

Virtual Meetings: Put Your Best Face Forward!



The pandemic forced companies across all sectors to rapidly change the way they worked. Although it's clear that some form of remote or hybrid work is the new normal, working remotely brings its own set of challenges.

How many times have you been in a meeting that started with fuzzy video, distorted audio or someone's face that suffered from the dreaded extreme close-up? On top of technical issues, many of us are still self-conscious in front of a screen. Others fear that virtual meetings make it harder to stand out from the rest of the group and that their contribution might get lost in the crowd.

For those who still haven't mastered the art of virtual meetings, don't worry. There are ways to perfect your skills and get you noticed!

Here are 7 ways to put your best face forward and perfect the art of virtual meetings:

Dress for Success

When participating in virtual calls, make the effort to look as presentable as possible on camera. Appearances matter, and being on a virtual call is just another way of showing up in the workplace. When thinking about what to wear, consider the amount of lighting in your room. Solid colours are best but avoid heavy patterns that can be distracting. Try

to avoid black as less light will hit your face leaving you looking washed out. Be careful with jewellery choices as some items can produce a lot of noise.

Remember too that if your virtual code is “Business on top, bedtime at the bottom” – be sure to remain seated until the camera is off!

Clean Up Your Background

The focus during a virtual call should be on you – not what’s going on around you. Make sure your area is clean and organized and free from any distractions. Be sure pets or kids are in a separate room. Try to plan ahead to eliminate the chance of any potential distractions. Make sure your space feels welcoming and add any items that might make you feel at ease. Perhaps flowers or a set of beloved books. Just be sure not to put anything within camera view you wouldn’t want others to see!

Check Your Lighting and Camera Angle

Play with lighting and be sure your headshot is framed properly. For maximum effect, your main source of light should be in front of you. Bring your laptop camera up to eye level by placing it on books or a stand. Make sure the camera is far enough away to minimize distortion. Don’t forget about eye contact. Look into the camera to be sure people on the other end feel noticed. Having the proper set up displays confidence and establishes a personal connection with the other person or people behind the screen.

Watch Your Body Language

One of the key differences between virtual and personal meetings is the ability to read the other person’s body language and reactions to your comments. Body language is minimized over a screen, so facial expressions are important. Be authentic with your emotions, sit up straight and consciously use body language to connect with others during a call. Feel free to add hand gestures as you speak as they add visual cues that make it easier for listeners to follow you. Stay focused and present, and don’t forget to smile. Others can sense when you’re distracted and it will be clear on video who is listening – and who is not.

Speak Up

Before the meeting, do a little warm up with your voice. To make sure your voice comes through loud and clear, communicate with intention and add a little energy to your message. A slightly higher energy level will help cut through the clutter as people won’t be able to read your body language as accurately through a screen. Don’t speak in whispers but speak loud enough to be carried effectively through a microphone. Speak

as if you're talking to someone directly across a table. You don't have to shout to be heard.

Prepare and Show Up in Advance

Before the meeting, make sure everything is working as expected. Check your audio and video for any possible glitches. Take some time to review what the meeting is all about. What will you be expected to do? Be sure everything you need is on your computer and check to see if any forwarded information was received.

Sign in to the meeting early to chat with others before the meeting officially begins. This is a great way to expand your network and reinforce existing relationships.

Read the Room

Just as if you were speaking to an audience in person, it's important not to lose the interest of a virtual audience. As you're talking, check to see what others are doing on the call. Are they on their smartphones? Do they look engaged? If you feel you're losing your audience, throw in a few calculated hand gestures. Take a brief pause and ask questions to keep them engaged.

Standing out during virtual meetings isn't always an easy task. Taking the time to review a few best practices now increases the chance that you will become a valuable contributor whose presence will be in great demand. Don't forget that everyone behind the screen is a real person, and don't beat yourself up if you make a mistake. Just be yourself and smile – and you'll be a shining star with a memorable virtual presence!