Videoconferencing Best Practices – Meetings, Presentations and Technology Tidbits

For Administrators:

1. Make sure everyone knows about the conference well in advance. Consider embedding the link in both the Outlook meeting invitation and the agenda. If you expect your participants to be on camera, or recommend utilization of a headset, make that clear in your invitation.

2. Conduct a dry run with at least one presenter the day before. You don't have to go through everything; just make sure things work on the technical side.
   
   If you will be having participants in the room and want to project the call on the Conference room monitor, you can use the Room Keyboard and computer. You will need to turn on the monitor by pushing the Power button on the monitor at the front of the room.
   
   If you want to project from your laptop, you will need to connect it to the computer in the room. Make sure that you have the proper connector for this (it can vary depending on the Conference Room). Request the help of IT by contacting son-help@listserv.cc.emory.edu, if you need assistance.

3. Designate someone ahead of time to take notes and vet any questions online guests have, since time is limited. (Most conference software allows participants to submit questions through chat.)

4. Open the call 10-15 minutes early to double-check that everything looks good, and to welcome participants as they arrive. This means you need to have the meeting room scheduled at least 15 minutes prior to the start of the meeting. Don’t leave participants wondering or frustrated because they are logged in, and you aren’t even in the room yet.

5. When callers open the software, it gives the option of using the computer audio or telephone. It is usually preferable for each member to call in on their own phones, rather than using the computer’s audio.
   
   If there is 1 main speaker, it is also a good idea for the Administrator to Mute all other lines. Callers can “Raise their hands” within the software and get called on to proceed, at which time they should be unmuted.
   
   On calls with many participants discussing things, each participant should mute their own lines except when they are speaking. This keeps extraneous office noises from being heard on the call. DON’T FORGET TO UNMUTE when you want to talk!
5. The host should introduce the meeting and participants, about two minutes after the scheduled start. (Two minutes gives just a little more time for people to call in, without annoying the others.) It’s a good idea to do a Roll Call if it’s a relatively small group (less than 15) so everyone knows who is on the call. By beginning the conference, the host ensures things get off to a good start and eliminates any awkwardness for presenters who aren't prepared to introduce themselves. Set the ground rules at this time, including letting others know how questions will be handled. Assure that those online can both hear the speakers and see the projecting documents.

6. If the conference is in the form of a meeting, make sure any follow-up is clearly assigned to the appropriate participants.

7. Send out a recording, slides, or any other pertinent information within 24 hours of the conference.


9. Did you record the meeting? You can repurpose the meeting in many ways. Depending on the goal of your conference, you may be able to use clips on your company's blog, YouTube channel, or recruiting and/or promotional materials.

10. Consider hosting a follow-up live discussion or informal Q&A.

**For speakers/presenters:**

11. When writing your presentation, keep the audience in mind. Look for opportunities to engage them through questions, picture illustrations, and real-life examples. (When introducing a product or a piece of software, real-time demonstrations are valuable.)

12. Conduct a dry run with a test audience the day before. You don't have to go through your whole presentation, but you want to get familiar with the conference software and make sure it's working properly.

13. If you're delivering a webinar, decide in advance whether or not you want the audience to see you. The advantage to being visible on screen is you can use facial expression and gestures to show emotion and clarify points. In contrast, keeping only your slides visible may make you less nervous and allow you to use more notes.

14. Practice, practice, practice! You may know your material well, but it will sound different out loud than it does in your head. Going through your presentation once or twice before delivering it will make a major difference in how you sound to the audience.

15. Call in at least 15 minutes early, to make sure you're properly set up and prevent any nervousness from having to rush. Close out any applications on your computer, especially those that make your personal information visible (such as email).

16. Show some enthusiasm: If you aren't interested in this event, why should others be? Get to know your material well so that you can make it come alive for those listening.
17. Do not read your slides (a.k.a. death by PowerPoint). As with any presentation, best practice for slides is to use big fonts and as few words as possible—it's up to you to explain, elaborate, and engage. (Moderate use of numbers and statistics can be beneficial—but don't go overboard.)

18. Speak at a good pace. Most people tend to speak too fast when presenting, so slow it down. Exercise special care if you're demonstrating software, to make sure the audience is with you.

19. Schedule pauses in your presentation to handle questions.

20. Stick to a predetermined time for your core material. Additionally, make sure there is plenty of time scheduled for questions, both during and after your presentation.

21. Conclude with a sum-up and actionable advice; focus on key takeaways.

22. Provide your contact information and social-media handles when concluding, so it's easy for others to reach you. (Or spread the word about the great information you just presented!)

**For participants/attendees:**

23. Make sure you have access to the conferencing software. (We recommend you download in advance if your first use of the software.) Usually, clicking on the link in the evite will open up the client software for you to use.

24. Call in a few minutes early, so you can test your audio and video and you won’t annoy everyone else with your late entrance. Also, make sure your phone or computer is on mute. Sign in with your full name.

25. Don't interrupt: If there's no opportunity to submit questions through chat, make sure to write them down so you can ask when given an opportunity. If the program administrator does not do an audio check at the beginning of the presentation, speak up and assure you can hear and see clearly.

26. When callers open the software, it gives the option of using the computer audio or telephone. It is usually preferable for each member to call in on their own phones, rather than using the computer’s audio.

   If there is 1 main speaker, the host may mute all other lines. Callers can “Raise their hands” within the software and get called on to proceed, at which time they should be unmuted.

   On calls with many participants discussing things, each participant should mute their own lines except when they are speaking. This keeps extraneous office noises from being heard on the call. DON’T FORGET TO UNMUTE when you want to talk!

27. Reach out to the speaker or moderator after the presentation if you'd like more insights, or to let them know you enjoyed the conference. Doing so promotes a better working relationship—and may even lead to unexpected opportunities.
Resources