-ups; when you stretch out your arms, the edge of the screen falls between your elbows and wrists. Be sure to accommodate properly. Use close-ups shots judiciously. It is important that participants see a speaker's facial expressions, however, an occasional full-length shot is good so that the participants get the same feel they might if they were seeing you in person. Use a full-length or group shot (if on a panel or in an interview) when appropriate, and make sure the camera line of sight is not obstructed. *see added note at end of document

6   SUSTAIN STRONG LEVEL OF ENTHUSIASM

All the things that make you a great speaker will make you even better over video. How well you connect with your audience and make them feel as if you are speaking directly to them will come through if you relax and feel comfortable with the technology. Videoconferencing participants will find it difficult to pay attention if the content of your presentation is not delivered in an interesting way or if you allow the technology to make you is tense. Sustain enthusiasm toward the technology and the subject matter throughout the speech. Don't feel boxed in because you are video conferencing but be as natural as you can considering each of the other 7 habits. Get beyond the "talking head" model and make the session as interactive as possible. Pull your participants in by being personable and interacting with them when appropriate. Relate to your audience. Add activities and interactive episodes to keep them engaged.

7   SPEAK IN A STRONG, CLEAR VOICE AND MUTE AS APPROPRIATE

Take advantage of the system to communicate naturally, using tone inflection and body language. Adjust for any slight audio delay; continue sharing your full thought once you begin speaking and avoid interrupting others. If you are not speaking for a long time, such as having participants share for several minutes, mute as appropriate to prevent them from being distracted. Be aware of noises in

and outside of your environment such as a lawnmower, conversations in the hallway, tapping of a pen on the table, and coughing as they can be quite distracting. It is courteous for those not speaking to mute, unless you are in a discussion and want the conversation to flow among sites naturally such as Q&A time.

ADDITIONAL NOTE:

Marci Powell originally developed *7 Habits of Highly Effective Video Conferencing Speakers* for her coaching session with Dr. Stephen R. Covey as he transitioned from delivering keynote addresses in-person to delivering them virtually. Dr. Covey had a studio set up with the proper background already established, therefore, I omitted several key etiquette tips were not included in this list.

Without a set studio or video conferencing space already established, an important tip should be mentioned regarding selecting your background and camera position.

Keep in mind the background behind you in regard to not only what you are wearing but also with what the remote sites see past you. If you are not using a green screen or background removal software, choose to have a clutter-free neutral backdrop. If at home, find an area with no distracting features of a room such as a bed but instead have a solid wall, bookcase or nice wall art behind you. Do not stand with a window or light behind you or have lamps/lights in view as it will darken your face.

Next frame yourself. Decide if you will be standing or sitting and fill the screen as much as possible with yourself, or co-located people in the call, rather than furniture, floor or ceiling. Using the picture-in-picture or gallery view will allow you to see what others are seeing at your site.

Basic fundamental skills will maintain professionalism, continuity, and flow so a session runs smoothly, and the distance disappears.