

## Virtual Presentation Best Practices

**1. Make sure the audience can see you.** If you're going to use a camera, the audience should be able to see who they're talking to. Just like taking a picture, there should be a light source in front of you (natural light through a window or at least a lamp) so that your face is lit. If there's more light coming from behind you than in front of you, your face will be in a shadow. Your audience won't be able to make out your face clearly which is isn't fun, not to mention mildly creepy.

**2. Don't move around too much.** Most webcams aren't designed for high resolution. Mix that with how hard your computer is already working and you'll find that sudden movements will cause the picture to blur or even break up. This usually resolves on its own once you stop moving, but creates a couple of seconds of useless video.

**3. What you wear can mess with your camera.** Clothes can cause havoc with your webcam. Pure white clothing can "flare" and show up very bright on camera, which can wash out your face. Checkered patterns don't read well on camera and can look blurry. Your shirt should be a solid color and preferably not bright white.

**4. Just because you can hold web meetings in your bunny slippers doesn't mean you should.** People form opinions of a speaker based on what they see. Dress appropriately for the audience. Here's a hint- most webcams only show you from mid-chest up. You'd be surprised how many people wear a jacket, dress shirt and cargo shorts!

**5. Watch out behind you.** Always test your camera positioning before going live. What is going on behind you? You don't want your audience watching people walk by. Nor do you want that fern in the corner to look like it's growing out of your head. Do your surroundings look professional to your audience?

**6. Make sure you have a strong audio connection.** Different devices deliver different levels of audio quality. You may have recently noticed news reporters wearing earbuds when broadcasting from home and that's becoming the best practice. Regardless of whether your plan to connect using your computer or a phone, it's recommended you use wireless earbuds or a headset to make sure your voice comes through loud and clear. If joining from a mobile device, be sure to select a location that offers reliable service.

**7. Make sure you have a solid internet connection and a back-up plan if you lose internet connectivity.** If you can, connect directly to your internet using an Ethernet cable. Be prepared that you may lose your internet connection during the webinar and may need to dial into the call. Have copy of your slides available on your computer desktop or as a print-out.

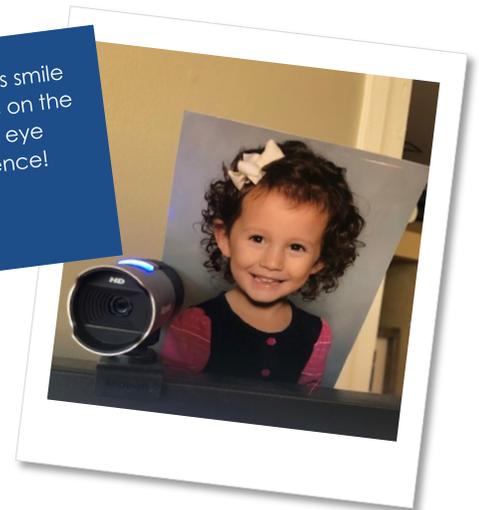
**8. Reduce background noise.** Many of us are working from home now and you may not be home alone while you are presenting. A spouse, children, pets, lawn mower or airplane could interrupt your presentation at a moment's notice. While the audience will most likely sympathize with you as "we're all in this together," you'll

want to do what you can to make sure you have a quiet space during your presentation. Even the smallest sounds can get picked up by your mic such as shuffling papers, your laptop running, a fan in the room or keyboard strokes. Be thoughtful of these noises and try to keep them away from your microphone.

**9. Look your audience in the eye.** Just as in a live presentation, eye contact is a sign of trustworthiness, competence and confidence. The problem is that your audience isn't in the room. As a result, it's often hard to remember where to look. Many presenters wind up looking at either their own picture on the screen, or if you're using two-way video, the face of your audience. The problem is that on camera it looks like you're looking down or to the side, which is not what you're trying to do. Most webcams have a little dot of light that tells you where the camera is—treat that as your audience's eyes and speak there. Do it well and you could run for office because that's what politicians and TV reporters do.

My daughter's infectious smile helps me keep my eyes on the camera, so I'm making eye contact with the audience!

- Kristin Rodriguez



**10. Be prepared for calamity.** Occasionally, the webcam will freeze and stop working. No one will be able to tell you why, and tech support at your provider will shrug and say they don't know either. That's okay. Just be prepared. Most platforms allow you to post a still picture of yourself that will serve as a placeholder for where your webcam video would be. Make sure you're smiling—candid shots are perfectly okay as long as you look happy and you're not doing anything incriminating.

**11. Don't have the camera on you any more than necessary.** This may be the most useful tip of all. Use the webcam to greet your audience, let them know who you are and establish rapport. Then, when you get into the meat of the presentation, turn it off. Save bandwidth, don't worry about what you look like while you're presenting, and let the audience focus on the content of your presentation. You can earn extra "brownie points" if you turn it back on for Q and A so that they can see your confidence and professionalism. You can also look them in the eye as you sign off and leave them with a positive impression.