

## Getting your Presentation Ready for Video Conferencing

Covid19 has meant all kinds of work adjustments. Communication, while done remotely, still needs to happen, and happen effectively. So how does presenting remotely differ from presenting live and in-person, and how do we adjust ourselves and our presentations accordingly?

First, recognize that we do need to adjust, especially if we'll be using visuals like PowerPoint, Keynote or even Prezi. Why? Because whereas in a live in-person presentation, our physical presence and (possibly) charismatic persona could overcome a crummy slide deck, when we present remotely the slides take center stage. If you are seen at all, you're in a tiny box on the right side of the screen; possibly along with a few other tiny boxes with people in them. A distraction to be sure. Add to that the ease with which your audience can be enticed to look at or do something else, and compelling visuals become even more critical. Now the question is, what makes a compelling visual?

**Don't require reading:** A successful visual does NOT require the audience to read. Why? Because we process language, both written and spoken, with the same part of our brain; the phonological loop. Here's how it works: when you read something, your inner voice reads it to your inner ear. When you hear someone speak, your inner ear processes what the speaker is saying. The same processor does both of these things, *but it cannot do both at once*. When you present your audience with lots of text on a slide (bullet points) and then you talk at the same time, you're causing cognitive overload. You are short-circuiting that processor; it cannot make sense of your message. Oh, and we can't remember what we can't understand. So that's a fail.

In a live in-person presentation your audience can choose to ignore your slides and focus solely on you. Or, if you don't have the good fortune to be super compelling, your audience will read the slide and then surf their smartphone until the next slide appears. Giving a remote presentation you don't have the ability to command their attention the same way. Your slides must be the compelling thing. So if they don't have tons of text, what do they have?

**Think 'show and tell':** Remember kindergarten? Your classmates showed you their new doll or truck or sibling and told you all about what it was. This "show and tell" method works because it uses another processor; the visuospatial sketchpad, or the inner eye. The inner eye works to process images while the phonological loop is processing language. They work so well together that their outcome is retention upwards of 80%. That is a WIN.

**Have the "huh?" factor:** NO slide should make sense on its own. Every visual should require you, the presenter, to explain it. Think about it, if the audience is looking at something they can't figure out, they are going to sit (undistractable!) waiting eagerly for you to explain it to them. You've piqued their interest – perhaps even shown something that is counterintuitive

(creates cognitive dissonance) and their brains are urging them to stay focused and hear what you have to say to resolve this dissonance. Now you've got 'em eating out of your hand.

**Are bite-sized bits:** Especially because we're giving this presentation remotely, we want to be sure we don't lose anyone along the way. Use animation (subtle ones like Fade or Appear, or a directional one if that's connected to what's being conveyed) to give them the information one bite at a time. This also adds to the compelling nature of your presentation. They can't get ahead of you, so they can't turn away.

**PRACTICE OUT LOUD:** Let's face it, a big reason you are using tons of content on your slides is because you think you need them for speaker notes. Here's a news flash; if you practice out loud, your visuals will be memory clues for YOU! That's right, you'll see the visual and you'll be able to retrieve the associated content from your long term memory. And, you'll look like a presentation super-star.

Take a deep breath. Click through your current deck and think about how you can make your ideas visual. Charts and graphs are terrific visuals, as are icons to represent things and ideas. Depending on what industry you're in photos and video (short!) work well too. Give it the thought it deserves, put a new presentation together and practice it out loud. You'll be heard, and get results.

Need help making your presentation a true aid for your audience (and a win for you?) Contact bespeak. I've been building presentations (and presenters) since 2006. Want to know more? [www.bespeakpresentations.com](http://www.bespeakpresentations.com) Or contact me: [beheard@bespeakpresentations.com](mailto:beheard@bespeakpresentations.com) or call: 203-218-1255.