

Tips for a Successful Meeting

Tips for Great Meetings

Make sure you have the video address number(s) of the site you want to call or that the site is listed in a directory.

Set your camera presets before you start your call so that you can quickly use them during the call. Depending on the system you call, you may also be able to use the presets stored on the far-site system.

Set up and test sharing your content, such as, PowerPoints or any desktop presentations, beforehand.

Tips for Great Video

Avoid wearing bright colors, all-light or all-dark clothing, or very “busy” patterns (such as small checks or narrow stripes). Light pastels and muted colors look the best on the screen.

If there are windows in the room, close any drapes or blinds. Daylight is a variable light source and can conflict with interior room lighting.

Use natural gestures when you speak.

When adjusting your cameras during the meeting, try to fill the screen as much as possible with people rather than with the table, chairs, walls, or the floor.

Tips for Great Audio

Speak in your normal voice without shouting.

Ask the people at the other site if they can hear you. Have them introduce themselves so you can be sure that you can hear them.

Since the audio may have a very slight delay, you may want to pause briefly for others to answer you or to make comments.

As with any meeting, try to limit side conversations.

Preparing a Videoconference

Treat the remote audience as if they were in the room.

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Schedule, plan, and practice in advance.

Smile when on camera.

Talk slowly and to the camera lens.

Connect the conference 30 minutes prior to the start.

Be aware of body language.

On the day of the conference, a connection will begin 15 to 30 minutes before start time. If possible, use this time for presenters to experience and practice videoconferencing techniques.

It is highly recommended that you use an experienced "video super-users" if you want to have a professional look and feel to your conference. A super-user can help with setup of the camera and microphone(s), pan the camera for a more interesting presentation, and to trouble shoot minor problems that might occur during the conference.

It can also be very helpful to have a trained or experienced person at each of the remote sites. Someone at each site needs to at least know how to mute the microphone and possibly pan the camera. Both of these are very simple tasks to learn.

If you are planning on using videoconferencing periodically, you should seriously consider training your own video super-user.

Note that all videoconferencing sites are not created equal. Most sites have a single camera and a single monitor. Multiple microphones should be made available for videoconferences with larger groups of participants.

If there are not too many participants, it is often helpful to have self-introductions at the beginning of the conference. If this is not possible due to the size of the audience, it is recommended that a "host" at each site speak briefly about those who are in attendance. This helps them become more familiar with the equipment (such as muting the microphone) and will help identify trouble with the system.

The host at the presenting site needs to actively attempt to bring in the other sites into the discussion throughout the session. This also helps identify problems with the system. Each speaker should also use this technique. This can be accomplished several times during the conference by using a "role call" approach to see if each site has questions. Remind participants to use microphones when asking questions so that all sites can hear. Remind all sites to mute their microphones when they are not involved in the discussion, otherwise, local conversations will be heard by all.

Tips for Presenters

Look into the camera, rather than the monitor, when speaking to remote sites. If not, it may appear on their monitor that you are looking above, below or to the side.

Use natural gestures when you speak, but try to avoid too much movement, such as swiveling in your chair or twirling your pen. Try to wear both light and dark clothing. Wearing all light or all dark clothing can trick the camera's automatic brightness control. Avoid very "busy" patterns on clothing, such as small checks or narrow stripes. These can cause distracting visual effects on the screen. Avoid bright colors. Light pastels and muted colors look better on the screen than very intense colors or bright white. Keep jewelry to a minimum.

Don't place papers or objects on in the way of the microphone. Don't rustle papers or tap on the microphone. If possible, ask frequent questions of all sites to make everyone feel involved in the session.

Organize materials in advance. Have all handouts delivered to all sites prior to the conference. Paper copies for the document camera work better than transparencies. Use at least 16 or 18 point bold typeface in landscape mode for camera documents. If you plan on broadcasting a videotape presentation, preview it first over a videoconferencing system. Some videotapes do not lend themselves well to this type of broadcasting, primarily due to the amount of movement recorded.

Interactive Videoconferencing Etiquette

Know your Audience

Can you imagine a presenter that ignores the audience? It happens all of the time in videoconferencing. It takes practice and conscious effort to treat the remote audience just as if they were in the same room. One very effective technique is to ask questions of the remote audience every five minutes. Another is to welcome them to the conference and invite their participation.

A Smile Brightens the Room

In videoconferencing, body language is a silent but very loud communication channel. Movements become overemphasized onscreen. Participants must be especially conscious of their movements and where they are looking. They are magnified on the remote screens.

This is Interactive Videoconferencing--- Not T.V.

Pay attention to the remote speaker. Don't be discourteous and look away or worse yet, have a conversation with someone in your room. It is no different than being in the same room. Your actions are seen (and felt) by the presenter.

Schedule in Advance

Make sure the sites' rooms and coordinators are all available for your meeting. Visitors to the sites will also appreciate it if the receptionist is expecting them.

Technical Issue

It is okay, even welcome, to interrupt if you are unable to see or hear adequately. Otherwise, it is assumed that all is well.