

Body Language 87

Zoom Boom 4- Administration

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

There are lots of administrative considerations that can add to the quality of your virtual meeting.

First of all, if you are the host or co-host of the meeting, recognize that your view is different from the participants.

It is a good idea to have a second computer within eyesight where you are logged in as a participant (mute the mic and disable the live video so you show up as a gray rectangle.)

Having a second computer allows you to see the screen experience that all participants see. Often when doing screen share, breakouts, or polling, you can know if something is not working for the participants and fix it quickly.

It is a good idea to have someone serve as the co-host, but make sure this person is familiar with all of the controls. The co-host allows you, as the facilitator of the meeting, to pay full attention to the individuals on the screen and not be tied up mentally trying to follow the chat or question areas. Also, the co-host can accept people who are waiting in the waiting room.

I picked up a neat trick a couple weeks ago that really works well. As facilitator of the meeting, I would always play the role of “host,” and I would let someone else be the co-host. I found that it is better to reverse roles and let the second in command be the “host” while I was designated the co-host.

The reason reversing roles works to my advantage is that only the host can assign people to the specific breakout room for them. All other functions can be handled equally well by the co-host. If I am the host, then I have to scramble around after people

enter the meeting assigning them to the breakout rooms. Having my second in command take care of that task while I pay full attention to the participants works much better for me.

There is a method of preassigning people to breakout rooms, but I found that to be difficult because you never know how many no-shows there are going to be. When I use breakout rooms, it is often for role play exercises where each individual has a different set of instructions.

If the participants for your meeting are spread out geographically, you need to deal with the issue of time zones. Try to balance the timing of meetings so that certain members of the group are not always forced to participate at an inconvenient time.

Sharing your screen helps the quality of meetings greatly, but do take the time to practice and get used to this feature. I find it best to not allow all participants to share their screen because it can get a bit frantic going from one person to the next. I avoid that problem by disallowing all participants from sharing their screens, at least while the meeting is getting started. You can always enable screen share later in the session if that would be helpful.

One detail to remember in screen share is that when you go to share a screen, you need to check the button labeled “Share Computer Sound” if you will be showing a video. Failing to do so this will mean that the participants will not be able to hear the sound track.

The annotate button at the top is helpful to let people be engaged in the presentation. It allows participants to type messages on the screen or put little icons, like hearts or X's. Play around with the annotate feature before using it live with a group. Familiarize yourself with how things work.

One precaution with annotation is that you need to clear all notations before advancing to another slide or the current annotation will be superimposed on the new slide.

It is best to have someone other than the facilitator of the meeting monitoring the chat room and the questions function. Dialog can become a big distraction if you are simultaneously trying to provide the content. For larger events you may want to have two helpers: a moderator to handle the questions and chat and a technical expert to handle any possible glitches.

I hope these tips have been helpful to you. I have only been doing this work for about 5 weeks, so there are probably a lot more tricks I need to learn in the future. Zoom is quite helpful with training, and there are a number of YouTube videos to explain the various features of this tool. I believe the new “normal” for how we work will include a lot more remote meetings, so it is best to invest some energy in learning how to do it well.

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

