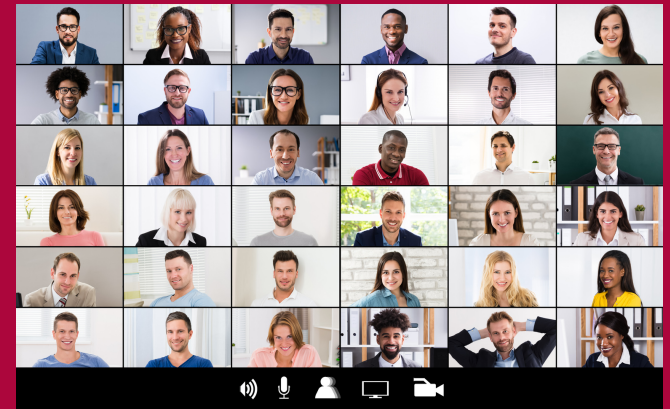


# We're All News Anchors Now



## The Speechworks Virtual Communication Skills Handbook

**Speechworks**

ASHER COMMUNICATIONS

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**2020** will be remembered for many things. One of them will be this: it was the year we all became news anchors.

For thousands of years, public speaking was largely one thing: a man or a woman standing in front of actual physical humans in actual physical rooms, trying to persuade listeners to do stuff. Of course, the rooms could vary in size and the numbers of people could vary. Sometimes you would be in a hall with 500 people. Other times you would be in a conference room with only five team members. But you would still look actual humans in the eye, smile, and with the force of your personality try to get them to do stuff.

That changed in 2020.

Thanks to the Covid-19 quarantine, public speaking became something that we all did via Zoom, Webex, Skype, Microsoft Teams, BlueJeans, and any number of other video communication platforms.

Suddenly we all needed to figure out how to connect via video technology. And the question arose, how do we do that? How do we connect with others using technology when we're so used to connecting in person? How do I make eye



*Until further notice, video conferences are the new auditorium. And we have to learn to adapt.*

contact with someone when they're in another country? And how do I know if I'm connecting when I can't really gauge reactions like I could in a conference room?

The answer is to use the same tools and techniques that have been employed for decades by the likes of Walter Cronkite, Diane Sawyer, Leslie Stahl, Katie Couric, Lester Holt, and Anderson Cooper.



*...video is a very intimate medium where you need to look a person in the eye and connect in a personal way.*

The news anchors have known for years that video is a very intimate medium where you need to look one person in the eye and connect in a personal way.

They've known the importance of brevity and story-telling. They've understood that energy has to be pushed out through the medium or you'll come across as flat. They've understood that discussions and Q&A are always more interesting than a speech. And, they also understand that team communication has distinct advantages over speaking solo.

If we want to master communication in the post-COVID world, we need to learn from the news anchors and adapt their ideas to our virtual meetings. This e-book will help you do just that.

### **PART I: HOW TO CONNECT VIA VIDEO**

The first part of the e-book focuses on how to connect through the medium itself. “Uncle Walter” Cronkite was often called “the most trusted man in America” because he made his evening news viewers feel that he was chatting with them personally. We’ll talk about how you can do the same thing with listeners in Zoom meetings.



*Technology can often be so impersonal. It's your job to make it personal.*

### **PART II: TIGHT STORIES AND TIGHT ANSWERS**

The second part of the e-book will focus on how to hold the attention of listeners in a world where we all seem afflicted by attention deficit disorder. Indeed, most of us can't sit still for longer than the average YouTube video. That means that presenters need to know how to craft the kind of simple, tight stories that news anchors have relied on for years.

We'll talk about how you can do that in your next meeting. Similarly, we'll also discuss the importance of keeping answers tight.



*Connecting with one person via video can be hard enough, let alone connecting with a team or a whole company.*

### PART III: TEAMS AND WEBINARS

The final part of the book will address some of the special challenges that arise when adapting meetings to a video environment. We'll talk about how teams can present effectively via video technology. We'll also focus on how to create and deliver great webinars.

Ultimately, as we all try to connect with listeners more effectively in the virtual world, I hope that you'll remember one thing: we're all news anchors now.

**WHEN** NBC news anchor Lester Holt delivers the news, it feels like he's talking right to you, conversing casually in your living room. How does he do that? Of course, he has a teleprompter. But more importantly, he's looking directly into the camera lens. By doing that, it feels like he's talking to you alone. Of course, millions of other viewers feel the same way.

Indeed, talk to any television news professional and she will tell you that the key to connection is the eyes. My colleague Marilyn Ringo, a former CNN news anchor, told me that when she was on air, she would talk to the camera lens like she was talking to a good friend.

### **LOOK INTO THE LENS**

So, what does that mean for those of us that want to connect on Zoom, or WebEx? If we want to connect in the same way, we have to do the same thing. We need to look directly into our camera lens.

This is a lot harder than it seems. For most of us, we've been programmed since childhood to "look 'em in the eye." And that is great advice for connecting in person.



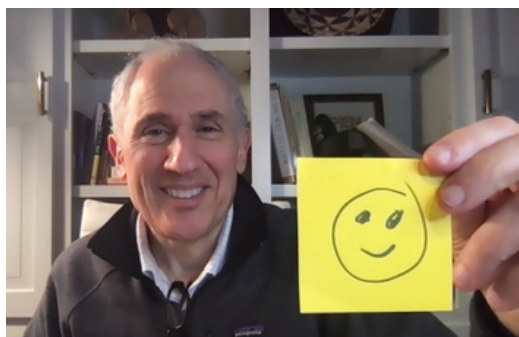
*...The key to connection is the eyes.*

But if you actually look people in the eye on a Zoom call, you won't make eye contact. To your listeners, it will look like you're looking down, or up or the side, depending on where your screen is relative to the lens.

This is something that you can prove to yourself quite easily on your own computer. Simply make two videos of yourself. The first time, make the video looking at your own image. Then make a video looking directly into the camera. You'll be amazed at how much more connected the second video will feel.

Learning to make eye contact with the lens is one thing, making it a habit is another. It's easy to forget and fall back on making eye contact with the images on the screen.

A little trick that I use is to draw a smiley face on a small Post-It note and place it beside my camera lens. That Post-It note is a reminder that I need to look right into the camera lens.



*Place your stickie note pal at the top of your screen and use it for reference.*

### GAUGING AUDIENCE REACTIONS

*"But if I'm making eye contact with the camera lens, I can't see how people are*

*responding to my ideas."*

Of course, this is the fundamental challenge with eye contact on a video call. It seems like we have to make a choice between making eye contact with our listeners or being able to see how listeners are responding. And it's true, technically you can't do both.



*Read the room— the Zoom room.*

But my experience has been that you actually CAN do both! You learn to make eye contact most of the time while occasionally glancing down at the images of your listeners. It's a little like how parents are able to cook dinner while watching their children with "eyes in the back of their head."

So here is your assignment. Create your smiley-faced sticky note and do a couple of recordings of yourself talking into the camera. Do it for about five or ten minutes. You'll quickly start to get a feel for making eye contact with the lens.

That is the first and most important step to connecting with others on video calls.

**EYE CONTACT ON A VIDEO CALL IS CRITICAL**



**[Click here to view the video.](#)**

# CHAPTER TWO

## Present From a Virtual Newsroom

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**I**F you ever get the chance, tour a newsroom. CNN has a great studio tour in Atlanta. These newsrooms are very controlled environments. There are bright lights, carefully appointed backgrounds, and chairs that are adjusted to make you sit just so.



*If you look good, you're more believable.*

A lot of effort goes into making news anchors look good on camera. And that effort matters. If you look good, you're more believable. How credible would Anderson Cooper seem if he presented in front of an unmade bed and a twirling ceiling fan with a dark shadow across his face?

Most businesses have a dress code to convey a sense of professionalism. You need to have a similar set of standards to convey professionalism on a video conference.

### **DIRECT SOFT BRIGHT LIGHT ON YOUR FACE**

If you are well-lit, you connect better.

In virtually every video conference I attend, there is someone whose face is poorly lit. Presenting with a dark shadow is a distraction to your listeners. This can be even worse if you have darker skin.

And it's an easy problem to fix. The best source of light is an open window. Position your computer with your face toward the window and chances are you'll be fine.

If that's not possible, consider investing in a "ring light." They cost about \$35 on Amazon. These lights give off a nice soft light that illuminates your face evenly without blinding you.

A little experimentation here goes a long way. I had to present from a new space recently, and while we were waiting, I asked my team members to give me feedback. I had my ring light on but wasn't sure how the other lights in the room would impact my image. So I tried both, and they told me to turn off the other lights and go just with the ring light.

*Rings lights are a great tool to mimic natural light.*

### **MANAGE YOUR BACKGROUND**

During COVID-19, we were all treated to news anchors, commentators, and television hosts talking to us from their homes. Most of them had carefully curated backgrounds. For news programs, we see a lot of bookcases stocked with weighty history books. For sports programs, we see athletes with trophies in the



background. For comedians, who knows what we'll see.

But the point is that these folks pick backgrounds consistent with their personal brands. As a communication skills coach, I speak in front of a bookshelf. Recently I spoke with someone speaking from a room stocked with posters from the band Phish. Another person was speaking in front of baseball memorabilia. I don't really care what you do. But be deliberate. Your sailing posters tell a story about you just like an unmade bed tells a story.

### **BE CAREFUL WITH VIRTUAL BACKGROUNDS**

Virtual backgrounds can be great. You can pick something that looks professional and does away with the need to curate something behind you.

But virtual backgrounds do have problems. They can create a "shimmer" effect, where you look like you're in some sort of science fiction movie where pieces of your face and arms fade in and out. It's distracting.

The best solution is a "green screen" background, which you can buy on Amazon. Bright white backgrounds can be as good as green screens. But if you want to use



*Find or create a place in your home with a simple, clean background.*

virtual backgrounds and minimize “shimmer” you should experiment and see what works.

### FRAME THE PICTURE WITH YOUR HEAD AND UPPER TORSO

News studios have professional camera operators who are tasked with framing the news anchors properly on the screen. You don't have that. So you have to do your own framing. The best position is with your head toward the top of the frame and your upper torso toward the bottom.

Nothing screams “amateur” more than having your face too close to the screen. You don't want to look like a talking head. You want to be back far enough so that when you start moving your hands, people can actually see that you're moving your hands.

### PUT THE CAMERA AT EYE LEVEL

You want to be able to look straight ahead into the camera. If you have the camera positioned too low, your listeners will be treated to a nice view up your nostrils. Not good.



*Position your head towards the top, and upper torso towards the bottom of your screen.*

Books and shoeboxes work great to lift up your computer so that the camera is at eye level. You can also purchase a laptop stand.

### ABOUT YOUR CHAIR

Chairs are only important in that they can promote or hinder good posture. The best posture is up and forward. Again, watch the news anchors; they're up and forward with straight backs. Indeed, many news anchors sit in special chairs with no backs to promote the right posture.

When I'm on a video call, I scooch forward in my chair so that I have no temptation to lean back and get too comfortable. If you have the right kind of desk, consider standing up. Your posture will look great and you'll come across with a great deal of energy.

If you're serious about looking great on these video calls, create a virtual studio. You'll look so much better.



*Position yourself or your computer so you don't have to slouch (think: opposite of this woman)*

**SIMULATE A TELEVISION STUDIO TO LOOK GREAT VIRTUALLY**



**[Click here to view the video.](#)**

**WALTER** Cronkite was beloved by millions of viewers because he came across as an authentic person. “Uncle Walter” seemed like a close relative with whom you could share a beer or a meal. And so many of the great news anchors have this same skill. Lester Holt, Anderson Cooper, and Robin Roberts all seem like good friends.

So, what is the key to coming across on a video conference with authenticity?

Ironically, for most people, the key is to exaggerate your energy. Push out more energy than feels comfortable. Move your hands more than you think you should. And give more facial energy than seems normal.

### Why Exaggerate?

Most people in business deliver messages with a muted version of their true personalities. They reduce their energy because they want to seem “serious” or because they’re nervous or feeling judged. The result is that they can seem flat or bored. This is particularly true on video calls where we’re speaking to a laptop computer and the technology tends to flatten our style.



*Don't be afraid to really exaggerate. It might feel silly, but it works.*

So, we coach people to exaggerate the energy to “get back to normal.” I call this the “authenticity paradox.” In a business setting and on video calls, we need to fake extra energy so that we can seem authentic.

Of course, I don’t really want you to be fake. But most people would be surprised to see how that “fake” energy actually comes across as very authentic.

Working recently with a software sales representative, he was coming across as flat on his video calls. I recorded his message and then played it back. He agreed that he seemed flat.

I suggested that he needed to triple his energy. “I agree that I need to come across with more energy,” he said. “But I don’t want to seem like a used car salesman. People will be able to tell I’m faking.”

Of course, I didn’t want him to come across as a used car salesman either. “Just give it a shot,” I said, “I’ll record you and show you how you appear. If you look silly, don’t ever do it again.”

And so, he gave it a shot and really exaggerated his energy, moving his hands



*Exaggerate your voice, facial expressions, and body language.*

more than he would normally, over-smiling, and flexing his eyebrows. “That felt horrible,” he said, as soon as he finished.

But when we looked at the video together, he quickly admitted that he looked good. “My suspicion is that the people that know you well would recognize this style,” I told him.

Of course, this is an easy experiment anyone can do on their own computer. Simply turn on your video recorder and deliver two minutes of one of your standard business presentations. Do it the way that you would normally do it.

Then do it again. But this time exaggerate your energy, going for a “used car salesman” style. Then compare the two versions. You might be surprised at how good the “used car salesman” looks. You will probably see that the “used car salesman” isn’t as cheesy as you expected. Rather, you probably just look energized and connected, sort of like you would be when having an animated conversation with a good friend.

And that animated style is exactly what can make you come across like a news anchor.



*It may feel cheesy at first, but it will translate authentically.*

### BOOST YOUR ENERGY FOR VIRTUAL PRESENTATIONS



[Click here to view the video.](#)

**LOOKING** and sounding good on camera is just the first step to connecting like a news anchor.

The next step is to learn to tell a story well. And how do they do it on television? They make it tight and to the point.

So how do you do tell a tight story in the context of a video call? We teach a simple approach that works well for all forms of spoken communication. But it's particularly useful on a Zoom call.

The idea is that you quickly articulate the challenge or issue that your listeners care about. Then you propose to address the issue with three tight points. This "executive message" is a nice, tight story; it's easy for your listeners to quickly grasp. If you watch the news anchors, you'll see this type of tight messaging over and over again. They cut quickly to the essence of the issue and then give a quick overview.

Here is how we teach our clients to lay out a quick, simple story.

### **STEP 1: START WITH A "HOOK"**

That means that you should articulate the simple business issue that your listener cares about.



*Have your hook, message objective, and three points ready to roll.*

Sample Hooks:

- *Proposing a new Customer Relationship Management System. “We’re all looking for ways to reduce our costs while bringing in additional revenues.”*
- *Proposing to open a new office. “We know that the board wants to find ways to expand our reach into the Midwest.”*
- *Arguing for a permissive “work from home” policy. “The leadership team is concerned with saving money on real estate costs while improving employee productivity.”*

### STEP 2: DELIVER A SIMPLE "MESSAGE OBJECTIVE"

This is a simple “what’s it all about” statement.

Sample Message Objectives:

- *CRM: “Investing in a new customer relationship management system will help us in both ways.”*
- *New office: “Opening an office in Columbus, Ohio will position us to grow the business in the middle of the country.”*
- *Work from Home Policy: “A more robust work-from-home policy will reduce costs while improving productivity.”*



*What is it all about?*

### STEP 3: PREVIEW YOUR MESSAGE WITH THREE SIMPLE POINTS

This may be the most important part of this approach. A tight story needs to be brief. So you should ask yourself, “What are the three simple ideas that my listeners must remember?” Those are your three points.



*Layout your three points.*

Sample Message Objectives:

- *CRM: “The new CRM will do three things for us: 1. Save us time. 2. Save us money. 3. Raise our profile with key clients.”*
- *New Office: The new office in Columbus will do three things for us: 1. Position us to grow in the Midwest. 2. Allow us to build off an existing client-base. 3. Generate a positive ROI in two years.”*
- *Work from home: “A more robust work from home policy will do three things: 1. Reduce our real estate costs. 2. Improve employee morale. 3. Improve our ability to recruit great employees.”*

Putting it all together, here is what these little “scripts” would sound like.

### PROPOSING A NEW CRM

- **Hook:** *“We’re all looking for ways to reduce our costs while bringing in additional*

revenues.”

- **Message Objective:** “Investing in a new customer relationship management system will help us in both ways.”
- **Three Points Story:** “The new CRM will do three things for us: 1. Save us time. 2. Save us money. 3. Raise our profile with key clients.”



Think about what problem your audience is trying to solve.

### PROPOSING TO OPEN A NEW OFFICE IN COLUMBUS, OH

- **Hook:** “We know that the board wants to find ways to expand our reach into the Midwest.”
- **Message Objective:** “Opening an office in Columbus, Ohio will position us to grow the business in the middle of the country.”
- **Three Points Story:** “The new office in Columbus will do three things for us: 1. Position us to grow in the Midwest. 2. Allow us to build off an existing client-base. 3. Generate a positive ROI in two years.”

### URGING A MORE PERMISSIVE "WORK-FROM-HOME" POLICY

- **Hook:** “The leadership team is concerned with saving money on real estate costs

*while improving employee productivity.”*

- **Message Objective:** *“A more robust work-from-home policy will reduce costs while improving productivity.”*
- **Three Points Story:** *“A more robust work from home policy with do three things:  
1. Reduce our real estate costs. 2. Improve employee morale. 3. Improve our ability to recruit great employees.”*



*Give a quick summary. And you're good to go!*

Variations on this approach can work for virtually any message. The most important concept is to boil the message to its three-point essence.

Let's say that you're going to give an update on how a project is progressing.

You could say *“The project is progressing well. There are really three key things we're focusing on right now. 1. What's happened so far. 2. What are the challenges? And 3. What are our plans to remedy the challenges?”*

*Let's say that you're doing a training session.*

*“Ultimately, we know that everyone here is trying to learn how to grow their sales results. So let's talk about what works. 1. Reaching out to existing customers with new ideas. 2. Getting Referrals. 3. Making cold calls.”*

# CHAPTER FOUR

## News Anchors Tell Tight Stories

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*Leave time for Q&A.*

Once you've given this quick overview, you've laid out the basic story. You've done your job as a "news anchor" to give a nice, tight summary. From there, you can go into detail with each point, providing data, stories and taking questions about each point.

### VIRTUAL PRESENTATIONS REQUIRE A TIGHT STORY



[Click here to view the video.](#)

**ON** television, long-winded interviewees rarely get invited back. Indeed, if you happen to catch a bad interview on a news program, watch the news anchor. You may notice him or her starting to get a little antsy, nodding her head and trying to politely interrupt.

That's because, on video, long answers lose people while short answers build credibility.

Albert Einstein said, "If you can't say it simply, you don't understand it well enough." Indeed, a tight answer says, "This person is an expert. She knows her stuff."

So when you're on video calls (or at any time for that matter), try to give short answers. If your answer is longer than 15 seconds, you should have a timer start to go off in your head, counting down to 30 seconds. Anything longer seems like an eternity.

### SO HOW DO WE DO WELL WITH Q&A?

**STEP 1: Prepare for Q&A by making a list.** When you see a great interviewee, they have almost always spent time thinking about the possible questions. And



*"If you can't say it simply, you don't know it well enough."*

*– Albert Einstein*

the fact is that you can anticipate most of the questions that you're going to get.

If you're talking about the progress of a software installation project, you know that you're going to get questions on schedule, key challenges, budget, etc. Write out a list.

1. Are we staying within the budget?
2. What are the biggest challenges we're facing?
3. What is undermining the schedule?
4. What sort of training will we need once we're done?

There's a famous quote often attributed to Henry Kissinger, the Secretary of State under President Richard Nixon, who allegedly once opened a press conference by saying, "Does anyone have any questions for my answers?"

The point is that you can anticipate most of the questions you'll get. If you want to be great at Q&A, spend some time prepping for the questions.

### **SO HOW DO WE KEEP ANSWERS TIGHT?**

The most important idea here is to give the answer immediately in your first sentence and then explain for a sentence or two. Don't start with the background



*Anticipate their questions. Plan your answers.*

and then build to the answer.

Let's say that the question is "How much will this project cost?"

Here's a bad answer: "Well, the problem we're having is getting competitive quotes. We've put the project out for bid to three consulting firms. One of them said it would cost \$100,000. The second quoted us \$150,000. We haven't heard yet from the third firm. But we're confident the cost will come in around \$125,000."

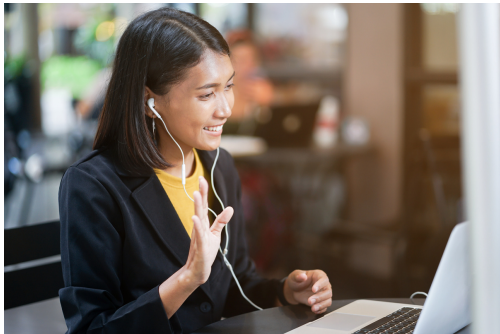
Here's a good answer: "We expect the project to cost about \$125,000. We're still getting quotes from the consulting firms. We'll have a final number in a couple of weeks."

Here's a trick to help you keep your answers tight. Take a piece of the question and use it to start the answer.

Question: "What the biggest challenge we're going to face on this project?"

Answer: "The biggest challenge we're going to face is . . ."

Question: "Why haven't more of our team members adopted this approach?"



Take a piece of the question and use it to start the answer.

Answer: “More team members haven’t adopted the approach because . . .”

Question: “Why is this taking so long?”

Answer: “It’s taking so long because . . .”

By taking a piece of the question and using it to start your answer, you signal that you have heard the question and that you’re answering straight away.

Short answers don’t mean you can never go into the weeds.

A lot of people worry that short answers are too superficial. And a 15 - 30 second answer at times may be too brief. There certainly are times when a question calls for a deeper dive. My point is that you shouldn’t start with the deeper dive. Start with the bigger, more general answer, then go deep if that’s what the client wants.

If the client asks for more detail, then go into more detail. Let the client tell you when they want to go into the weeds.



*Let the client tell you when they want to go into the weeds.*

### Q&A IN A VIRTUAL WORLD



[Click here to view the video.](#)

**GREAT** team presentations don't just inform; they convey a sense of team chemistry—an air of camaraderie and connection with one another and the audience. But how do you do that when the team members are all remote?

Your model should be a news team covering a hurricane.

If you watch hurricane coverage on the news, you'll see one anchor in the studio and several reporters out in the field. The anchor gives an overview of what's happening. She gives the “big picture” story. Then she hands it off to the reporters in the field. Usually, those handoffs are laced with cordial banter to show a sense of teamwork.

That's the same model you should use for virtual team presentations. One person on your team is the “anchor” laying out the general story. Everyone else takes a piece of the story and elaborates before turning back over to the news anchor or another of the other team members. But it should be a well-choreographed dance.



*It should be a well-choreographed dance.*

### THE TEAM SHOULD TELL A SINGLE STORY

One way to convey team chemistry virtually as well as in-person is to have your entire team tell a single story. And a great way to do that is to use the simple formula we outlined in chapter four. Start with a hook that details the big issue faced by the audience. Then give a message objective, a one-sentence “what’s it all about” statement. Then provide a three-point preview.

Before turning it over to one of the team members to discuss point one, it’s a good idea to introduce the team members and explain their role in the presentation.

Here is how it might sound.

- **Hook:** *“We’re all looking for ways to reduce our costs while bringing in additional revenues.”*
- **Message Objective:** *“Investing in a new customer relationship management system will help us in both ways.”*
- **Three Points Story:** *“The new CRM will do three things for us: 1. Save us time. 2. Save us money. 3. Raise our profile with key clients.”*
- **Introduce the Team:** *“Before we get into the three points, let me introduce the*



*Have your entire team tell a single story.*

*team. Janet is going to talk about how the system will save us time. She is a sales rep who has been testing the system. She'll be able to attest to time savings. Carl is from the finance organization. He is going to talk about how the system will save us money. And Andrea is the VP of sales and marketing. She is going to talk about how we expect the system to raise our profile with key clients."*



*Detail why each person is the right one to talk about that point.*

Notice that when we introduce the team members we detail why each person is the right one to talk about that point. The goal is to show that you've put together a team that makes sense. That conveys team chemistry.

### **EACH TEAM MEMBER SHOULD START BY RESTATING THE KEY POINT.**

The team "role players" should always start their sections by re-stating the key point. This reinforces that the entire team is telling a single story.

So, let's say that Janet is going to take point 1: The CRM will save money. Here is how she should start:

"So let's talk about the first point, 'Saving time.'"

“From there, Janet can bring her message to life in any number of ways with data, stories, business examples, etc. But if everyone starts their message the same way, you get a sense of team chemistry.

### HANDOFFS SHOULD BE FRIENDLY

One of the hardest things to do in a virtual environment is to convey camaraderie. In person you can look at your colleagues and tease one another, smile at one another, and otherwise just find ways to connect. On video calls, it’s much harder because we’re all so separated.



What to do? We’re going to take another cue from the news anchors and their infamous “happy talk.” You may remember “happy talk,” like those little conversations between news anchors and reporters that signal transitions.

*“Great story John. I see that you really enjoyed judging the biggest pumpkin contest at the fair. Now let’s go to Janet, who is at the courthouse.”*

Or whatever.

The point is that they have little bits of conversation that facilitate transitions. We should do the same thing during virtual team presentations. A good transition

*A good transition should feel natural, yet intentional.*

should tee up the next speaker and show camaraderie.

“So now I’d like to turn it over to my good friend and colleague of 25 years, Carl, who will talk us through how we’re going to save money.”

Yes, it’s superficial. And maybe it seems a bit silly. But these little transitions actually tell your listeners that you guys all know each other, you like each other, and that you’ve actually taken the time to prepare. —That’s important.

### Q&A SHOULD BE PLANNED

Few things are worse on a virtual presentation than botched Q&A. Two of you are trying to answer the same question, and because of the technology, your voices are blocked out. You come across like the Keystone Cops (if you’re too young, look ‘em up). If you’re all trying to answer questions together, you’re going to look horrible.

### THE KEY IS PREPARATION PLUS A QUARTERBACK

The first step is simply to write down all the possible questions that you might



*Let the expert answer questions about their areas of expertise.*

receive as a team. Come up with a list of 10 - 20 possible questions. Then allocate them among the team members. Then practice giving tight answers consistent with our discussion in chapter five.

Once you've agreed on who will take which questions, most of the problems of conflicting with others on the team should fall away. After all, you should've talked through all the questions and who will take which question.

But there is still the possibility of confusion. What if a surprise question arises? Then the quarterback (usually the person who kicks off the presentation) does the handoff. "So that's a question that would be best handled by our financial expert, Carl."

Beware of Bolt Tightening!

Bolt tightening is the tendency to want to improve on the answers of our teammates. "If it's ok, I'd like to add something to what Carl just said . . ." That's bolt-tightening: coming along and trying to tighten the bolt/answer just a bit. The problem with bolt tightening is that it undermines team chemistry. When you jump in to clarify a team member's answer, you're suggesting that his answer



*Support your teammates. Don't undermine their answer.*

# CHAPTER SIX

## Team Presentations: One Anchor and Several Reporters 39



*Don't undermine, but add your take (if it feels necessary).*

wasn't good enough.

That doesn't mean that you can't ever jump in. But the best way to do that is to do so after an invitation. "That's my take on that issue. Perhaps my colleague Jack would like to add something." That sort of handoff makes you seem like a strong team.

And that's a good thing.

### TRANSITIONS IN A TEAM PRESENTATION



[Click here to view the video.](#)

**MANY** of us think that we can just deliver a PowerPoint presentation over Zoom. But no one likes to sit in front of their computer and hear a voice narrate a bunch of slides. Most PowerPoint presentations already suck. On Zoom, they're even worse.

What's the answer? A news interview format. We need to transform webinars from PowerPoint presentations to a business version of the television news interview program. Think about a news anchor interviewing guests on topics of interest.

The beauty of video calls is that we can actually improve on this news format. Platforms like Zoom, WebEx, and Microsoft Teams allow us to bring the audience into the conversation and make it a truly interactive and fun experience.

### **A SIMPLE FORMAT THAT WORKS**

We know that this works because we do it twice a month.

Here is just one webinar that we did as part of our series on communication skills. The topic was "How to Sell Ideas to the C-Suite." The webinar was an interview with Lee Rivas, CEO of Revint Solutions. Lee had also been the CEO of the health



*Have a conversation with your audience.*

care and public sector business at LexisNexis Risk Solutions and Elsevier. He was a true expert in selling ideas to the C-Suite.

Let's start with what this webinar could have been but wasn't. It could have been a PowerPoint presentation with Lee detailing his ideas. But as mentioned, no one likes PowerPoint in regular meetings. They like it even less online.

So, we went with a highly interactive interview format. I interviewed Lee while at the same time soliciting questions from the more than 200 participants. It was a highly interactive and very successful webinar.

Here is a format that you can use for your next webinar.

### **STEP 1: WARM EVERYONE UP WITH QUESTIONS**

Get the conversation started while people are signing in to the call. Get people to start talking about the topic at hand. For the Lee Rivas webinar here is what I said as people were signing in.

"While we're waiting to start, please go to the chatbox and answer the following question: What is the biggest challenge we face when we have to sell ideas to the



*Get people chatting from the get-go.*

C-Suite?” The “Biggest challenge” question is always good and usually provokes a broad range of answers. As people type in their answers, we ask participants to unmute and explain their points of view. This early interaction establishes a “culture of the meeting” making clear that we expect people to participate.

### **STEP 2: WELCOME EVERYONE AND INTRODUCE THE "EXPERT"**

I should point out that the expert can be anyone that is going to be talking about the topic. So if your webinar is on how to boost sales and you would normally do a PowerPoint yourself, just get someone to interview you and you can be the expert.



*Anyone can be an expert.*

### **STEP 3: START THE INTERVIEW**

Keep your questions open-ended and general. “So tell me, what are the keys to selling ideas to the C-Suite.” And then let the person talk.



*The more people involved, the better.*

### STEP 4: SOLICIT LOTS OF QUESTIONS FROM THE AUDIENCE

“If you have questions, don’t hesitate to go to the chatbox and ask!” And when someone asks a question, be sure to stop and take it. Even better, ask the person to unmute and ask it live. The more people involved, the better.

For your next webinar, dump the PowerPoint and make it an interactive news program. You’ll be amazed at how much fun you’ll have. More importantly, your audience will love it.

**SO** how do news anchors seem so smooth? One reason is practice. Prior to going on air, many news anchors get their scripts, review them, and practice saying them out loud.



Indeed, one of the simplest things that we can all do to come across well on video calls is simply to practice our messages.

Indeed, a five-minute practice session is one of the easiest things we can all do to become great communicators.


Once you write out your three points, practice saying them out loud. Even better, record yourself saying them into a camera. Play it back and see how you look.

Do the same thing with Q&A. Practice answering questions on camera and see how you look.

Remember that presenting virtually is an art that is both spoken and visual. If you want to be good at it, you need to practice.

And if you do practice, you're going to get good very quickly.

*Practice in the mirror. Pay attention to your facial expressions and body language.*



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