

Body Language 86

Zoom Boom 3- Distractions

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This is the third of four short articles highlighting the differences from in-person body language and body language when using a virtual platform.

Distractions during a virtual meeting are inevitable, but there are many steps you can take to minimize them.

The first rule is to keep yourself on mute when you are not actually talking. That way, if the phone rings or the dog barks, the other people in the meeting

will not be aware, and you will not have caused an interruption.

If you are participating from home, let other people in your house know you are having a meeting or have some kind of signal so other people do not inadvertently cause an interruption. In our home, we shut the door to our office as a signal we are busy and do not want to be disturbed.

Try to anticipate your needs for the meeting time. Go to the bathroom, if possible, before starting a meeting and make sure you have some water or coffee available so you do not need to get up and leave the room. Have any props you want to use at hand so you don't have to go off camera to hunt them down during the meeting.

Plan to arrive at the meeting 5-10 minutes early so you can deal with any technical challenges from your end before the meeting starts. It is unfair to others to arrive 5 minutes late and then have a problem getting your microphone to work properly. Check things out yourself before the meeting starts.

If you have a camera, it is best to use it unless bandwidth is a problem. Some people would rather not show their face because they might be having a bad hair day. Keep in mind that when people cannot see your face at all, it is rather like a conference call for them. You may have the advantage of being able to see the other faces, but they cannot see you.

Make sure you allow roughly equal air time for all participants if it is a meeting format. Don't forget to include people who are phoning in. Just because you cannot see their faces does not mean you can ignore them. A webinar format usually implies that the person or panel in charge will be doing most of the communicating. Just be sensitive to the need for others to have adequate airtime and don't monopolize the conversation.

A huge distraction for any meeting is a phenomenon called a "Zoom Bomb." This is where someone who is not part of the meeting breaks into the format and puts up some obscene or hurtful information. I have experienced this, and it is completely disruptive to the meeting.

Zoom has done a good job of providing tools to prevent a meeting from being bombed. They are a little more cumbersome than to operate without the tools, but they are well worth using because of the magnitude of the hurt a bomb can cause. Here is a list of the tools available at this time.

1. Have people register for the meeting, so you know who to expect.
2. Always use a system generated meeting address and a password. You can select any password you wish.
3. Enable the "waiting room" feature so that people do not enter the meeting without the host giving them access.
4. Disallow screen share for all participants to start out, You can enable all to share the screen once the meeting is locked.
5. Once people have all arrived, lock the meeting. This will prevent anyone else from entering.
6. The host or co-host can dismiss any disruptive person, so be prepared to use that feature if need be.
7. Keep your software up to date.

If you use care, the meeting disruptions will be minimal. The few that do happen will be cause for laughter rather than frustration.

This is a part in a series of articles on "Body Language" by Bob Whipple "The Trust Ambassador."