

How to Improve Your Presentation Skills for Video Conferencing

By Gary Genard



You're conducting business online now. Do you know how to look and sound good? Here's how to improve your presentation skills for video conferencing!

The coronavirus or COVID-19 has changed business worldwide. Suddenly, we're forced to conduct business online far more than we used to. And that means a *lot more* video meetings and conferences.

Have you adjusted your presentation skills to meet the challenge?

If you're feeling isolated and a little anxious about video-based communication, paradoxically, you're not alone. Yet it still helps to know how to achieve presence and charisma, even when you're speaking online.

Here are two ways to come across more naturally and with greater impact when a webcam becomes your best friend!



Are You Coming Across Online the Right Way?

I recently read the following opinion concerning how we all need to communicate online now: that doing so is “somewhere between absence and presence.” This is nonsense. Why would you need to be present online any less than you do in person? The main difference between the two is that one is electronically transmitted. Other than that, you still need the presence that comes from authenticity. It’s may not be stage presence. Let’s call it instead “*Video Presence*.”

Can you learn this type of presence? Of course. When it comes to video-based coaching and training, we have marvelous tools today in any of the online meeting platforms. I have been using the Pro version of Zoom since before the pandemic, since I coach people from all over the world. One of the nice things about video meetings (and my clients have been commenting on this lately) is how well it fosters in-real-time conversations when you have no other option.

So if you want to communicate strongly in video meetings, don’t think of it as an “absence” that the coronavirus is forcing upon you. Consider, for one thing, that most of the time you’re very close to your screen—and so is everybody else. That’s actually a form of intimacy. (I won’t even mention how comfortable wearing your jammies is when no one can see it!)

Here’s another way to make your presentation skills pay off in a video conference: accept how easy it is to deal with your slides while you’re speaking. Instead of splitting your attention between listeners and the display screen—and as some presenters do, talking to the slides instead of the audience—it’s all now literally at your fingertips.

It should be even easier, then, to pay attention to your slides and listeners at the same time, since you’re already looking at both! It’s one way to know how to stay focused when you’re speaking. If the camera on your laptop or phone intimidates you, see my next point, on the next page.



How to Be at Your Best in Video Conferencing

I'll admit that for many people, speaking into a camera with no one else around seems odd and uncomfortable. It may be hard to motivate yourself for, say, a keynote if you can't see your audience. This problem can be magnified if you're presenting a webinar, when you have to speak for a long time before the relief of someone "raising their hand" to ask a question.

Here's the advice I give to clients who are going to appear in remote TV or radio interviews. Until recently, that meant politicians, diplomats, and sports commentators, and occasionally, a CEO, lawyer, or medical professional. But today, that means a lot of us who wouldn't have been speaking in this way before the current crisis.

Let's face it: it's a challenge for anybody to relate to a television camera, webcam, or radio microphone (or phone link) when there's no one else around. The thought that there will be 10s, scores, thousands, or even millions of people eventually watching or listening certainly doesn't help! So I recommend this: imagine that you're speaking to someone whose opinion you value.

That person might be a colleague, spouse, sibling, mentor, or your wise uncle. It should be a person you *really* would like to hear say, "Dave, that was terrific. You really hit it out of the park." When you imagine you're talking to that person (instead of a recording device), you'll come across at your best—as you would *in a natural conversation*.

All good public speaking is conversational. It doesn't matter if it takes place in a boardroom, your customer's office, a convention hall, or via video conferencing.