

Changing the Channel – From Face to Face to Digital Space: *Framing the Foundations of Video Based Presentation & Meeting Channels*

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Effective presentation skills never go out of style, however, the channel by which we deliver presentations has been rapidly changing over the past two decades. Technological developments have made it easier to bring audiences together in virtual spaces and as a result, more and more presentations are taking place every day through digital channels. The cornerstones of effective and engaging presentations have remained the same for hundreds of years, but digital presentation and meeting channels bring both new challenges and opportunities that need to be examined in order to ensure we as a field are applying and teaching the best practices for this new channel. While some face-to-face presentation skills and best practices carry over to the digital world, there are new and unique practices that must be considered when attempting to engage digital audiences. The primary aim of this manuscript is to provide presenters and facilitators an overview of the unique opportunities and challenges that digital channels present along with details on the best practices and approaches for engaging digital audiences in an effective manner. An examination of future challenges for training and coaching presenters within these digital channels is also discussed.

Introduction

Digital presentation channels have experienced tremendous growth and adoption over the past decade (Rolland, Mathiassen, & Rai, 2018). Platforms such as *Skype*, *Zoom*, *Cisco Webex*, *Google Hangouts*, and *Microsoft Teams* are providing organizations around the world an opportunity to connect their talent and resources in new and dynamic ways (Matt, Hess, & Benlian, 2015). A recent Forbes Insight survey connected with 333 global executives from a range of disciplines (e.g. healthcare, manufacturing, retail, education, technology, financial services, etc.) and identified an overall positive attitude towards the adoption of video conferencing systems (Forbes Insights, 2017). In fact, a majority of these executives agreed that video conferencing was having a positive impact on their production/performance, and 97% of

those surveyed agreed that video channels are helping to promote a sense of connectedness among remote workers. By adopting digital presentation channels, business leaders aim to reduce costs, improve efficiency, and increase productivity, while also expanding networks and fostering stronger, and often more remote, relationships. Beyond business, educational institutions are also relying heavily on digital presentation/meeting formats as a means of delivering instructional content, as well as for evaluation of student performance (e.g. video based assignments) (Akbar, 2016; Finger, Sun, & Jamieson-Proctor, 2010). As higher education shifts towards online learning and virtual campuses, physical distance barriers for adult education are removed (Hope, 2009). As a result, opportunities for increased online education translates to an improvement in the equity of access for a wide range of learners, especially adults or returning learners.

However, the Forbes survey (2017), along with other studies, have identified certain challenges that these digital channels may also introduce, including but not limited to: a lack of recognized value, a lack of metrics on how to measure the effectiveness of the channels, and of greatest importance, a lack of training on how to best utilize the technological affordances offered by the various programs currently in the marketplace (Kanter, 2017; Austin et al., 2010; Grant & Cheon, 2007; Collins, 2016). While companies, institutions, and educational organizations are jumping at the opportunity to adopt video based solutions, they also are recognizing that providing associates or instructors with access to new technology does not necessarily translate to an immediate return on investment. As such, implementing digital video channels without a critical assessment of how to best utilize the affordances of the technology can undermine the efficiency and effectiveness that they offer (Kane, Palmer, Phillips, Kiron, & Buckley, 2015). Video channels, like other communication technologies that came before it (e.g. email, voice mail, etc.) must be appropriately integrated into organizational culture, which likely begins with thoughtful training at all levels (Ferriera, Moriera, & Secura, 2017). Thus, as these video conferencing and presentation channels continue to be integrated into the fabric of our lives, we are presented with both opportunities and challenges that need to be examined to ensure we work towards developing and applying best practices of digital delivery. Furthermore, effective communication skills have long been coveted in all industries (Carnevale & Smith, 2013). In a 2016 report from the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), verbal communication skills were rated as the most important skill for employment applicants. Thus, organizations have always sought to hire and retain individuals who possess these coveted skills that were traditionally the main feature in both boardrooms and classrooms alike. However, as the channel changes to

video-based presentations, conferences, and personal interactions, there must also be an evolution of training to ensure current and future individuals are capable of fulfilling contemporary demands and opportunities afforded by these new video channels. Therefore, the primary aim of this manuscript is to outline a set of best practices for video based presentations (both synchronous and asynchronous) and meetings.

From Face-to-Face to Digital Space

It is critical that we begin by acknowledging that the foundation of traditional face-to-face presentation best practices remain the same in the digital world. Therefore, screen composers should remain committed to certain presentation best practices as they carry forward into digital channels. Yet, there are certain technological affordances associated with digital presentations that present new opportunities and should be considered in an effort to maximize the channel's strengths, while also seeking to limit some of its weaknesses. This praxis is organized around the process of transitioning traditional elements and considerations of a face-to-face presentation to a digital channel.

Attention Getting & First Impressions

A great presentation via any channel starts with a strong first impression. Traditionally, presenters have utilized specific mechanisms to gain an audience's attention in a meaningful manner (e.g. anecdotal stories, statistics, rhetorical questions, etc.). The same remains (mostly) true for presentations in the digital space, however, the presenter is also afforded a unique opportunity to deliver their chosen mechanism via a wider array of modalities to help capture the audience's attention. Considering that each member of the digital audience has a very clear and direct line of audio-visual connection to the presentation, the presenter should strive to

provide the audience with digital content that engages their senses (sight and sound) in a manner that is in line with the sentiment of the presentation itself. While this may seem similar to using a video as an attention getter in a traditional face-to-face presentation there is one very significant difference: the digital audience is not sharing a singular physical space or environment. Thus, utilizing a compelling piece of multimedia (ideally one that is produced specifically for the presentation) provides the audience an opportunity to feel as if they are sharing the same experience with other members of the audience.

A digital presentation also affords the presenter a unique choice of how they make their first appearance, and subsequent first impression on the audience. In a face-to-face setting, it is quite typical for the audience to at least see the presenter before they begin, thus, the first impression often takes place before the presenter begins their formal introduction. However, in the digital space, the presenter has the ability to control exactly when and how the audience first sees and/or hears the presenter. Thus, the presenter has an important decision for how they want to manage that first impression. Digital presenters should determine how they want to make their first impression based on the sentiment that they want to convey and the environment that they want to create for the audience. If they want to be seen as accessible, or create a more informal atmosphere, they might consider being available before a digital synchronous presentation starts to make small talk and greet audience members as they join the digital room. On the other hand, if the presenter wants to create a more formal atmosphere and/or make a significant statement with their first impression, they might consider utilizing an on-screen message to welcome participants and then open with a multimedia video to grab the audience's attention.

- Tip: To save time later in the presentation, consider including important information in

a digital welcome message to audience members as they arrive in the digital room. For example, if the length of the presentation requires breaks, include the time they will take place. Also, consider including recommendations for camera and/or sound settings or how to access supplemental web links. Maximizing the time before the presentation starts can make a big difference later in the session.

Selecting and Organizing Content for the Digital Presentation

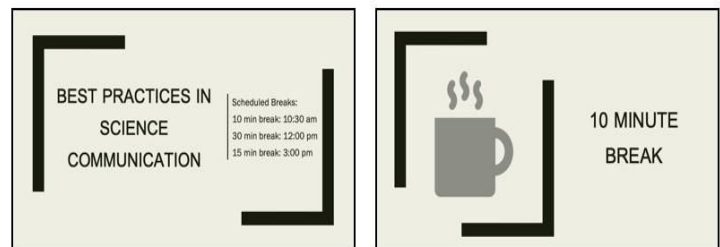


Figure 1. Digital Welcome Message

Content selection may be one of the most challenging elements of organizing an effective and efficient presentation. One critical element for digitally based presentations is whether or not they will be delivered in a synchronous or asynchronous fashion. If the video-based presentation is delivered in a synchronous fashion, the selection and coverage of content is much closer to that of a traditional face-to-face presentation. However, if the presentation is going to be asynchronous, special consideration should be given as to how this may impact the way the content is consumed. First, in a situation where the content can be consumed by the audience on their own time (asynchronous), the presenter must recognize that certain content can be easily reviewed for increased comprehension. Thus, even if there is a complex process or explanation within the content, the ability for the viewer to easily replay the content may suggest that it does not need an overly exaggerated explanation as might be necessary when the presentation is

taking place in a shared time (synchronous) environment.

- Tip: Include clear on-screen text displays that bookmark the beginning of each unique sequence to make it even easier for viewers of asynchronous presentations to easily pause and re-watch complex content. Consider utilizing some (different) colored fills for the onscreen bookmarks so that they easily stand-out from the other content in the video.
- Tip: Since asynchronous audiences do not have the advantage of being able to stop a presenter to ask clarification questions it is critical that presenters provide a channel to audiences to ask questions and/or provide comments. This channel should be clearly communicated at the beginning and/or end of the video and the presenter should provide an expectation on how they will respond to those comments and questions.

“Not that the story need be long, but it will take a long while to make it short.” ~ Mark Twain

Given that video channels are typically seen as a more efficient means for disseminating information, video based audiences are also more likely to expect a shorter and/or more concise approach to content (Fishman, 2016). As noted in the above wisdom from Mark Twain (Twain, 1871), the process of curating just the right amount of content can be particularly challenging. This challenge may not be distinct to digital presentations, but the video-based channel does offer a few additional affordances that can help with content related dilemmas.

First, the screen composer must recognize that their content should be presented in multiple formats whenever possible. Audiences do not all share the same learning styles; some individuals are more likely to gravitate to the spoken word, others may rely on visual images to process information, and some may prefer the opportunity to read through content to help enhance their comprehension (Grünewald, Meinel,

Totschnig, & Willems, 2013; Tsai, 2011). In a digital presentation the presenter has an opportunity to appeal to each of these learning styles on a more consistent basis from beginning to end. Therefore, when selecting content, it is critical to consider how it can be modified to appeal to a range of learning styles to promote engagement across the entire audience.

- Tip: When curating content for the presentation, select examples that will more easily lend themselves to being portrayed in a visual manner. Consider integrating additional visually focused abstract depictions, inspired by traditional literary mechanisms (i.e. metaphors & symbols). For example, as noted in an article for the Harvard Business Review (Duarte, 2014), using unique metaphors (not clichés) that your audience can relate to can help transform new and unfamiliar information with something that many people may already have experience with. Find ways to integrate creative metaphors and then visualize the metaphor to help it make a lasting impression.



Figure 2. Visual Metaphors

- Tip: When considering learning styles, producers must also consider certain limitations that may exist amongst their audience. For example, producers should be aware of certain color combinations when designing visual materials. Members of an audience that have a color vision deficiency (WHO, 2018) may be unable to

easily see certain color combinations. Therefore, presenters should consider how certain combinations may look to others and check them in advance (Harolds, 2012).

the challenge to ensure that even if audience members are multi-tasking, they can easily pick-up with the presentation at any point due to its clear organizational pattern and cues. In order to engage this challenge, screen

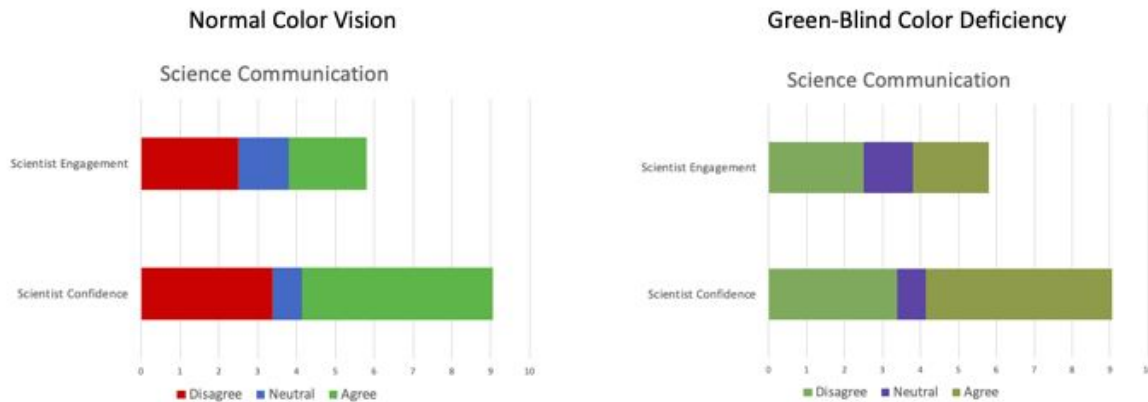


Figure 3. Color Combinations for Color Vision Deficiencies

One element that holds true for both synchronous and asynchronous presentations is the need for clear organization. While face-to-face audiences are not immune to distraction, digital audiences are more likely to be susceptible to multi-tasking (Prezi, 2018). In today's digital environments we have more things than ever competing for our attention. Therefore, the challenge for digital presenters, is that in some circumstances, it can be particularly difficult to discern if members of a digital audience are engaged in multi-tasking and thereby not entirely focused on the presentation at any one given time. While the impact of multi-tasking has, and continues to be addressed in separate literatures (Yap & Lim, 2013; Bellur, Nowak & Hull, 2015), the digital presenter must be aware of this potential scenario and embrace

composers should clearly articulate the presentation's organizational pattern upfront and then offer a visual theme or depiction that both articulates that pattern as well as visually communicates each stage of the presentation.

- Tip: As you transition to a new topic offer audiences an internal summary, but make it more visual by utilizing the same agenda/organizational pattern slide at multiple points and then strike-through or grey-out sections that have been addressed.



Figure 4. Internal Summary Slides

- Tip: Add a visual progress bar to your slide deck to offer real-time feedback to your audience about the current progress of the presentation. Online tutorials can be found to help

producers design simple progress bars (PresentationLoad Blog, 2019) or find inspiration for more content specific bars (Nediger, 2019).

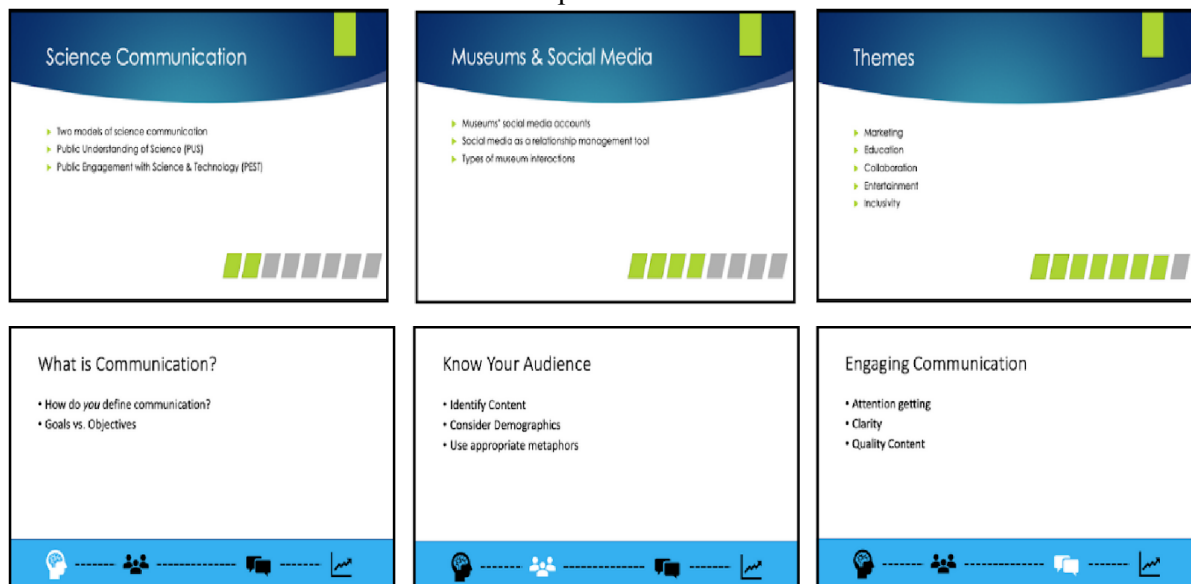


Figure 5. Visual Progress Bar

- Tip: If a synchronous presentation is going to last beyond 10 minutes, it is good practice to build in some predetermined breaks that allow audience members a chance to ask clarification questions or provide feedback.

Digital presentations are unique in the sense that audiences expect the content to be highly focused and tailored towards their specific needs. Audiences of asynchronous

video content are likely consuming the digital content with the goal of extracting specific information for it to be applied in some relevant manner going forward. Therefore, the producer must ensure that the video's labeling is specific and accurate to the content.

- Tip: Asynchronous video titles should be explicit and should be appropriately tagged to provide potential viewers an accurate description of what is included (YouTube

Creator Academy, 2019). Titles and tags help to set expectations for viewers and if expectations are not met, the viewer is more likely to have a negative disposition towards the video and/or presenter.

- Tip: If the producer is attempting to communicate a complex multi-step process, it may be best to produce a series of videos that build off of each other. This keeps each individual video significantly shorter and cuts down on the need for an abundance of internal reviews within each of the videos.

Conclusions and Calls to Action

Just like a great introduction, a digital closing should be both memorable and functional. The most critical difference between a face-to-face and digital conclusion is what happens immediately afterwards. Given that there is no physical space for a digital audience to share and thereby engage the presenter and/or their peers in an informal fashion, they likely will be able to disconnect from the digital presentation space instantaneously, thus, eliminating the potential for valuable informal debriefing and/or networking opportunities. While the draw of digital presentations is their efficiency of time and resources, they may also result in less informal communication, which may hamper the development of certain relational dynamics (Levy, 2011). Therefore, digital presenters must be diligent in regards to how they can supplement the audience's experience even after their formal presentation has ended.

One way that digital producers can provide effective closure to their presentations is to offer a clear message on the specific instructions for audience members to follow-up with the presenter. For both synchronous and asynchronous, the presenter should make a point of communicating to audience members the appropriate time frame and modality for follow-up.

- Tip: The presenter should have a visual slide that includes relevant contact information.

This may be a good place for the presenter to include and/or promote social media follows, (e.g. *Twitter*, *LinkedIn*, *Instagram*, etc.).

Next, if you think it would be valuable to share supplemental resources with your attendees, put together a document that includes hyperlinks to each resource.

- Tip: Take your follow-up document to the next level by including visual imagery that makes it easy for your audience to recall which resource was associated with which specific part of the presentation. Even just a small screen shot of the slide that it was referenced on may be enough to help them make a quicker connection.

Finally, similar to if you were hosting an event in a physical location, the host of the meeting should remain on the call until all parties have left the digital space. This demonstrates a sense of commitment to the entire digital event by remaining until the end, while also offering a clear opportunity for audience members who choose to remain on the call a chance to ask a potential follow-up or at least exchange some feedback or notes of appreciation, increasing the opportunity for some valuable relational development.

- Tip: It is good practice for the host to remain in the digital room before attendees have disconnected, however, the host should also make it very clear when the formal presentation or video conference has ended and provide clear signals to audience members that they are free to close their portals as it can be an uncomfortable feeling for audience members to signoff if they are unsure if is appropriate to do so.

Production Basics and Delivery Best Practices

While some elements remain similar to traditional face-to-face presentations, the specific channel by which digital presentations take place is primarily what makes them so unique. Unlike traditional presentation environments that often take on many shapes

and sizes, digital forums tend to be more standardized, with the majority of the interaction taking place through some type of video. As a result, there are some fairly standardized best practices for ensuring that a digital presentation looks and sounds its very best. By implementing these best practices we work to ensure that audience members are engaged from start to finish and perceive both the presentation and the presenter as both dynamic and credible.

Environment, Environment, Environment

Screen composers are faced with the challenge of creating a shared virtual space that is professional, efficient, and welcoming. The environment and its immediate surroundings have a direct influence on the quality of the production.

Size and scope. The ideal environment does not need to be overly vast. In fact, most screen composers will want to frame themselves with a professional background that has clearly defined parameters (i.e. small office spaces). If the presenter does not plan to move around during the shoot, then viewers may only see a small area of the environment and the presenter may only need to prepare an area that is no more than approximately 10 square feet.

Nevertheless, this area should be free of clutter and any unnecessary artifacts.

- Tip: Bedrooms or other personal areas are not ideal environments for presenting. These spaces do not lend themselves to creating a professional setting and will likely be distracting or even uncomfortable for audience members to be *in*.

Light and sound considerations. Lighting and sound are covered in more explicit detail below, but when it comes to selecting an environment the presenter must consider the dynamics of the room. Rooms or spaces that offer a great deal of natural lighting may only be effective during certain

times of the day. Spaces that are rather large or that lack materials to absorb sound may present challenges for capturing quality sound. A presenter should try to identify an environment that they can exert a great deal of control over, including the ability to add or remove furniture as needed. Producers must also consider the implications and ability to limit potential background noise, especially from heating or cooling elements (e.g. fans, air conditioners, heating units).

- Tip: Outdoor video shoots may look great, but they are incredibly difficult to control from a lighting and sound standpoint. Unless you have professional experience, equipment, and support, avoid outdoor presentations as they offer a whole host of often uncertain and uncontrollable elements.

Establishing a distraction free zone.

The ideal environment should be free of extraneous disruptions and distractions. It is important that both the presenter and members of the (synchronous) audience make an effort to eliminate all potential disruptions during a video based presentation.

- Tip: Let people in your environment know in advance if you are planning to be on an extended video based presentation. By communicating this in advance you can try and avoid scenarios where you feel guilty or frustrated by being committed to the virtual space when you may be needed elsewhere. Presenters should ask their audience members to engage in this practice when possible.

Impression management. Screen composers must also consider the type of impression their environmental surroundings will have on their audience. When possible, the presenter should try and select an environmental backdrop that helps to enhance the overarching theme or tone of the content.

- Tip: A simple picture hung on the wall adjacent to the presenter can be enough to help prime the audience to start thinking in

a certain way. Presenters might consider swapping out the picture in the frame for each presentation as a way to enhance the environment while also giving consistent audience members something to look forward to. For example, presenters can try to match the theme of the presentation to the background pictures. If you're discussing environmental sustainability in one presentation, maybe include a nice nature image in the frame. Then, if the next presentation focuses on art in STEM, include an artistic depiction of a STEM topic/object.

- Tip: During synchronous presentations or meetings, the environmental surroundings of the audience members can also play a role in the larger atmosphere of the digitally shared space. Thus, it is critical that the host of the meeting make an effort to reach out to attendees in advance and share some of these best practices in a proactive manner to ensure that the environment of their audience members helps to create a distraction free and professional environment for everyone.
- Tip: If you are producing an asynchronous video and want to cut out a few bad takes or hide some small issues in post-production, you can add on-screen visual images and/or textual descriptions to clarify content and engage multiple learning styles: a win-win for both you and your audience!

Looking Good on Camera: The Basics

In a range of recent studies, sampled employees reported that one of the major reasons that they are averse to adopting video conferencing technology is because they don't feel comfortable with how they look on camera (Okyle, 2016; Collins, 2016; Rodriguez, Ooms, & Montañez, 2008). Unfortunately, this issue is often exacerbated by the fact that many of these employees have not received any form of video etiquette training that would likely help them feel more

confident and prepared for their on-screen portrayals.

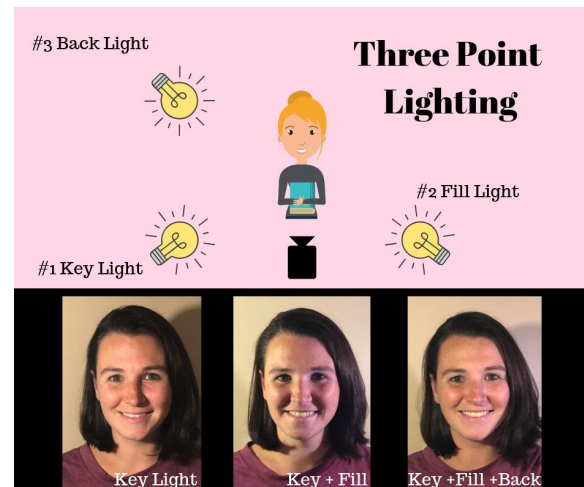


Figure 6. Three-Point Lighting

By following the best practices outlined below, presenters can bolster their confidence that they are looking their best on camera.

Lighting. Presenters should always try and implement a 3-point lighting technique whenever possible (Aldred, 2017). A lighting solution should aim to light the entire environment in a balanced manner that minimizes shadows. However, be aware! It is possible for presenters to over light an area in which they and/or their environment appear to be washed out by light. Presenters may also need to engineer some unique solutions to work around the limitations of a given environment. Overhead fluorescent lighting can be too harsh sometimes, but some plastic film or a relatively transparent piece of fabric may do the trick to diffuse and soften the light. Lamps can also be a great resource when there are shadows in certain areas of the frame because they are easily moved and different bulbs can be swapped in and out for different effects. There are a number of great light bulb solutions on the market today that can be easily dimmed or even emit a spectrum of colors to help get the lighting just right (i.e. the Lixf collection of Wi-Fi enabled bulbs).

- Tip: If the room you are setting up in has a lot of natural light, you'll want to avoid setting up in front of that window. Instead, try to utilize that natural light as your fill light, likely meaning that the window will be adjacent to one side of the presenter. This may require that the key light is moved to balance the other side of the frame.

Camera positioning. For a standard video presentation, we typically want to frame our presenter with their eye line following along a horizontal line approximately $\frac{1}{3}$ of the way down the frame. This is in line with a fundamental photography best practice known as the rule of thirds (Amirshahi, Hayn-Leichsenring, Denzler, & Redies, 2014). In order to do this effectively, the camera should be adjusted to the same height at the presenter's eye line, which helps to ensure they are looking straight into the camera, as opposed to looking up or down at the audience.

- Tip: It is important for the presenter to remember that the camera is representative of their audience's eyes, such that, looking straight into the camera will help to create a sense of eye contact with audience members. By setting the camera at the right height it will also promote better posture for the presenter, one in which the presenter is sitting up straight, shoulders are slightly pulled back and the head is a neutral position (not leaning or tilted significantly forward or back).

Next, the camera should be positioned approximately 3-5 feet from the presenter. The bottom of the frame should begin around the middle of the presenter's chest. In addition to these placements, the presenter should also try and bring some dynamism to their framing by establishing a narrow (or short side) and a wide (or long side) element to their frame, by which the presenter is positioned slightly closer to one edge of the frame.

- Tip: When using the short/long side approach to framing, consider integrating a

meaningful visual adjacent to the presenter's face, such as an 8" x 12" photo frame containing something relevant to the given presentation.

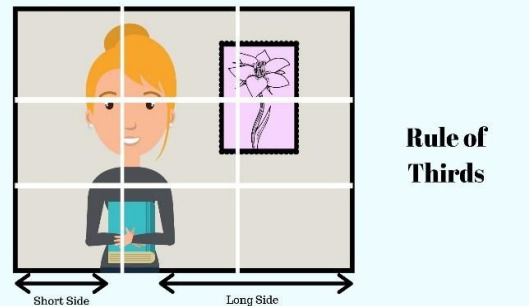


Figure 7. Rule of Thirds

Nonverbal movement, expressions, and vocalics. Presenters need to be aware of the boundaries of their camera frame and should not move outside of these boundaries unless they have someone filming who is prepared to move the camera with them. During a traditional face-to-face presentation, we would expect a dynamic presenter to move gracefully in an effort to command attention from different parts of the room, however, this is not something that should be directly adopted into digital presentations. Presenters should engage in a limited range of movements and should also be prepared to limit their typical hand-gesturing as it can be quite distracting within a small video frame. Instead, to engage audiences in a dynamic fashion, it is critical that presenters focus on their facial expressions to enhance the encoding of both their verbal and non-verbal messages. Since the face is the primary focal point for the video framing, audiences will rely heavily on the presenter's facial expressions to interpret the message and its related emotional sentiments. Given this, digital presenters should invest time and effort honing skills that enhance the dynamic range of their facial expressions. Presenters must also be much more sensitive to their vocal dynamism to ensure they are adding value to their message in a manner that may have the

greatest impact on how the audience perceives the message (Genard, 2012).

- Tip: Practicing facial expressions in front of a mirror is a simple and easy way for digital presenters to develop greater self-awareness of their expressions. Given the emphasis that video presentations place on the presenter's face, presenters will feel more confident if they feel comfortable in how they are expressing or responding to messages with their face.

Wardrobe Considerations. Looking good on camera also means considering what to wear. Beyond implementing the season's hottest fashionable trends, presenters must also consider how their wardrobe will interact with the camera and their environmental background. First, select colors that will stand out for the right reasons. Avoid wearing very light colored (e.g. whites and pale yellows) or very dark colored (e.g. all black suits & bright reds) as they tend to wash-out the presenter or diminish contrasting definition respectively (Jager, 2015). Instead, opt for warmer colors that fall in between shades of blue, green, and red. Identify what color the background of your shot frame is going to be and be sure to select colors that will complement each other well. Avoid wearing the same color as the background as it will blend in and not help distinguish a good contrasting effect for the presenter. Next, stick to solid patterns and traditional styles when possible. Even the slightest patterns on clothes can create some visual distortion on screen, making the image look fuzzy. Jewelry can look good on camera, but it can also be the source of unwanted noise, thus, avoid bracelets or dangly earrings that might produce noise that can be easily picked up by microphones.

- Tip: If a presenter is preparing to deliver a video based presentation in an unknown environment it is best for them to bring a few wardrobe options to ensure they have an appropriate option that will work with the environment.

Sounding Professional. In addition to the visual content of a presentation, the sound of a presenter's voice can also have a significant influence on how the audience perceives the presentation and its messages (Galbraith, McKinney, DeNoble, & Ehrlich, 2014; Mottram, 2016). One thing that presenters can do to create an engaging auditory environment for their attendees is to be vocally dynamic. Vocal dynamism involves appropriately varying the sounds of the voice including: tone, pitch, volume, and rate of speech. Vocal delivery that is considered to be monotone and lacking in dynamism is perceived by listeners as a lack of interest and can quickly disengage even the most loyal audience members (The Total Communicator, 2004).

- Tip: Mix up your voice! Practice speaking using a higher pitch, a friendly tone, or at a slightly higher volume and speed to add excitement to your voice and convey enthusiasm about the content you are presenting. When preparing the presentation pre-determine what moments will most benefit from greater vocal variety. Pay close attention to how the physical production of sound impacts the emotional sentiment in your delivery.

Next, it is critical to select and utilize the most appropriate microphone for the given production and its associated environment. Generally speaking, there are two primary types of microphones associated with computer based video channels: internal and external. Internal microphones are built right into the computer/laptop itself, and provide a great deal of convenience and ease of use/set-up. However, internal mics often do not capture sound with the same quality as external microphones because they cannot be positioned closely to the speaker's mouth.

- Tip: If you are using an internal microphone, remember that it is going to also pick noises close to the where the mic is located, particularly, mouse and keyboard clicking. Given how close the mic is to these noises, they are likely to

sound quite loud to your audience, thus you'll want to consider using a handheld clicker to advance slides if relying on an internal mic for a presentation.

On the other hand, external microphones will need to be purchased separately from the computer, but most can be easily connected and set-up using a USB port. External mics have the ability to be positioned much closer to the speaker or be pointed in the direction of the sound source, making them a big upgrade from the standard internal computer microphone.

- Tip: Many types of external microphones can be used depending on the recording environment, setup, or the purpose of the recording (Video School Online, 2019). Shotgun microphones are very high quality and are directional, they can be pointed directly at the speaker and minimize background noise. Audio recording microphones are more mobile and can be placed on table tops, but tend to also pick up more background noise. Lapel mics can be clipped 8-10 inches from the speaker's mouth, on a shirt/pocket for example, making it great for mobility and convenience during interviews. But these are omni-directional (pick up sound from all directions) and thus need to be pointed towards the speaker's mouth for optimum sound quality.

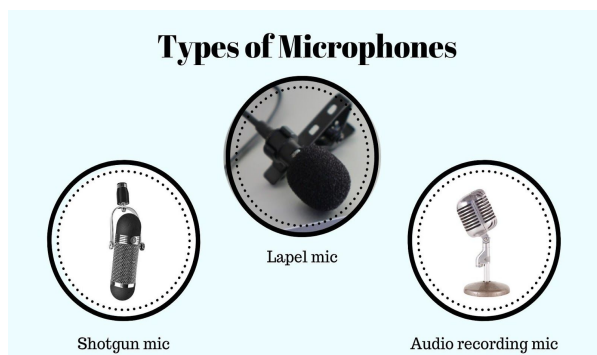


Figure 8. Types of Microphones

Finally, after a presenter has prepared their voice and selected the appropriate equipment,

they need to make sure that the recorded version of their voice has a high degree of fidelity. This can be done by examining audio levels of their recorded voice (DSLR Video Shooter, 2017). Audio levels are measured in decibels (dB), with 0 dB being the maximum level that voice sound can reach before audio distortion occurs. To avoid sounding like a garbled robot, the voice needs to have audio levels with negative dB values. Typically, presenters should have their vocal range between -12 and -10 dB for optimum sound quality.

- Tip: Make sure to test audio levels prior to the digital meeting or presentation recording. Test the audio level when speaking normally and when speaking at the highest volume in normal conversation. Try to laugh or practice louder transition words/sentences to see where this peak level is to ensure your levels will not peak at any point during the recording.

Being Audience Centered in a Digital Space: Manifesting and sustaining effective relational dynamics

Presentations and meetings do more than just disseminate information, they are often at the center of valuable networking and social bonding opportunities. In face-to-face settings, it is natural for informal engagements to take place before or after a meeting as attendees come and go from a single shared space. However, digital presentations and meetings do not share this same luxury, thus, presenters and coordinators should engage their audiences with alternative activities in an attempt to offer similar social benefits and opportunities.

Presenters often consider engaging their audiences by sharing relevant content ahead of time. Many presenters may be tempted to simply share their presentation deck before the presentation, however, these are unlikely to garner the same response as something more digitally poignant like a simplified graphic/image, link to a short

online article, or connecting them to an audio file such as a recent podcast. Presenters might even consider asking attendees to prepare something that they will share with the group during the engagement. By doing this, the presenter is helping the group at large to all think about the same idea which is likely to help if the goal may be to facilitate discussion amongst the group.

- Tip: Use that share button! If you are going to ask your audience to engage your content in some fashion ahead of time, try to ensure you are maximizing the digital space and share materials that will not only promote thought on the topic, but also may be of value to others. If your audience feels that the content you shared with them, is worthy of being shared with others, you know you've engaged them in the right manner!

During a traditional face-to-face presentation, the presenter has the ability to gather more immediate nonverbal feedback from their audience, thus allowing them to make adjustments to not only their delivery, but also in their approach to covering content. The traditional audience may also have greater ability to visually or vocally engage (or disengage) with the content, providing the presenter critical feedback on how they may need to adjust the presentation going forward. However, it can be challenging for a digital presenter to gather feedback during a presentation or for digital attendees to demonstrate their approval or enthusiasm during the presentation. As a result, digital presentations sometimes fail to maintain and promote audience engagement which can have a negative impression on the presenter and/or their content (Bromberg, 2013). However, with some careful planning, presenters can utilize a few mechanisms to help audience members feel more connected and engaged.

First, presenters should consider offering attendees the chance to provide thoughts, questions, and comments during the presentation using some type of text/chat based function. All of today's video

conferencing platforms offer participants some form of text feature in which attendees can engage in dialogue. Therefore, presenters should find meaningful ways to engage the audience via this channel when appropriate. Presenters might also consider pre-planning a set of discussion questions to engage the audience at various stages of the presentation and invite them to share their responses in the chat. Furthermore, given how difficult it can be to interrupt during a digital presentation, the presenter may include a few moments during the presentation in which they invite attendees to ask clarification questions through the chat feature. The chat function may also provide added benefit to the development of new thoughts and ideas as it allows audience members to engage in critical discussion with their peers during the presentation, a process not typically feasible during a traditional presentation. Thus, instead of great comments or ideas being lost in the moment, they can be shared in real time with others in the digital room, adding value to the presentation itself. While there is always the possibility that audience members can become distracted by that chat feature, it may be a trade-off some presenters are willing to make as it may be better than audience members disengaging and/or electing to digitally multitask on other non-presentation related engagements.

- Tip: It pays to have a helping hand! If a video presenter has the luxury of having an assistant, that person can help moderate the discussion in the chat forum. The moderator can be equipped with all sorts of supplemental information and can share this information synchronously while the presentation is going on. The moderator can also help pass along important comments or questions to the presenter to help keep things moving in an efficient fashion.

Given that the audience itself is brought together via a virtual space and not a shared room, it can be difficult for the presenter or other audience members to gather the same

type of quick visual feedback that helps evaluate group consensus or individual concerns. In order to overcome this, presenters should establish a set of visual cues at the beginning of the session that they review with attendees to utilize as needed throughout the session. Asking participants to show a thumbs up or thumbs down can be an easy way to determine if everyone can hear the presenter or if they are ready to move on to the next topic. To make it more dynamic, the presenter might invite attendees to hold up images or even numbers in response to certain questions. For example, “On a scale of 1-10, how much do you agree with this statement...” with presenters holding up their number for others to see.

- Tip: Many of today’s most popular video platforms allow the presenter to spotlight members of the audience. These spotlighting features allow different members of the audience to have the chance to be front and center and can even allow other members of the room to share content or engage with the materials in an interactive fashion. Presenters can utilize this option if they feel it will help increase engagement amongst audience members who might be willing or interested in greater participation during the session.

Finally, given that digital presentations and meetings are typically known for saving time due to their efficiency they also have an expectation that they should stay on schedule and move quickly. While it is important to follow through on such an expectation, it is also important to make attendees feel that their presence is valuable to the session. During a digital meeting it can be difficult for attendees to make their own introductions, therefore, presenters or meeting hosts should set aside at least a few moments to engage some ice breaker style introductions. Even if the group is familiar with each other, offering a few seconds for each attendee to share their response to a meaningful question can help create a more social atmosphere. This also helps to ensure that everyone can hear and see

each other, which is good to address at the beginning of the session and not during a more critical part of the session.

- Tip: Pop quiz time! What color shirt is the women wearing in the first image found in this manuscript? Including some pop quiz style questions for your audience to answer can help put the fun back in the functional part of the presentations. Consider including a question during a transition point in the presentation, especially at the mid-way point when you are seeking to re-invigorate the audience's attention. You can use the back chat function in many digital meeting rooms to review answers and give recognition to those participants who get it right!

Next Steps: Measuring the Effectiveness of Digital Presentations and Beyond

Following the successful adoption and implementation of best practices for presenting in digital environments, what comes next? Implementing new techniques and adopting new technologies is a progressive first step, but presenters must also begin to assess if these new technologies are fulfilling their larger goals and meeting (or exceeding) audience expectations. Therefore, the advancement of these digital best practices must be accompanied by a scientific exploration into the type of influence these best practices are having on audiences.

The concept of engagement has been examined by researchers in a variety of fields (e.g. education, marketing, video games, virtual reality, etc.) for conceptualizing and measuring the effectiveness of digitally presented content (Ashley & Tuten, 2015; Fotopoulou & Couldry, 2015; Bromberg et al., 2013; Hung, Hwang, & Huang, 2012; Boyle, Connolly, Hainey, & Boyle, 2012; Hernandez et al., 2013; Cruz-Benito, Therón, García-Peñalvo, & Lucas, 2015). Many of these studies characterize engagement as having multiple elements: behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement. Each of

these types of engagement can be found in different types of multimedia, in varying degrees. For example, behavioral engagement can be seen in attention and physical participation in the newest entertaining video game, emotional engagement can be experienced by watching a poignant news program, or cognitive engagement in watching educational YouTube videos. Therefore, a presenter must always begin by initially conceptualizing engagement; what does it mean within the context of their presentation? Specifically identifying the type of engagement they are most interested in producing amongst their audience. Next, the presenter must also consider how they could measure levels of engagement amongst their audience; what are (if any) the tangible elements the presenter will use to capture or measure engagement? It is important to refrain from simply adopting measures or definitions from the world of traditional face-to-face presentations, but instead, to redefine and analyze what successful engagement looks like in a digital exchange. For example, nonverbal forms of engagement (listening, head-nodding, eye-contact, etc.) are harder to detect on an online platform. Instead, digital presenters may need to turn to the world of social media platforms for examples or mechanisms that capture agreement or consensus, such as: such as “likes,” retweets, follows, shares, comments, etc. Consider how best to implement different feedback mechanisms to engage and sustain audiences that matches the context and tone of the presentation. For example, providing spaces to type a comment may be more effective for certain audiences than allocating time for audience questions, because of the element of anonymity or relative distance to the conversation and presenter.

Communication Centers and their Future

The responsibility of educating individuals on the implementation of best practices within these digital presentation

platforms falls across a broad spectrum of individuals and organizations, from high school and university instructors to industry focused workshops and training programs. Yet, existing communication centers of excellence are likely best positioned to begin the transition of working these digital best practices into their existing approaches. Communication centers often exist at the center of larger communities and have the dynamic ability to offer resources and support for both academic and professional development. Thus, these centers have the ability to discern what skills are needed by their clients today while also keeping an eye on industry trends to help clients be prepared for future demands as well. Existing communication centers will need to determine the capacity and resources that they (initially) have available to allow them to start serving requests for training and coaching related to the delivery of digital presentations. While existing centers are well positioned to integrate the new digital foundations and pedagogy, they must also identify both physical and digital space for which the training can take place. Digital training will require centers to be capable of providing their clients with access to certain hardware and software which may require new allocations of space and/or funding. However, as the transition begins to take place, the adoption of new technology and training may also allow the center to utilize a digital approach to their training and potentially begin to offer consultative training in the digital space as a means of presenting the best practices of digital delivery at the heart of their own approach to training and coaching.

New and forthcoming communication centers have an opportunity to build digital presentation training into their model from the beginning. A new communication center must consider how they will balance their training and allocation of resources between traditional face-to-face presentations and those that take place in digital worlds. Future communication centers will require an infrastructure that can

be easily updated as trending hardware and software options for digital delivery replace existing platforms. Given this need, new communication centers will need to be careful in regards to how they commit their funding resources to ensure that they have the ability to make upgrades or changes as technology continues to evolve.

Finally, online education has seen consistent growth for the past decade (Blakey, 2010). Even amongst more traditional institutions of higher education, the adoption of technology in the classroom has been an important mechanism for increasing access to information, resources, and collaboration. However, while great in theory, these digital adoptions present new challenges for both instructors and students, such as: maintaining a high level of engagement (despite the lack of a physically shared space) or creating an intrinsic learning environment to help students maintain motivation to remain committed to the rigorous requirements of online classes (Blakey, 2010). As a result, communication centers may also find themselves at the center of conversations surrounding online teaching, providing guidance for instructors on the best practices for presenting to their learners.

While the technology may be new today, the skills surrounding effective presentations have always been evolving to meet the demands of new audiences. These are exciting times for the field of communication to determine how we will train and guide future generations of presenters to utilize the technological affordances of today's digital channels in the most effective and engaging manner. As a result, facilitators and instructors from all levels of education must ensure that they keep up with this emerging technology and its associated best practices in order to maximize the affordances presented by digital video based channels. We must seek to employ standards and best practices of communication excellence as we embrace new channels and mentor the next generation of presenters and screen composers.

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