

## VIDEOCONFERENCING LIKE A PRO

In today's world, knowing how to videoconference appropriately is crucial to maintaining professionalism. As most meetings are now conducted virtually, it's vitally important to project an impressive image via video just like you would strive to do in person.

### Following are helpful tips:

#### Technology

- **Wired:** It's a best practice to use a wired ethernet jack, when possible.
- **Wi-fi:** If using wi-fi, close extra apps (streaming video, etc.) that may be using bandwidth.
- **Battery power:** Make sure laptop (if using) is fully charged or plugged into power. Battery use can adversely affect video quality. By the same token, don't have unnecessary programs running in the background.
- **Phone:** If using the phone for dial-in, make sure you are sitting close to the speaker. Better yet, use an external microphone or headset.
- **Quiet space:** Remember to turn your cell phones off (or to silent).

#### Lights, Camera, Action

- **Lighting:** Intentionally placed lighting is critical. You can make this work with table lamps, but make sure that you have at least one light falling on your face from as close to the front as possible. Make sure that your room is well-lit. Natural lighting is best; however, if that is not an option, use a place with an overhead light, if possible. Try to avoid fluorescent lighting or sitting where a ceiling light is directly behind your head. Avoid sitting with a window behind you.
- **Camera Angle:** Sit close to the screen. Your face should fill most of it. Put your camera at eye level. You might need to place your laptop on a large book or small box – too high or too low and the camera angle can be unflattering or distracting. This is a balancing act...don't sit TOO close or you end up amplifying every movement.
- **Talk to the camera:** Stop looking at yourself. When it's your turn to talk, talk to the camera rather than looking at yourself on the screen. It will look like you're talking directly to each person. You always want to appear 100 percent engaged and present.
- **Background:** Have a professional, non-distracting background that is work appropriate. Some platforms let you use a green screen, which can really make things fun. But note that virtual backgrounds can also distort the projection of your face, so practice with them before using them. Avoid having other clients' sensitive documents in view of the camera.
- **Mute:** When you're not talking, hit mute. When you're on mute during an audio call, you can do whatever you want. But when you're on mute on a video call, you need to act like you're truly engaged. Nod your head. Focus on the screen. Mute your microphone when you are not speaking, even if you're the only one in the room. Background noise (including tapping, typing or noisy jewelry) can be extremely distracting and interrupt a meeting's productivity. Remember to unmute yourself when you need to chime in.

- **Dress:** Just because you're working from home doesn't mean you can do video conferences in your PJs. Dress in business casual, or the way you are expected to at your physical workplace. This shows respect for your group and can put you into a "work" mindset. Do not be tempted to wear business attire on top and loungewear on the bottom. You never know when you'll have to get up suddenly. Wear neutral, solid-colored clothing. Avoid black, white, bright red, or striped clothing. Striped shirts (or other busy patterns) do not transmit well on camera. Pastels or light colors work well. Avoid large, shiny jewelry, which can be visually distracting.

## Interactions

- **Icebreakers:** There's a tendency in virtual meetings to launch right into the task, which can negatively affect relationship building. It's recommended that you be sure to go around the "virtual" room and ask everyone to introduce themselves. A short amount of small talk at the top is still a good way to break the ice.
- **Movement:** Try to keep your body movements to a minimum, as excessive movement can degrade video quality.
- **Volume:** Avoid screaming. If someone can't hear you, then adjust the level on the microphone and make sure it's not covered by clothing or something else. Yelling will cause viewers to turn down their volume and potentially miss what you or others have to say.
- **Pace yourself:** Video-conference meetings should move at a slightly slower pace than a typical meeting due to a two- to three-second delay for most systems to communicate. When you're talking, go slow. Take turns speaking and don't interrupt. This is common courtesy, but in video conferencing it's practical as well; everyone has different equipment, so some attendees may experience some lag or slowdown.
- **Direct questions:** To the extent that you might ask questions, try to direct each question to a specific person. Asking open-ended questions to a large remote audience will often result in "dead air" and then multiple people talking at once.
- **Pausing:** If you need to jump out of the meeting for any reason, hit the coffee cup icon and your facilitator will know not to call on you or turn off your camera until you return.
- **Toolbox:** Use the tools. Polling, breakouts, screen sharing, but plan and practice these in advance. Use chat to share questions or feedback with the host.
- **Eating:** Don't eat during the meeting, unless it's a virtual meal. Keep drink sips to a minimum so other attendees don't spend their time looking at the bottom of your mug.
- **Be engaged:** When someone is talking, pay attention! Visual communication and body language convey so much. Tune in—not out—when others are talking. Don't multitask or check emails. Take notes if needed, but this is video; everyone can tell that you are not paying attention. Nod your head, smile and provide non-verbal feedback as you would in person.
- **Practice:** Educate yourself on the functionality of the video conferencing system you will be using before you get on the video call. There are many videos, articles and other resources on how to use the various video conferencing services.
- **Do be yourself and have fun!**