

Helpful Hints for Effective Video Conferencing

Here's hoping the following tips will help ensure a more successful video conferencing event whatever kind that is. Cheers to all that helped me with this!

- Arrive to your meeting early to check everything twice: test, retest, & test again
- Have good, reliable connection
- Sit in line-of-sight of camera
- Get a good external camera. You don't have to spend a fortune (I called Zoom and asked for their recommendation a couple years ago when my internal camera became fuzzy and distracting to me and clients)
- Remember folks can see you!!
- Test volumes. You and your client may want to invest in an external mic. I find for multiple clients in one room an external mic is an absolute.
- Use headset/buds/headphones (whatever's most comfortable for you) with a built-in microphone
- Shut the blinds/curtains. We want front-lighting not backlighting.
- Be aware of what's in the background wherever you are. In some Zoom versions, you can choose a background photo to use instead of simply showing your office or home, etc. Some using an older computer may find they need a green screen to do this however.
- Void tapping your fingers, typing, crunching paper, etc (my ice machine can make enough noise to cause a client to ask what happened. Ahh, open concept rooms! And then there's Izzy's whining!)
- Put pets (as well as kids and partners?) in separate room from you if possible
- Be sure folks mute their mics when not speaking!! (this is hugely important and a mistake that's happened in every video chat I've had this week). On Zoom, if you set your mic to mute, you can then hold down the space bar to talk and your mic will revert back to mute when you release the space bar again.
- If you hear an echo or distortion, it's probably an open mic. If you're the host, you can mute others so use that button!
- Act like you! Yes, the camera can be intimidating. Perhaps a bit of practice in a mirror or with a willing partner on video can help
- Wear simple comfortable clothing unless you need to dress more professionally (remember you may only be visible from the waist up!)
- Change things up: do a poll, ask a question, change up your voice
- Send out an agenda with questions beforehand
- The inclusive language: use people's names or say you folks (not participants, attendees, etc.)

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- Say “imagine what it would be like to...” Or “what if...” instead of simply listing items
- Use breakout sessions, chat, hand raising, polls, think-pair-share
 - Have folks think about something; pair to talk with a partner; then return to large group to share.
- Make sure you have everything you need within easy reach of your chair (or whatever you’re sitting in for your session). I also like having my cell phone nearby in case of looking up something for a client or myself; setting a timer if doing groups; for back up if we lose connection (text is especially helpful if this happens, I’ve found)
- Have a backup communication plan: In case of connection trouble with remote participants, have a plan such as asking participants to connect to the meeting through another device (ie, smart phones if on their laptops) and/or collaborate through text or email. Most platforms have some feature such as “chat” usually in a side bar that may also be used often even when the connection to video is lost.
- Make sure clients/participants test their equipment and connection before your session/meeting. Rarely but sometimes I have a client who is uncomfortable with video conferencing and appears to postpone checking their connections until our session. While that’s OK with me I have had to explain that this will cut into our valuable and costly session time. With Zoom, folks only need to download the app; they don’t need to set up an account which is a nice feature & easier for some folks. It can also be used without the video screen on, just via phone.

What are some positives about video platform usage?

- There are a few reasons to decide upon a good (easy to manage, still powerful & functional) video conferencing tool (software/company):
 - For therapists/counselors:
 - This format can facilitate 1x1 sessions with clients (individuals, couples) when face-to-face sessions are not preferred
 - For professionals in general:
 - Video platforms can facilitate having real-time meetings (regular ones, project-oriented, etc), without having to travel. This saves time, there’s no need to find a room to use, it’s easier to plan into busy schedules, and nowadays it’s a great ‘social distancing’ tool!
 - For trainers:
 - You can easily organize a webinar (webinar = mainly one-way transmitting information) for any size of group. Meetings can be

Note: information has been gathered from personal experiences, Stanford Graduate School of Business; Zoom.com; Rik Bes; Bill Matulich. Rev Mar20, 2020

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recorded and viewed afterwards on-demand, for review (attendees) or catching up (those who couldn't make the real-time webinar). The Zoom meeting some of us had on February 29th with Rik Bes is an example of a webinar. Some group discussion, and lots of 'transmitting information'.

- With a good video conferencing system, one can also organize a 'Virtual Real-time Classroom (VRC)'. In a VRC you use the interactivity functionalities of your video conferencing system to the max. Functionalities like:
 - screen sharing (not just by the trainer, but all participants can do that) to show PowerPoints, videos, etc.
 - Use the breakout room facility to let participants work in small groups online (which you as the host can manage)
 - Use the 'polling' function for more interactivity
- You can start with a free license at many apps (for instance at zoom.us). Use it for a few days (or weeks!) to familiarize yourself with the software; do some test-calls with colleagues/friends.
- Once you're happy with your platform of choice, consider switching to a paid subscription. The limitations of a free subscription (for instance on Zoom the length of time is limited to a 40-minute max as well as number of participants. With Pro, there's no limit to time and up to 100 people can participate remotely) will no longer bother you as the number of your functionalities to manage (tweak) sessions increases.
- For Zoom particularly:
 - If you're distracting yourself, there is a way to hide your own screen (so you don't see yourself while in a session/chatting with someone else): in the upper RH corner there are 3 dots when you hover over your screen photo when the app is open. There's a button to select that will hide yourself.
 - One more suggestion regarding participants having to (for the first time) download a small app: This is not obligatory in Zoom! You, as the host, can change that in your settings, in such a way that participants who cannot or do not want to download the small app, can still participate in your Zoom session. You can enable "Join from your browser" (thus bypassing downloading the app) in your advanced in-meeting settings.

Finally, from Rik Bes. This is the link for his recent Zoom tutorial with several MINTees (thanks to Rik for allowing us all access to this!):

<https://vimeopro.com/rikbesmivideopage/mint-zoom>; Password: **MINT ZOOM**