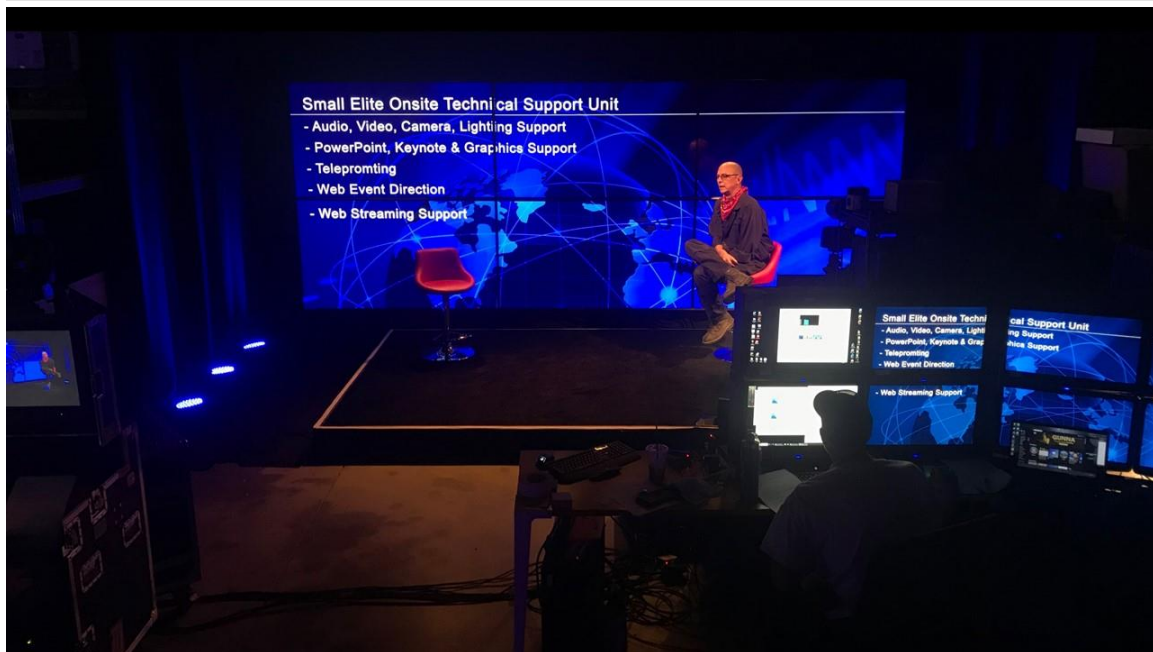




Face Value



**Bringing the Power of
Face-to-Face Communications
To Our Virtual World**

**By
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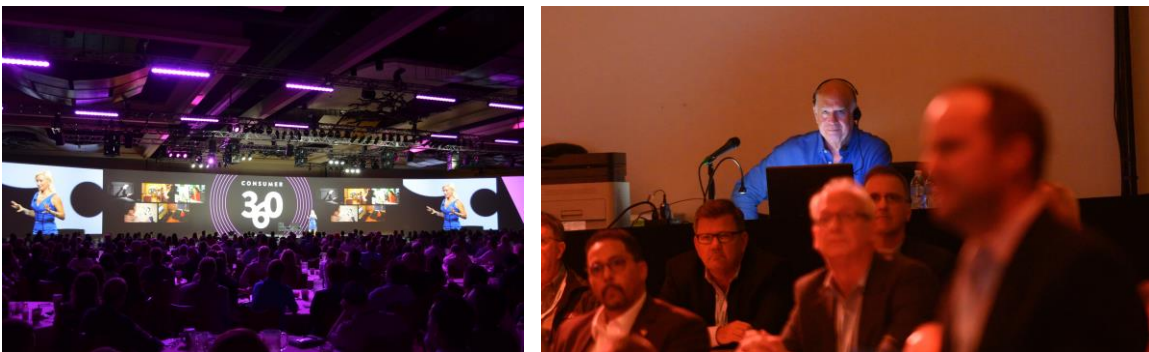
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Introduction

Face Value

Human beings come equipped with a factory setting to seek real, not virtual, relationships. Solid bonds of friendship develop when we are together and contribute to our health, help us learn and remember, extend our lives and foster a sense of happiness. Not just any social networks will do: humans need real, face-to-face, encounters with others in our world.



Since 1986 I have been producing *live* meetings and events from small start-up software companies to large global corporations and associations. We produce the *show*. From the impressive staging and lighting in the general session room, to technically perfect breakout sessions and demos. From set-up, through 2-5 days of show, to strike, we turn empty hotel ballrooms into memorable events for our client's customers, employees and other stakeholders.

Until the pandemic, I loved sitting in the back of a ballroom, on the tech riser, watching speakers connect with their audiences. I have seen impactful leaders giving memorable speeches, leading the way in competitive industries, making tough decisions and urging their organization on during challenging times. I enjoy seeing people receive their awards and watch the audience rise to salute their accomplishments. I have seen our clients grow, innovate, inspire and turn their companies into world-class organizations.

In her 2014 book, *The Village Effect*, award-winning author and psychologist Susan Pinker¹ uses the field of neuroscience and moving personal stories to demonstrate how face-to-face contact is crucial for learning, happiness, resilience and a long life. Pinker explores the impact of face-to-face contact from cradle to grave revealing surprising findings about human relationships in a digital age. In the process, *The Village Effect* offers a new way to think about how we educate our children, meet partners and conduct business.

Fast forward to today...because of Covid 19, we have been conducting business and other communications virtually, with the dramatic, instantaneous increase in the use of our cell phones, home computers, or iPads, connecting us to Zoom and other video conferencing services.

As things begin to open up, we may segue into small, local meetings that will typically be shorter than usual with strict social distancing guidelines. These live meetings will often be coupled with a virtual audience--creating a **hybrid event**, so out of town attendees and others, who can't, or won't attend, can also participate.

We will then segue into mid-sized meetings with some people flying in and additional guidelines focusing on safe travel. These meetings may last 1-2 full days and we will begin to see some reduction in social distancing guidelines, and hopefully, no need to wear masks. Even so, for some time, some attendees will still only participate virtually.

Finally, we will get back to the typical 2-3 day meeting with larger audiences and air travel. Certain restrictions will be lifted, but again, some people will still not want, or be able to fly, and some will only opt to participate virtually.

¹ Susan Pinker, *The Village Effect: How Face-to-Face Contact Can Make Us Healthier, Happier And Smarter* (New York: Random House, 2014)

The challenge facing today's business leaders, managers and event planners is how, through virtual or hybrid meetings do we best communicate to give our organizations, the education, direction, hope and motivation needed. *Chicago Tribune* writer Rex W. Huppke notes "a funny thing about people is they seem to respond best when you treat them like people. The fact remains that human-to-human interaction is most effective when performed in a sincerely human way."² This human way of connecting -- the person-to-person way -- consists of behaviors learned from our first days on Earth. While these should be very natural to us, the digital age and the rise of the Coronavirus has created a reliance on less natural and more virtual communications. The time has come to incorporate the value of human ways of connecting, into our virtual world, so we can communicate with what I call **Face Value**.

Face Value is taking the lessons learned, and the benefits of face-to-face communications and incorporating them into virtual communications and media. Some may ask, 'why do we even need these meetings and events, can't we just send an email or talk on the phone?' The answer is no, if you want the best chance to:

- Impactfully inform, persuade and encourage an audience
- Recognize outstanding performance
- Gather honest feedback
- Build trust with employees, prospects, customers or other stakeholders

In Face Value we will review the key building blocks of face-to-face communications as well as concepts developed by neurologists and psychologists--and offer ways to incorporate them into your big and small, live or virtual communications.

Welcome to Face Value!

² Rex W. Huppke, "Start the New Year Focusing on Sincere Relationships at Work." *Chicago Tribune*, Jan. 5, 2015, www.chicagotribune.com (accessed Feb. 8, 2015).

Chapter I

Matching Your Audience's Expectations

This idea applies not only to business communications but to most of our communications and relationships. If I am leading the virtual conference say to yourself, "if I am sitting in a live audience, or, behind my home office desk, what will make this live meeting, or virtual conference, a worthwhile experience where I teach something new and open my audience's mind to a new way of thinking. First you will need to *walk in your audience's shoes*. That will help you produce events that will effectively and impactfully convey your messages.

Being in the production business you would think I was a tech geek. I'm not. The core of my success at acquiring and keeping clients has been developing client relationships, creating trust and managing expectations. Helen Morris Brown, speaking at a TEDex talk on ***The Psychology of Communicating Effectively in a Digital World*** makes the point clearly--to be successful in business today you must match the expectations of your stakeholders. Take a look:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3aPaRWUqO-w>

"Mutual trust is created when things go according to plan. There are actually neuro transmitters in our brains that make us feel good when expectations are met."

For example, when a client sends a text with a request--respond as soon as you can, even if it is just to tell them that you are working on it. Treat texting like you are speaking face-to-face, conversational and exact. Your client will feel acknowledged and rewarded. You will be on your way to meeting their expectations and establishing trust.

Whether your communications are in person, or virtual, remember these things:

- 1) **“Walk in your client’s/customer’s/member’s/stakeholder’s shoes”** – What you say matters--but only if it matters to your audience.
- 2) **Ask for input** – Match your audience’s expectations by asking them what are your challenges and what would they like to talk about?
- 3) **“Walk the talk”** - Growing up on the south side of Chicago, you learn to do what you say you are going to do. When you do that, and surround yourself with people who do that, *life is good*...and your meetings, events and communications will reflect that.
- 4) **There is almost always an element of selling** - Whether you are communicating to a new prospect, an audience or convincing upper management, matching their expectations is critical to your success.
 - A. Clearly lay out your scope of recommendations/products/services and expected outcomes
 - B. Help them visualize what you are saying. Utilize photos, drawings, floorplans, spreadsheets and detailed budgets.
 - C. List the budget for each option separately as this will engage your audience in the decision-making process.

Matching Expectations to Develop Trust Tips

- Always tell the truth-even when it hurts
- If you do not know the answer, say so
- Never miss deadlines
- Being good at your job is important...being trusted is essential

Summary: The Face Value of *Matching Your Audience’s Expectations* is that when things go according to plan, everyone feels rewarded, trust is created and objectives are achieved.

Chapter II

Connection Before Content

Humans are hardwired to threat and reward. If attendees feel threatened, or uncomfortable about what is going to happen, their defenses are raised. How do we remove these obstacles and create an environment to foster a sense of trust, collaboration, creativity and the search for solutions?



Before the pandemic, live meetings were a great place to create trust. For most events, clients or sponsors would normally begin by hosting a welcome reception. I am amazed how this combination of food, a nice setting and a bar can make *good* events, *great*. This is where the connections start. Old relationships are renewed, new friendships begin and employees or members can get to know your leaders in a relaxed setting. Presidents and vice presidents should not hunker down together. They need to become gracious hosts and hostesses and work the room. Having audience members meet one or more speakers in person ahead of time is powerful.

Today, to develop connections virtually and here are ideas to develop trust:

- **Certainty:** The virtual conference, needs a logical information flow as it helps people predict what is coming next. Pre-event communications should include an agenda and background information to begin matching your audience's expectations to what is about to occur.

- **Status:** Make your audience feel important. Make them feel comfortable so that when asked “who has any suggestions” your audience responds. When people feel comfortable and confident, they are more apt to speak up. Then their ideas, thoughts, questions and constructive criticisms flow-- and that is when the *golden nuggets come*, those things that can make or break, your next quarter and your organization.

- **Structure:** The leader should present a coherent content flow to include:
 - o Starting and finishing on time
 - o Understanding your audience’s challenges and expectations, and matching your agenda to meet it
 - o Giving others a chance to speak
 - o Allowing for different points of view
 - o Allowing time for discussion, polling and Q&A

- **Next Steps and Action Plans:** Help your audience create their own objectives by providing the facts they need to decide for themselves what their objectives should be, and how they are going to achieve them. This is an effective method for increasing performance because objectives set by your participants themselves are more likely to be achieved.

Connection Tips

- Get on the virtual session early
- Know your audience
- Cultivate a reputation for being reliable and hardworking
- Do not promise what you cannot deliver
- Treat everyone in the organization with respect

Summary: The Face Value of *Connecting before Content* is that it opens up your audience to what you are presenting, and frees them-up to create innovative, new ideas.

Chapter III

Context & Education Through Engagement

Neurologists tell us that before an attendee can understand what's being presented, or what behavioral change is being sought, information must be organized and put into context.

What is the honest, current status of what we are talking about?

What specifically do we wish to improve?

What are the obstacles (competition, market conditions, money, time etc?) that may prevent us from accomplishing our goals?

The Presentation: How do we bring context and education?

- **Offer Purpose.** Are your presentations clear and succinct? Do the presentations have meaning behind them for your audience? If not, the audience will be inattentive--especially in a virtual conference.
- **Give them the WIFM.** What's In It For Me? What does your audience care about--and why? This information gives you insight on the best way to address the audience and how the information should be delivered. Sending out a survey such as Survey Monkey in advance assists in learning what's important to your audience and what exactly you need to give them. Sending out a survey after the meeting lets you know how you did.
- **Teach.** Good meetings teach the audience something new or remind them of something they have learned before. The core ideas behind teaching – *explanation, reasoning, finding things out, questioning, content evidence and credible authority* should be supported by **storytelling**. A well told, true story can provide an amazing emotional lift that makes the lesson truly memorable. For more complex topics send out background information ahead of time.

- **Encourage Different Points of View.** Well-designed panel discussions, led by a knowledgeable moderator can fully engage the attendee's thought process. Audiences embrace spontaneity and real answers. Questions from the audience can be easily gathered live or digitally.

- **Persuade and Encourage.** Always, and particularly during times of change, people need encouragement, hope and faith in their leaders. Define the messages you need to convey and what you want participants to leave your event thinking, knowing and feeling.

- **Anticipate Tough Questions.** Queries such as; What business are we in? Why are we promoting that product? What value am I getting out of my membership? And so many more that you need to be ready for.

- **Length Matters.** To determine how long a presentation should be within the confines of the overall agenda ask, "is this content relevant to this audience and will they learn something new that they can use?" TED Talks speeches are no longer than 18 minutes. Most speeches at corporate meetings are between 30-45 minutes. A technique that has worked well in live events and now virtual events is to shorten the formal speech and have the MC ask a few questions that leads into a few "pocket" stories (short, impactful story to reinforce a key point) as part of Q & A to make it look spontaneous.

- **Master of Ceremonies.** Often overlooked, but one of the most important elements to any conference is the MC. The MC should be well respected with a good grasp of the content. If live the MC should be comfortable on stage, if virtual the MC should be comfortable on-camera. Their personality and energy is really important in keeping the audience engaged and informed. The true value brought by an astute MC is by their ability to create a content thread, transitioning from one speaker to another, ensuring your messages are received, and setting up the next speaker or topic.

Visually Engage

Consider Design Elements. When planning a virtual event, there are numerous design techniques that should be considered. They can help amplify the delivery of your message and help fully engage an audience.

- **Speech Coaching for Virtual Conferences**

- A. Have a backdrop or setting that is appropriate for the webcast
- B. Look at the camera, not yourself
- C. Maintain good posture
- D. Lean slightly towards the camera
- E. Minimize gesturing
- F. Don't fold your arms
- G. Nod at certain points
- H. Smile genuinely
- I. Limit your movement when listening
- J. Record your presentation and play it back for self-improvement

Media

When presenting in a virtual conference, you can utilize many of the same types of tools and media that you would use in a live meeting. Consider these:

- **Factoids.** Approximately 10 minutes before the meeting starts, as participants are logging onto your webcast, display interesting facts on the screen about your company or industry which can generate excitement and focus your audience on the messages you want to convey. You can also billboard the upcoming speakers and topics.
- **Speaker Support Graphics.** The creation of visuals to accompany presentations is an art and science onto itself. When attendees hear **and** see messages they are much more apt to be remembered. In most cases keep text to a minimum, with a maximum of 6 bullet points per slide and use pictures when possible.



- **Presentation Zen** This technique encourages speakers to eliminate data points-- and simply tell a story. Presentation Zen proponents recommend three rules:
 - 1) Restraint: Resist the urge to cram too much information on each slide.
 - 2) Simplicity: Talk only about what's **really** important.
 - 3) Naturalness: Create an interactive conversation with the audience.



- **Spatial Parallelism.** This concept has been developed by leading designers to present as much relevant information as possible, on as large a scale as possible. Spatial parallelism takes advantage of our capacity to reason with multiple images that appear simultaneously within our eye span. Audiences are able to select, sort, edit, and review information, which keeps them engaged. A picture can be more powerful than a thousand words. Also, in virtual meetings since you are looking at a monitor right in front of you more information can be placed on each slide vs. looking at a screen in a ballroom.

- **Videos.** With new, and even virtual technologies, presenting videos at meetings has become easier and can be very effective. While audiences overall have higher production value expectations, they also are used to seeing videos created by truly amateur videographers, like friends and mom and dad, on their smartphones. Sometimes those amateur productions communicate very effectively!

Here are several ways videos can enhance a virtual conference.

1. Theme Opener
2. Product or Service Video
3. Customer Testimonials
4. Transition Videos
5. Awards Modules
6. Candid Videos

- **Skits.** Recently, Esprit Productions was responsible for three meetings in three weeks. Each was very unique, with different organizations, audiences and subject matter. But all three had something in common--Skits! Here's what each group did to reinforce their messaging and to make it memorable!
 - o Music performance of a re-lyriced popular song
 - o Product Intro - gesture recognition feature presented by a court jester
 - o Software Intro (shipped in a box) sung to the SNL parody "In a Box"

In today's corporate world, sanitized presentations with little risk-taking is the norm. **But, audiences long for something different and fun in their events today.** Messages can have greater impact when packaged in comedy. Skits can even be done virtually, by people in various locations, utilizing technology to bring it all together.

Today we are often presenting to a new generation of tech-savvy, sometimes short attention-span participants, who respond much more positively to anything *other* than another staid corporate presentation. Audiences want to be engaged, entertained and heard--not just addressed.

Other Ways to Capture Your Audience's Attention

- **Make the Information Come Alive.** Support what is being presented and enhance audience absorption of new information through demonstrations and case studies.
- **Small Group Q&A and Discussion.** In live events we have our breakout rooms and in virtual events there are also ways to break the main group into smaller groups. This can increase participation and idea generation.
- **Networking.** While we are in virtual conferences we can still have a coffee break or cocktail hour where networking can take place. Most webcast systems allow us to do split screens where team members can be at home sipping their favorite beverage, and still make new connections.

Summary: The Face *Value of Context and Education* is that it takes your audience through a shared journey of where we are at, what are our challenges are and how together, we can you do something to improve our situation.

Chapter IV

The Role of Humor & Emotion

When you tie together your key messages with emotion, even virtual communications can be very powerful. But how can we make it work virtually?

Every company, every meeting has its “freight” -- the information that has to be communicated and discussed. The challenge is for the planning team to make it interesting enough to get the message across, and remembered.

The objective for most meetings and events is to share information to **achieve behavioral change**. In the process of developing your event, the planners, speakers and the event staff communicate and send thousands of messages -- some overt and others subliminal. The event look, feel and brand, the agenda topics and even the PowerPoint font style all send messages to attendees about what they should learn, feel and do.

The aggregation of all these bits of information shape the event experience. Dr. Richard Ackley believes it is important to consider how the brain processes information to avoid having your meeting fall short of its full potential. He offers several ideas for meeting planners to maximize the participant experience.³

Setting the Stage

According to Ackley, when meeting organizers are planning an event, the first thing they need to ask is: “What do we want the attendees to take away from this event? What behavioral changes do we want them to make? Will our attendees already have what they need to understand the subjects or do we have to provide context for them?”

³ Dr. Richard Ackley, “Learning How the Brain Learns.” Meeting Professional International’s One+ Magazine, May 2011, www.mpiweb.org (accessed Feb. 11, 2015)

With these answers in hand, leadership can organize, sort and present their information so that attendees can see the big picture, assimilate the facts, evaluate their options, focus on the details and embark to complete the task.

Tips for Engaging the Right Side of the Brain

Emotion is a powerful motivator, explains Ackley, and it plays an important role in behavioral change. There are many techniques that can be used to elicit an emotional response electronically. These include:

- **Awe:** Announce a surprise initiative or the rollout of a new product or service. Steve Jobs was known toward the end of his developer’s conferences to say, “*One last thing,*” and then roll out an industry changing new product.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MnrJzXM7a6o>
- **Convey Confidence/Determination/Power/Pride/Positivity:** Coach your presenters to display these key characteristics. It will bring great comfort to your audience knowing they work with such successful people.
- **Energy/Enthusiasm /Excitement/Fun:** Especially with virtual conferences, they need to be well choreographed to have a distinct rhythm that keeps attendees engaged and energized. Develop a well-designed agenda that features inspiring speakers, a productive panel discussion and some surprising moments. People love a show!
- **Honesty:** People need leadership today to be honest. It’s a very tough world out there and we need the truth and facts even if the news isn’t good.
- **Hope:** There’s nothing like a well-delivered presentation, from a sincere speaker, outlining a specific challenge, followed by an inspiring call to action, and, specific plans for overcoming challenges. Don’t be afraid to think big.

- **Humor:** When well executed, humor brings a sense of community to a meeting. At live events we like to use a comedy troupe ala that would come on stage and present skits that were tailored to the audience’s organization. What made their performances so funny would be that the writers would “mine the pain” by focusing on things that recently didn’t go well. It made the organization look good as they admitted their mistakes, it made their executives look even more human and approachable, and the audiences loved the shared experience!

- **Impress:** Provide case studies that demonstrate how an individual or team accomplished a task that overcame a set of challenges and achieved superior results. Offer hands-on opportunities for attendees to interact with new software or products live, or on-line, to experience the benefits for themselves. Hear from your clients live or via video to tell the story of individuals who have benefited from your new products or service.

- **Inspiration:** News stories abound about politicians, sports figures and business executives who have *not* lived up to the qualities people expect from them. Today, more than ever, people want to be inspired. They want something and someone, they can believe in. Motivational speakers are actively participating in virtual conferences now to inspire audiences.

- **Love:** Yes, it’s an unusual word to use in the discussion of organizational events, but one worth considering. It’s very powerful when the stakeholders in your organization can say they love being a part of your organization. How can you make them feel that way?

- **Surprise:** Attendees love surprises. An unexpected gift sent to their home for a virtual conference, perhaps even a bottle of wine for the virtual networking portion of your event can truly make a difference.

Tips for Bringing Emotion to Your Event

- Share the credit for successful projects and make sure everyone's supervisor knows about their team's contributions.
- Bring the right attitude to your participation in the meeting. It shows, even virtually.
- The golden rule is, stakeholders should feel a sense of reward and recognition equal to, or greater, than their contributions to any meeting or event.
- Hope is a required ingredient for success

Summary: The Face Value of *Humor and Emotion* is that it opens up your audience to take in and remember more of your messages.

Chapter V

Listening & Feedback

To create honesty, openness and a more devoted team of stakeholders, be sure to provide feedback mechanisms—and listen carefully.

How to Listen

All of us believe we know how to listen. After all, listening is a behavior we do every day in nearly every hour we're awake. At the same time, we all regularly experience the problem of talking to people who don't listen well. Hearing is a physical act, listening is the act of hearing with comprehension.

As presenters we must be good listeners, and, we also need to help our event participants be good listeners as well.

Smartphone Apps and Webcasting Tools

One of the most exciting listening tools for events is the smartphone app as they offer **polling and digital Q&A capabilities**. This allows the audience to share their thoughts and concerns in real time and makes them feel actively involved in the event.

Collaboration Through Groupware

Collaboration software for high-performance virtual events can replace the traditional flip-chart. These online tools can elevate participant engagement to a new level during brainstorming sessions. Participant ideas are captured, by topic, as they are entered into the cloud. Once the brainstorming is complete, the group can review and discuss all of the ideas and prioritize action plans.

Breakout Leader Skills to Maximize Results

- Stimulate group discussion
- Be open to listening and changing your mind
- Consider the suggestions and opinions of everyone
- Suggestion systems work -- use them
- Too much resistance to a new system or change probably means there is something wrong with it as employees usually act in the organization's best interest
- Document and prioritize all ideas
- Strive to demystify problems that seem insurmountable—others have probably found solutions to similar challenges in the past
- Become known for listening, building ideas and not for finding fault

Summary: The Face Value of *Listening & Feedback* is that it builds an environment of trust and receptivity so everyone feels free to speak and becomes a motivated, involved stakeholder.

Chapter VI

The Art of Leadership

A live meeting or virtual conference is the perfect showcase to enhance your audience's perception of their leaders and organization. The purpose of the meeting should be clear to your audience and it should roll out with style, class and personality--while being budget appropriate. One time a member of a hotel staff asked my client at a pre-conference meeting what the theme of the meeting was and what would make this meeting special. The answer he received was, 'a well-run meeting reflects a well-run organization. That's our theme!'"

How to Act Like a Leader

Admired leaders are accessible and outgoing. A meeting leader, especially in a virtual setting needs screen presence. A leader should display the four C's -- competence, confidence, calmness and control to the audience. These qualities can be learned through practice and can make you a more effective leader.

- **Competence**

Nothing helps a leader's image more than a demonstrated sense of competence. Wise meeting leaders never attempt to step in front of a meeting without being well-versed on the subjects to be covered. They prepare by knowing what they should accomplish and what is needed to drive that accomplishment. They understand, in advance, what problems, questions and comments might arise and they are prepared to handle them should they come up.

- **Confidence**

Confidence is in large part a by-product of competence. The leader who knows the subject matter and their company objectives has reason to be confident. Confidence is essentially, an outward expression of an inner sense of security. Confidence and a sense of competence come from feeling secure about the subject at hand. Confidence creates charisma, and that's what people look for in a strong leader. When participants spot it, they, too, feel confident about the outcome of the meeting and that helps improve the quality of their participation.

- **Calmness**

Nervousness before a group stems from two sources. One is the adrenaline that automatically pumps into the bloodstream--it's nature's way of preparing the body to react quickly in a stressful situation. Most speakers feel an anticipatory rush of adrenaline a few minutes before they go on stage. Experience teaches them the adrenaline surge is short lived and typically subsides once they begin. Nervousness in front of a group is not a physical or psychological deficiency. It is a normal, healthy reaction to what is perceived as a stress filled situation.

The second source of nervousness is uncertainty. A leader who does not know their material, or their audience well, may not convey their messages effectively. The obvious antidote is to know the subject thoroughly, take the time to prepare a solid presentation and practice it as many times as necessary.

- **Control**

Leadership, according to President Dwight Eisenhower, is "the art of getting someone else to do something you want done because he wants to do it." In practical terms, this means that a leader must know how to inspire and motivate their people. The meeting leader has two important roles: moderator and facilitator. The leader controls the meeting's pace and direction. Ideally, the leader keeps things on course, maintains an orderly progression and steers the ship if it encounters any shoals or sandbars.

In mission-oriented meetings, where problems are to be solved, or policies hammered out, the leader's job is to generate discussion, drive the group towards a resolution and pull everything together in a final summary. Good presenters and speakers approach the podium, or the screen, in a calm fashion and take a few seconds to let the audience settle in. They look at the audience, or camera, and hold that gaze for a few seconds. All of this gives the adrenaline a little time to subside and reduces any nervousness. It also gives the audience an opportunity to prepare to listen.

During the talk, good presenters consciously strive to keep their speech slow, recognizing that most people talk too fast when speaking in public. The best speech is made at a pace about half that of normal conversation. The slow pace permits good enunciation, enabling the audience to hear and understand every word. This is especially true for audiences that include members for whom English is not their primary language.

As the MC, the leader acts as a coordinator and introduces the presenters, manages the time of the meeting, interprets, explains and summarizes content for the audience.

The leader must know how to run the meeting and the participants must be aware of this control. Sometimes the control is exercised in subtle ways, sometimes it needs to be made abundantly clear. Take a look at these examples.

Leadership Cautions

Control can be subtle. Little things can affect the tenor of a meeting, especially if it is virtual, and cause it to come apart or lose its momentum. Little things also can destroy the respect the participants have for the leader. Examples include:

- The leader resents a question from the audience and shows it...questions, even unwanted ones, should be encouraged.

- The leader jumps into the discussion and monopolizes it.

- The leader plays the role of a comic--while some humor is welcome at most meetings, a leader with aspirations to be a stand-up comic can quickly reduce a serious meeting to an amateur vaudeville show

- A comment from the leader comes across as a smack down to a participant, especially a remark of a personal nature...there will always be problem attendees, but a public put-down is never the right way to manage it, take the participant aside during a break and discuss the situation.

- The leader looks confused, unprepared or unknowledgeable...coming to a meeting unprepared is worse than not attending...if there has not been time to prepare, the best course is to postpone the meeting until the preparations can be completed

Racing Ahead

A deceptive kind of inattention occurs when participants are so involved in a meeting discussion that their minds race ahead of the speaker to new ideas. On one hand, racing ahead is a good sign, an indication that participants want to contribute. But it needs to be controlled or much may be missed. The best solution is to listen attentively and jot down one or two word reminders of fresh ideas as they occur.

Leadership Tips

- Strive to be known as a rainmaker, people developer, decision-maker or something else of value
- The old model said that managers did not do anything but “manage...” the new model says ***lead by example***
- If you have nothing constructive to say, say nothing--you will command much more attention when you have something of value to say
- Do not automatically look at change as bad
- Do not micromanage your people, your projects or your own life
- Never say, “That’s not my job”
- Never appear stressed in front of a client, a customer or your boss...take a deep breath and ask yourself, *how important is this really*
- Never correct a co-worker in front of a customer or client -- or anyone else
- Do not tell people their idea isn’t very good--just work at coming up with a better one
- Be more results-driven than methodology-driven
- Gather all available data to support your positions
- Make decisions in a timely fashion, even if you are not 100% certain that it is the right decision...*not deciding is a decision as well*
- Send thank you notes.
- Always strive for a deeper level of trust and truthfulness with associates

Summary: The Face Value of *The Art of Leadership* is that becoming an effective leader today is more complex than ever before as you now need to be effective and persuasive in person, on-line and on-camera.

Chapter VII

Impactful Virtual Conferences

Virtual conferences and webcasting have been around for over a decade. With the pandemic came a major increase in the use of these types of meetings. Like live meetings, there are many different types of virtual meetings. To help clarify all of your options a recently published paper entitled *Virtual Conferences - A Guide to Best Practices* by the Association for Computing Machinery states, “it’s not just about the technology that supports them, but about rethinking and retargeting the things that organizers and participants normally do with new media and new forms of interaction.” In this detailed guide you will learn about the variety of virtual events you can host, from straightforward conference calls, Zoom and WebEx video conferences to professionally produced day long conferences or events.

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/9bez7dalb9vpmig/Virtual-Conferences-Best-Practices.pdf?dl=0>

Our production team at Esprit Productions has worked on many hybrid events with a live audience, and a world-wide virtual audience over the past 10 years. Here’s what we produced at a Nielsen Customer Conference hybrid event.

<http://espritproductions.com/events-university/stand-out/>

Today’s pandemic has created the need to change the way you produce major virtual events or conferences with impact. Take a look at how you can turn your next webcast into a show.

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/z4xxmdgfpme9qw/Esprit%20Productions%20-%20Impactful%20Virtual%20Conferences%20-%20206-20.ppsx?dl=0>

Summary: The Face Value of *Virtual Conferences* is that in the near term it will be our main means of directly communicating with our core audiences. Try these ideas. Be strategic. Be bold. Good luck and good meetings!

Postscript

I read this beautiful summary of the benefits of a good meeting when I first started producing events 30+ years ago. With all of the changes in our world since then this still holds true today for all meetings, big or small, live or virtual.

“The ideal business meeting is an organizational jewel. It proceeds without wasted motion from opening to adjournment. It is well-planned, has a defined purpose, and adheres strictly to a prepared agenda and proceeds crisply, dispatching each item on the agenda. When it is over, everyone can leave the room knowing something has been accomplished.

Good meetings bring forth the best in people – the best ideas, the best decisions, and the best follow-up reactions. Not all meetings are good meetings, but good meetings can happen, and when they do, the company and the individual participants reap the benefits.

There is a certain amount of magic when people come together for a meeting. The magic is in the interplay of ideas and personalities that takes place in the meeting room. When the interaction is completed, information has been exchanged, old concepts and ideas have been tested and blended, and new ones have emerged. One of the magical aspects of a meeting is that it can and should be so many things at once – a communication device, a cauldron of creativity in which new ideas are born, and an anvil on which solid plans are forged.”

– 3M Management Team

About The Author



Ron Springer has three decades of experience as one of America's foremost meeting production and corporate communications solution providers. With former positions as a corporate vice president of marketing and events, Ron is now the owner and executive producer at Esprit Productions.

Ron's clients includes several of America's most successful organizations including: Nielsen (30 years), Siemens (30 years), Kraft, OshKosh B'Gosh, DePuy Orthopaedics-a Johnson & Johnson Co., Rand McNally, Snap-on Tools, First Penn Pacific Life Insurance, LifeTime Fitness, Monsanto, Blue Cross Blue Shield and Washington Speakers Bureau among others.

Esprit Productions has developed a national reputation for its innovative approaches, thought leadership and impeccable execution of live and virtual conferences and events. Their mission is to engage client audiences, inspire enthusiasm and enhance *esprit de corps* to enable client organizations to achieve their objectives.

Ron earned his marketing degree from Drake University and attended the Advanced Management Program at Stanford University.

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