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Seven Simple Rules for Conducting a Video Conference

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The modern landscape is ever changing, we now live in a time of smartphones, tablets and virtual worlds, not only in our personal lives, but also in the business world. Email communications have eroded the formal printed letter and text messages have replaced the phone call.

Therefore, it is only fitting that our means of hosting meetings has changed too. No longer are meetings solely face to face or via teleconferencing, but there is an increasing number of meetings which occur via video conferencing, whether that be through Skype or another video conferencing application. It is therefore imperative that in the advent of these types of meetings, all parties are clear on the rules of video conferencing.

These guidelines are not exhaustive, but are merely the beginning of what will surely become a much longer list as things evolve.

1. The first rule is to always remember that a video conference does not mean that formality has gone through the window. While the person interviewing or meeting with you will not be physically close to you, it does not mean that you can be casual. I had a friend joke that he intended to only wear a formal shirt and tie for his Skype hosted interview, but no pants. However, what happens if you need to stand during the course of the interview/ meeting. Dress in the same manner you would have should you be meeting the individual face to face.

2. Try to ensure that you are located in a very private or secure location. Barking dogs, phone which are constantly ringing or children interrupting are distractions which you can do without. Ensure that you request of your family or colleagues, peace and quiet for the scheduled meeting time, or employ the use of a headset which will eliminate all external noises during the meeting.

3. Always be punctual, if your video conference is scheduled for 2 p.m. you should be ready for 2 p.m. Be cognizant of time differences when scheduling conferences, and try to log onto the servers ahead of time to ensure that you can connect to your parties prior to the scheduled start of the meeting.

4. Test all equipment ahead of time. Do not wait until the last minute to test network connections, login information or sound settings. These can cause you to lose precious time trying to troubleshoot, and give the other party a bad impression of you.

5. Ensure that you have the bandwidth to facilitate this type of meeting. There is nothing worse than trying to stream video on the internet with a poor connection. Prior to conducting a video conference meeting, ensure that your internet service package can facilitate to the proper streaming of this type of service. Ensure that during the time of the video conference that there is no other major streaming that would cause a disruption in transmission.

6. Much as with a formal meeting, it is important to develop and share an Agenda, prior to its commencement. It is also imperative to appoint a Chairperson to ensure that the agenda is followed, and that meeting is not derailed. Further, a dedicated secretary should also be on hand to summarize key points and follow up the meeting with an email of not only the notes of the meeting, but the key action points and decisions made.

7. For a meeting with multiple feeds or multiple parties present, do ensure that you develop a system for how you will alert the Chair that you want to make a contribution. Some software contains a handraising feature, which when clicked causes a highlighted hand to flash beside your name. If such features are not built into the programme being used. When the meeting begins, the Chair should clearly outline the parameters of the meeting, and what will be considered to be the modus operandi for the group.

One must always bear the following caveat in mind when conducting a video conference: would I do this if we were face to face? If the answer is no, then don't do it simply because the meeting is via video conference. The above forms the start of a guide to productive, professional video conference meetings, however, when in doubt the above caveat should be your guide to ensuring that there are no embarrassing missteps on your part.

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