

DELIVERING VIRTUAL MEETINGS THAT DON'T SUCK

Having Impact
and Influence in an
Online World



STACEY HANKE INC

communicate with influence



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CHAPTER ONE

Virtual Meetings That Don't Suck

Are your virtual interactions as effective as they can be or are you grateful when they're over?

You may not be as influential as you think you are! Most of us believe that if we know our topic or if we feel good, we must have influence. Your level of comfort, experience and knowledge do not determine whether or not you are influential Monday to Monday®. The results you receive, the trust you build and the profits you gain are key indicators of your level of influence.

We are living in a new world of work called "noise." We receive messages 24/7 and live on virtual calls with our webcams on, dressed in business attire from the waist up, feeling fatigue by Wednesday. This world of noise makes it even more difficult to be consistent in how we show up and how we stay present. We need to focus and work even harder during our virtual interactions - to stand above the noise to be heard, understood and to influence action.

Every conversation – whether a meeting around a conference table, a presentation in front of hundreds of people or a Zoom call – is an opportunity to extend your personal brand. If you use the same skills in every conversation, you will show up as your best, authentic self in every interaction, **Monday to Monday®**

Your Reputation Is Worth the Effort

Why does etiquette take a side seat when we are virtual? Is it because we are clicking virtual link, after link, jumping on multiple meetings in a day?

You owe it to yourself to enhance your reputation rather than destroy it by treating your virtual meetings as a high-stakes presentation or conversation. We show up with our A-game for our high-stakes, in-person conversations. Why don't we do the same for our virtual interactions? Your name is still on it, and your reputation is worth the effort.

BEFORE YOUR NEXT MEETING

Turn off your notifications and silence your phone to avoid any temptation to look. How can you not look when you hear your phone? You are going to look. Instead, stay connected with your listeners through your camera by communicating that their time is valuable and you really do want to give them your best every time!

STOP MULTI-TASKING

We can see you.

Behave the way you want others to behave when you are leading a call or when it is your turn to share ideas. How we behave is how others will respond. When you multi-task, you are communicating it is okay for others to do the same. Research proves that nothing productive happens when we multi-task.

DON'T INTERRUPT

Pull back from the temptation to interrupt. If you interrupt, others will interrupt you. It is easier to avoid interrupting when everyone's camera is on. You're able to jump in when you can see individuals have reached the end of their point.



CHAPTER 3

LEADING VIRTUAL CONVERSATIONS

Are you guilty of muting your phone during a virtual call or avoiding turning on your webcam as you catch up on email or other tasks?

During the first five minutes of a virtual call, the majority of your listeners will be distracted by other tasks if you don't engage them immediately.

When virtual calls are not properly managed by the leader, they lack direction and often require more time than scheduled. When we find our virtual calls going over the scheduled time frame or multiple calls are scheduled on the same topic, time and money are not saved.

All of the influence skills (posture, movement, gestures, facial expressions, pause, volume and eye connection) are appropriate in face-to-face and virtual conversations. It is harder to keep your listeners engaged in virtual conversations when you do not turn on your webcam. Use these skills to help connect with your listeners, keep their attention and motivate them to act.

Create a reputation that when listeners see your name on their calendar, they do not think "Not today."

1 Talk TO your listeners rather than interacting with them. Treat every call as if you were sitting in the same room. Ask open-ended questions. When you ask, "Do you have any questions?" you are inviting your listeners to tune out. Instead ask, "What feedback do you have?" Then pause and wait for a response.

2 Avoid lame meeting openers such as "We are here today to talk about..." This invites listeners to check their email instead. Grab their attention the second you begin with a reference, quote, story or analogy.

3 Always close with a strong call to action. If you end with the boring "Thank you for your time. I look forward to your feedback," you have wasted their time and yours. Instead, ask for specific calls to action that are measurable, attainable and quantifiable. Influence only happens when you ask.



VIRTUAL CONVERSATION CHECKLIST (pg 2)



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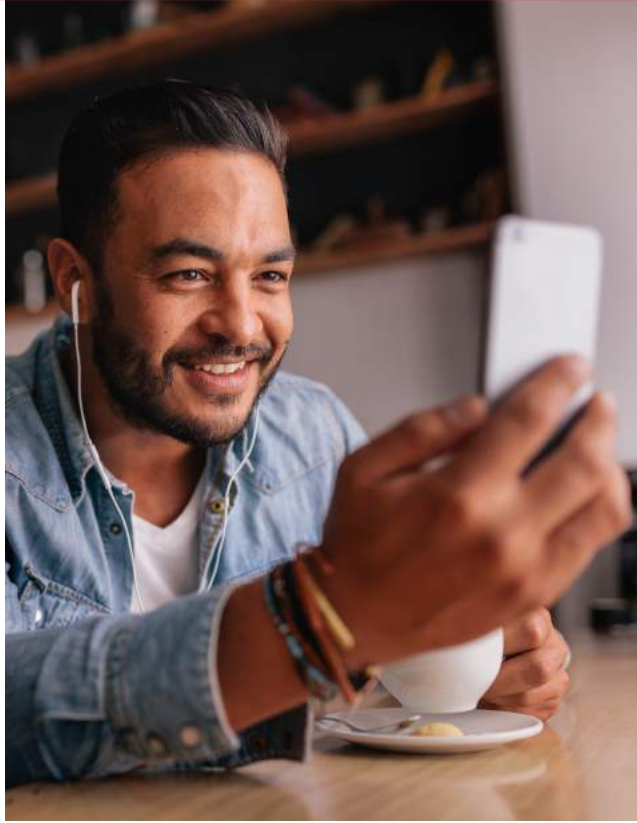
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If multiple or ongoing virtual calls with the same group are needed, rotate the role of the facilitator. This allows everyone an opportunity to take ownership of the calls and holds individuals accountable.

At the beginning of the call, explain the purpose of the call and your expectations, your role, the participants' roles and what needs to be accomplished. Explain to participants, "To make this call efficient and to respect your time, we'll need your participation. I want to make sure everyone is clear on their individual action steps moving forward. Therefore, I will be asking questions throughout the call for everyone to answer." Make sure you communicate to your listeners that you realize it is difficult to stay alert on a conference call. In order to reach results and to make sure you are on track as the facilitator, everyone needs to participate.

State at the beginning of the call your process for asking questions. Follow the agenda and keep the conversation on topic. If the conversation goes off topic, ask the group if they want to make note of the topic for future conversations or if they want to discuss the topic now.

VIRTUAL CONVERSATION CHECKLIST (pg 4)



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Use the chat feature to share resources and recommendations. Keep in mind that the chat feature is public for everyone on Zoom to see. If you have individuals joining without their webcam, make sure you share the chat comments with them.

If using your webcam is not your norm, practice with a friend, family member or co-worker. Learn the Zoom features and how to set up your camera to make sure you are not looking too high or too low into the camera.

When your group is mixed (virtual and face-to-face), spend the majority of your time speaking to your face-to-face listeners and your decision makers. Although you will be focusing primarily on your face-to-face listeners, be sure to include your virtual listeners, too.

When your entire group is virtual, speak directly into the camera. This helps your listeners feel more connected to you and your message.

CHAPTER FOUR

EMPLOYEES VS CLIENTS

If you are in sales, I get that your new world means figuring out how to successfully pitch through a box, which is your webcam.

We have been trying to persuade our clients for years to turn on their webcams when we were not able to meet in person. I will share what has worked for us to build chemistry and trust to influence our clients to take action, which has been the key to growing our business.

MAKE THE CONVERSATION ABOUT YOUR CLIENT

This is Sales 101!

One way of accomplishing this is to minimize the number of visual aids when you are virtual vs. what you would share if you were in person. You can always send your leave-behinds if these are critical to your pitch.

Another strategy: Place even more focus on your client by getting them to do most of the talking. This keeps them engaged and focused while you are able to constantly adapt your message on the fly. Make sure your message resonates specifically with what is important to them.



ONLY WHEN YOU SEE EYES

Only speak when you connect with the client's eyes or your camera. Avoid talking to your notes, your iPhone, your computer monitor or any other object in front of you. You can look away to gather your thoughts or to give your listener a break. Don't talk when you look away.

QUICK TIP: When there are several participants on the call, sit farther away from the camera. You will look like you are still looking directly at them if your eyes drift to them from your camera.

ONE CONVERSATION AT A TIME

We are challenged with trying to break through the many distractions interrupting our clients daily. I have found I need even more energy and focus to make every interaction count. I get it. You have distractions you are dealing with as well.

With the many distractions we are all facing daily, your listeners need to know you care, you have the best solutions for them, and that you understand where they are at and what they need. You will accomplish this critical step to building and cultivating your relationships when you are able to adapt your message. Adaptability is critical to delivering a message that resonates with your listeners' knowledge level, expectations and their "Why."



ADAPTING TO YOUR LISTENERS' "WHY"

Why is your topic important to your listeners?

Why is this conversation happening now?

Why should they take the action you want them to take? How will it benefit them?

LET YOUR LISTENERS LEAD

If they want to immediately jump into the agenda, go there with them. If they want to socialize first, do so without letting it go too far and wasting time. Watch their body language. If they have a lot of energy, you can use more energy in your voice and your body language. If their energy is more subdued, pull back on the amount of gestures, facial expressions and inflection.

CUT, DO NOT CRAM

Rather than adapting on the fly to end on time and avoid information overload, we cram 20 minutes of content into five minutes. The more you cram, the more you confuse. Use your time wisely to connect with your listeners' "why," giving them only the information they need to take action.

FREQUENT CHECK-INS

Throughout your conversation, ask open-ended questions to make sure your message is connecting with what is important to your listeners. This step is critical. "Do you have any questions" is not an open-ended question. "What questions do you have?" has more impact and increases engagement. It is critical to dig deep and identify what is important to your listener, what keeps them up at night or what is important to their customers.



Action steps critical to you and your team's productivity, client relationships and consistent brand.

As a leader, managing from afar virtually brings its own challenges.

Communicate clear and consistent messages to keep your team visually connected and their head in the game.

These three action steps are critical to you and your team's productivity, client relationships and for maintaining a consistent brand.

They include:

Steps to build stronger relationships, trust and commitment on your team.

How-to's for staying connected without a call.

Making sure your delivery is consistent with your message to build trust.

CAMERAS ON

Host team calls with cameras on: Zoom, GoToMeeting™, Microsoft® Teams or the many options out there. Turning on your cameras decreases the temptation for you, your teams and clients to get distracted. Keeping everyone visually connected increases motivation, productivity and consistency.

REQUIRE PARTICIPATION

No matter how you connect with your clients and team, everyone needs to know they have a voice. Your agenda should require everyone to participate. You can also rotate who on your calls leads your meetings. Your agenda should require everyone to participate.

SHARE KNOWLEDGE

Every week I share a Friday thought via email with our team. These messages include training resources, company updates or accountability check-ins. This step keeps your team updated, connected and focused on their development.

CHAPTER FIVE

OVERCOMING ONLINE CHALLENGES

Our clients tell us they are most uncomfortable about technology when it does not work. It will be easier if you come to the realization that technology is not perfect. Anticipate there will be lost connections, delays, poor WiFi signals.

They will happen. How you manage them will uphold your meeting effectiveness, increase your level of influence and minimize the distraction.

TAKE THE TIME to know your technology well so that you do not have to wing it. Have a strong understanding of the test you can do when you are frozen on the screen, no one can hear you or your WiFi stops.

PRACTICE WITH A PEER to make sure your webcam is proper height. I have seen everything from the neck stretcher because their camera is too high, to others who are too close to some who are barely on the screen and show more of their ceiling. If you were delivering a high-stakes presentation, I bet you would practice. Every time you show up, it is still high-stakes because your name is on it and your reputation depends on it.

HAVE A BACKUP PLAN! Do you have another area you can work from that has a better connection? If you are leading the meeting, is there someone in the meeting who can take over if you need to log off and log back in? This way you will not waste time and you can keep the meeting going. Last resort, are you better off calling in rather than turning your webcam on if your WiFi is not cooperating?

PAUSE VS MELTING DOWN. We have all experienced the meltdown. “You’re kidding me! (Or insert a word of your choice.) “My internet keeps cutting out!” Now is your chance to demonstrate grace under pressure and your ability to manage challenging situations. You can be influential by remaining calm and reassuring during a difficult environment.



WHAT THEY CAN'T SEE...BUT HEAR

I have been talking a lot about how to communicate effectively when your webcam is on. Many of you have been asking, “How can I be effective when I’m not able to turn on the webcam?”

Your voice is the essence of you. When the webcam is off, you need to rely on your volume, tone, inflection and words to influence action.

1 It is important to sit and stand in an open posture to project from your diaphragm. We all have the right to speak; we need to earn the right to be heard. Breathing from your diaphragm to project your voice prevents the monotone voice that puts everyone to sleep. Proper breathing also gives your voice energy to inflect and emphasize key points you want your listeners to remember.

2 Another skill that gives your voice energy and impact is gestures. When you gesture from your sides, that movement naturally increases your volume and inflection. Even though your listeners cannot see you, they can hear the points you are visually creating for them.

3 Say less with more impact. It is difficult to understand and absorb everything you say when you’re on autopilot. Take a breath, slow down and think before you speak. Pauses pull your listeners in...long-winded sentences push your listeners away.

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The bar is even higher when you and your listeners' webcams are turned off.

Now your voice and word choice must engage, connect and influence.

Technological devices and distractions make it increasingly challenging for leaders to reach those they need to influence in order to be successful.

In fact, many leaders are unwillingly sabotaging themselves and their influence.

- Stacey Hanke



MANAGING VISUAL AIDS DURING VIRTUAL CONVERSATIONS

Have you ever attended or led a virtual call in which there was a handout? As the leader, how do you ensure your listeners are on the same page in the handout as you are? The key is to create balance between you and your listener.

Follow these tips for your listener to get the most out of your message and the handout.

Verify participants have a copy of the handout. If some do not, make a decision about how to handle the call going forward.

Options include:

- Proceed with the call, and be extra careful when referring to the content of the handout.
- Re-schedule the call for everyone OR for only those who did not have the handout.
- Prearrange a way to get the handout to the participants who do not have a copy (e.g., be prepared to forward your original email containing the handout to those who need a copy of the handout or designate a “co-pilot” to handle those issues).



When you are using Zoom, you can use the Share Screen feature.



Consider coming up with your “rules of engagement” for your call, which are guidelines to make sure your meeting is effective and gets results. Guidelines should come from the group, such as: punctuality, participation expectations, specific action steps that need to be accomplished and what is and isn’t acceptable during your meetings.

MANAGING VISUAL AIDS

Treat virtual conversations like face-to-face interactions. Use eye connection and pause to deliver clear and concise sentences. Only speak when you are connected with the camera. Pause when you look away.



Set standards for call success. Say, "To give you a clear understanding of how we came up with these results, I recommend you follow along as I move through the handout." Your goal is to facilitate and manage the information your listener remembers. Therefore, you need to do what you can to keep the audience with you.



Give your listeners a chance at the beginning of the call to glance through the handout. This will satisfy their initial curiosity and it increases the likelihood they will follow your lead as you guide them through the handout or deck.



Frequently check in with listeners. Remind them what page you are on, ask if they are still with you and if they need additional information based on the take-away.



Provide an intro before displaying a new page, concept or idea. This helps your listeners move through ideas and reminds them where you are in the handout.



Rather than reading from the handout, give your listeners a moment to read what is on the page. Then, explain the take-away from each page or ask them to describe it.



Ask your listeners to close their handouts when you are ready to end the call OR direct them to a page in the handout that gives them a place to capture their action steps. When you can capture everyone's attention, they will more likely take action.



If you want to improve, ask for honest feedback from someone you trust.

VIRTUAL CONVERSATION CHALLENGES



CREATE AN ENGAGING EXPERIENCE

Prior to the call, contact several of your listeners. Ask them if they would be willing to answer a question during the call.

This is a way of including others in the call and it creates vocal contrast so that you are not the only one talking the whole time.



HOW TO ENCOURAGE INTERACTION

If you want your call to be interactive, ask an open-ended question.

Tip: After asking a question, count to five; if no one responds, encourage participation by saying, "I'm interested to hear your thoughts."

If there is still no response, ask a different open-ended question, such as "What has been your experience with...?"

This is an effective way to encourage your listeners to elicit their unknown or their unspoken thoughts.



FINAL WORDS

We are living in a new world of work called noise. We receive messages 24/7 via email, text, social media, in-person meetings to virtual calls with our webcams on. We are dressed in business attire from the waist up, feeling fatigue, by Wednesday.

This world of noise makes it even more difficult to be consistent in how we show up and how we stay present. We need to focus and work even harder during our virtual interactions - to stand above the noise to be heard, understood and to influence action.

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