



Don't Be A "Vidiot": 10 Tips For Better Video Meetings

by Amy Barzdukas

(NAPSA)—Video is excellent for breaking down barriers and connecting people from all around the world. But just as you can make a cultural gaffe in person, you can mess up with a camera. Bad video can be worse than no video.

Here are 10 things you can do to improve the quality of your video collaboration.

10. Don't wear pinstripes. When you're doing a videoconference, your camera—whether on your laptop or on a purpose-built device, such as the Polycom RealPresence Debut—is working hard to track your facial expressions and your movements. Throw some narrow blue and white stripes in there and the camera can't tell if that is movement or stripes, which makes the system work overtime to try to resolve the confusion. This has two implications: One, your viewers on the other end of the video session are seeing vibrating stripes that make their eyes burn, and two, if you are trying to share content—such as a movie, a PowerPoint presentation or your desktop—the camera is working too hard on bringing you into focus to put any effort into the content. The same principle applies to checks—leave them for the picnic table. Wide stripes are okay, but take some cues from newscasters—there's a reason they lean toward solid colors.

9. Keep in mind what you get complimented on. Is there a particular color you wear that results in more "you look great"s than others? Some colors wash you out, others make you look more alive. A solid royal blue is almost universally flattering. Bright red, on the other hand, tends to vibrate on screen. By all means be yourself, but keep in mind that via video, not everyone will see the entirety of that logo or



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slogan emblazoned on your chest—that can be awkward.

8. Remember, you're on camera. This might seem obvious, but if you're accustomed to audio-only calls, you've probably developed a keen ability to multitask while simultaneously losing your ability to keep a poker face. On larger videoconference calls, you may not always be speaking, but you're still visible—so forget playing games on your smartphone, personal grooming, grimacing, or rolling your eyes. The positive outcome is that people on video are more focused—and meetings go faster when you don't have to keep saying "I'm sorry, can you repeat that," which is often code for "I wasn't listening but I just heard my name...."

7. Look around. Check the self-view for what is going to show on camera. Make sure your surroundings are professional.

6. Practice. A dry run will help you identify the right lighting. Keep the light in front of you, not behind, and if you are using the webcam on a PC, most of the time you'll look better if you turn the brightness down just a bit. Being too close to the camera will exacerbate any eye movement away from the camera, so sit back at a comfortable distance and use the

camera zoom to make sure you are well framed. If you'll be sharing content, have it ready.

5. Test the technology. If you're joining a meeting through a Web browser, try it out before the first time you use it. Some technologies require plug-ins, and they may not be compatible with all browsers.

4. Sound matters. Think about how hard it is to hear in some restaurants—they often don't have such sound absorbers as carpets, tablecloths, wall coverings and so on, so all conversations bounce around and intensify. The same thing applies to videoconferencing. Polycom is known for the quality of the sound in its videoconferencing solutions, but even if you don't have access to top technology, you can improve your situation by making sure you're in a quiet location that has enough stuff in it—furniture, carpeting, plants—to absorb the echoes.

3. Don't be the one with the barking dog, or the one typing while someone else is talking, or the one crackling the potato chip bag, or the one whose cell phone keeps ringing (silence your phone). When you aren't talking, put yourself on mute if there's any background noise.

2. If you do put yourself on mute, remember to take it off when you start talking.

1. Be yourself. Look at the camera, not just the screen. If you're on a laptop, rest it on a stack of papers or books to put the camera closer to eye level. The best thing about using video is that you get to see each other with all your natural expressions, smiles, body language and nonverbal cues that help drive deeper connection and understanding. Take full advantage of the opportunity.

• Ms. Barzdukas is VP Global Solutions Marketing at Polycom.