

NAVIGATE THE CYBER VIDEO JUNGLE

WEBINAR WARRIOR

**FIGHT BACK
AGAINST:
NOSE HAIRS!
SONIC BOOMS!
FLICKERING FACES!**



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BY ROY HARRYMAN

CRUSH THE TECH BULLIES! GET THE LEADS YOU NEED!

TABLE OF **SUPER** CONTENTS

INTRO: NAVIGATE THE CYBER VIDEO JUNGLE	PAGE 2
1 RESOLUTION: GET LOTS & LOTS OF DOTS	PAGE 3
2 STEP INTO THE LIGHT, BUT NOT TOO MUCH	PAGE 4
3 EYES ON THE PRIZE (THE WEBCAM)	PAGE 7
4 SIT STILL: THE VIDEO YOU SAVE MAY BE YOUR OWN.	PAGE 11
5 DON'T BE KEEN ON GREEN SCREENS.	PAGE 12
6 SOUNDING OFF	PAGE 15
7 "I NEED MORE POWER CAPTAIN"	PAGE 19
8 SUMMARY OF EVERYTHING	PAGE 21
9 CHECKLIST AND A TEAM APPROACH	PAGE 22

ABOUT THE AUTHOR (THAT'S ME)

I'm a "webinar warrior" trained in the school of hard knocks. Educated as a journalist, I began producing a Facebook Live show in 2017. Several explosions ensued. The fires were eventually extinguished and when I emerged from the smoke, I knew how to produce a Facebook Live show with multiple guests, live interaction and minimal chaos. Much of this technology was transferable to Zoom and other platforms. As a result, I use this experience to help clients succeed in sharing insights with their audiences via webinars and digital meetings.

At some point the thought occurred to me, "Perhaps other people could

benefit from this knowledge?" Voila! Here we are.

The goal of this booklet is twofold:

1. To help you be your best on webinars and important online meetings.
2. Perhaps more importantly, it can help you prepare guests and clients so that they equally excel.

P.S. I don't claim to be a video expert, just a lifelong learner who's trying to help my clients (and you) shine.

Here's wishing you the best in all your endeavors. – Roy Harryman

www.RoyHarryman.com



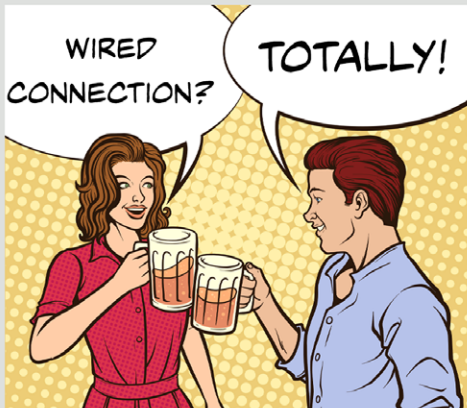
**IF YOU READ NOTHING ELSE,
PAY ATTENTION TO THESE ...**

FOUR FAST FIXES

TO KEEP YOUR WEBINAR FROM **BLOWING UP!**

#1 GET WIRED

Plug a cable into your internet port to improve your speed and avoid lags, frozen screens and digital noise. Wireless is convenient, but slower.



#2 GOTTA' GET A HEADSET

A headset, which includes a microphone and *windscreen, will protect your viewers from reverb, sonic blasts, digital noise and ambient noise. It closes the feedback loop.

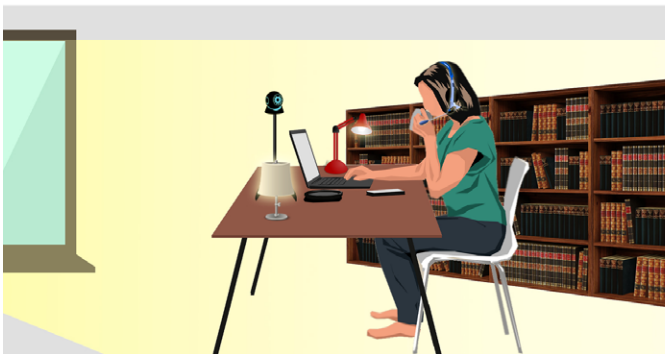


*A windscreen is the fuzzy ball surrounding the mic. It mitigates pops and spikes in audio.



#3 LIGHT IN FRONT

Sitting with your back to the window seems like it would create a zen-like ambiance. It won't. You'll be a silhouette. Lights always go in front.



#4 NO GREEN SCREEN

Unless the screen is perfectly and evenly lit, your hair and clothing will pixelate, flicker and "ghost." Instead, create a clean, undistracting background area. You don't need Northern Lights behind you.



NAVIGATE THE CYBER VIDEO JUNGLE (AND LIVE TO TELL ABOUT IT)

Yes! Eliminate nose hairs, sonic booms and pixelation in your quest for quality online meetings.

Want or need to step up the quality of your webinars and customer-focused Zoom meetings?

Take courage – you're among friends.

There are a few pre-pandemic veterans of webcam and Zoom communication, but most people were thrown over the wall with only a moment's notice.

Most remote workers found a way to make virtual communication work. A fuzzy screen and dog barking in the background were acceptable for your interoffice meetings. And probably still are.

Yet there are occasions when businesses and individuals need to step up the quality of their video communication:

- A sales presentation.
- A job interview.
- You're hosting a webinar.
- You're hosting a virtual conference.
- You're streaming live on social media for a brand or cause.

If you are representing a business or a brand, you want to be professional. Not perfect, but a little polished.



Even in the virtual world, first impressions matter. And if the video is recorded and reposted, the impression will be a lasting one. You may be on YouTube – forever! Since you can't destroy the evidence, it's better to prepare accordingly.

Think of inviting a client or prospect to your office. But the trash cans are overflowing, the fluorescent light is flickering and there's so much noise from trucks in the alley you can barely converse. *That's what some of our digital meetings are like.*

Not a techie? Don't worry. Most of the ideas here simply require a little forethought and planning. No superhero skills are required.

Up, up and away!

Chapter 1

Resolution: Get Lots and Lots of Dots

By dots I mean pixels. Look closely at any screen and you can see them. They are the tiny pieces of the puzzle that make up the whole of the image you are seeing right now.

When there are lots of dots it creates a clear and detailed picture. We refer to this as high resolution or high definition (HD). We refer to fewer dots, and a grainy or fuzzy picture, as low resolution (SD). If you're making a business presentation, make sure you're streaming in high resolution.

I'm not going to explain how to set up HD because every streaming service is different and this stuff is changing constantly. Whatever platform you are using (Zoom, social media, YouTube), make sure you stream in HD. It's the difference between fuzzy and focused, professional and amateur.

If you are featured side-by-side in a presentation, one panelist can look sharp while the other is fuzzed out. If someone's going to be fuzzy, it shouldn't be you.

Go HD. Be fuzz free.



Top: Resolution is 1080 in video mode (HD) or 300 DPI (dots per inch) in photo mode.



Above: Resolution is Standard Definition (SD) for video or web resolution (72 dots per inch) for photos. Note the jagged lines that emerge and the visibility of individual pixels.

Chapter 2

Step Into the Light – But Not Too Much

Continuing with our visual theme, let's talk about lighting. I'll share a few basic concepts, then you can tweak them to make it work for you.

First of all, the light should be in front of you. Sorry if I've insulted your intelligence, but I'm saying this for a reason.

It may seem appealing to sit with your back to the window, but you're going to get blown out by the natural light behind you and appear as a silhouette.

Lights *always* go in front.

Getting balanced lighting takes work – *but you can do it!* You'll need to move monitors and lamps around. Experiment until you're happy with the arrangement.

Note: Fluorescent lights are not your friend. They tend to zombify all of us, making us appear as if we've spent a few months in Antarctica. If your video environment is lit by fluorescents, experiment with turning them off and replacing them with lamps, ring lights or other sources. Or move to another room.

Your goal should be to avoid being overexposed or underexposed. Essentially, you should look like a human being with no distortion.



Overexposed ▲ and underexposed ▼



Well-balanced lighting ▼





This battery-powered LED light can be mounted on a tripod and placed anywhere. Photo: Amazon.com

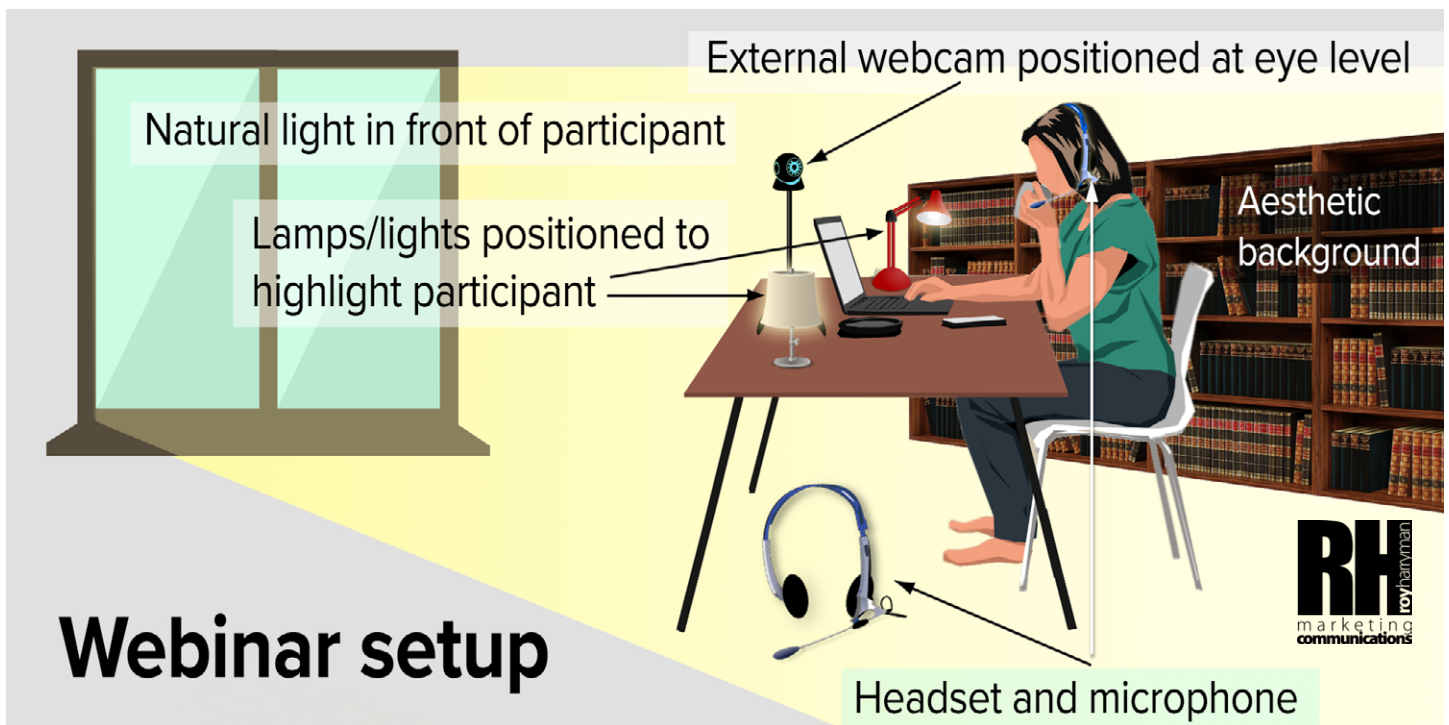


This USB-powered LED light can be mounted on a tripod. Photo: Amazon.com



LED ring light, powered by USB or outlet plug.

Illustration: Get Set Up For Success



What kind of specialized light gear do you need?

If you've got no budget, you can get by without any special equipment. Really! Use the home or workplace lamps you have and move them around until you're satisfied.

If you want to spend a little money, some people buy a ring light. I use one and I also have three small video lights powered by USB. In addition, I also have a third set powered entirely by rechargeable batteries. The advantage of those are that I can put them anywhere in the room without having to worry about wires.

Umbrella lighting is also an option, but unless you have a full studio, you'll likely not have room for all that bulky gear.

If I could only buy one piece of lighting equipment, I would buy the ring light. They are adjustable with variable degrees of lighting intensity and are mobile. They can be used with phones or webcams of any type.

Now, this may seem like a lot of work. But so would cleaning your office or meeting room in anticipation of a visitor.

As with any endeavor, getting started is the hardest part. However, once you have one "lit" webinar under your belt, things will begin to fall into place.

Photograph or write down how you set things up, and you'll quickly be able to replicate it next time.

Chapter 3

Eyes on the Prize (Meaning the Webcam)

Counterintuitive means something seemingly at odds with common sense. But “seemingly” is the key word. Although an action may be counterintuitive, it is still the correct choice. It just doesn’t feel like it.

Enter the webcam.

If you want to appear to be looking into someone’s eyes via video, then you can’t look at them. Instead, you have to look at your camera.

Having an awareness of this principle is half the battle. It’s OK to look aside now and then, but you must focus on the camera 80 percent of the time. Otherwise, you’ll look like you’re staring at your own shoes.

What to do? The main workaround on this is to move your camera so you can look at both it and the people you see on the screen simultaneously. The cheap way to do this is to put it on a small tripod. If your webcam is built into your laptop (and you don’t have access to an external webcam), then you can elevate it on a stack of books to get the right alignment.

WRONG



“I’m looking at the people on my screen. But it looks like I’m staring at my shoes or doing other work. And I’m blissfully ignorant!”

RIGHT



“I’m looking directly at my camera. That means I’m not looking at the people who appear on my screen. But, to my audience, I’m making direct eye contact.”

The Plexicam is one option to help video eye contact be more natural. This invention (which is not a camera) enables you to look at the camera and your audience simultaneously. It's entirely transparent. I've only added color below so you can see the Plexicam against the light-colored monitor background.

Plexicam.com



Plexicam.com



Plexicam.com



Should you use a built-in webcam, external webcam or phone?

All webcams are not created equal. In general, external webcams are capable of higher resolution and better video quality than built-in webcams, such as the ones found in many laptops.



External webcam. Plug it into a desktop or laptop.

Most laptop cameras stream and record in SD (standard definition) instead of HD (high definition). To overcome this, you can connect an external camera to your laptop, then choose it instead of the default option. You'll look sharper and more professional.



The webcam is built into this laptop.



And of course smart phones have a camera. But is it best?

Many high-end mobile devices have excellent cameras. The key to success, however, will be if you can have excellent audio quality as well. The built-in microphones on mobile devices often pick up ambient noise such as ventilation and even outside traffic. At minimum, you'll need headphones to eliminate sonic feedback.

Webcams, Nose Hairs and You



Hey there! Here's an up close and personal view of our video host, thanks to poor placement of a webcam.

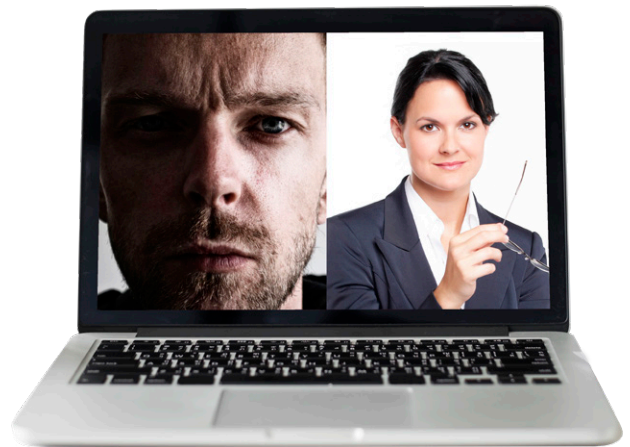
Another issue to consider is the angle at which you look at the camera. This is important and must be worked out offline. You don't want people looking

up at you, providing the opportunity for your nose hairs to be inspected (be sure to trim them, just in case!).

Cranium inflation syndrome

Finally, we come to a matter I call "head parity." In an interview or panel discussion, you don't want one person with his face extremely close to the camera and another person sitting back in her chair. It looks like a giant talking to a Lilliputian. Before you go live, make sure you have *head parity*.

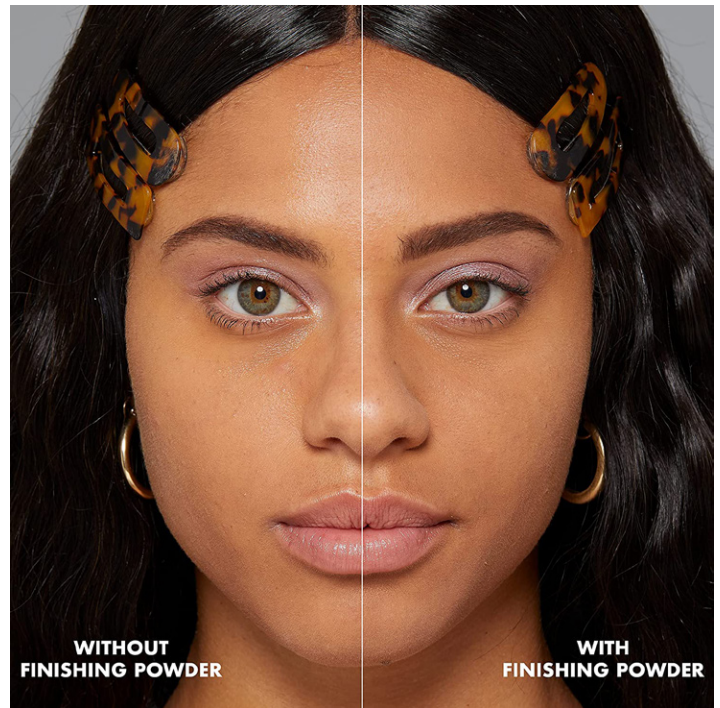
In addition to screening for inflated heads, you want to have a reasonable parity in height. I can hear you saying, "Yes but people aren't the same height!" Indeed. But TV news anchors and political candidates in debates have long worked to achieve the appearance of equal height. There is nothing shameful about being short or



tall. However, extreme disparities (real or imagined) are distracting. You want to present yourself as a peer, not as Paul Bunyan or Chicken Little. This can be easily accomplished by sitting on a pillow, raising or lowering your chair or adjusting the height of your camera.

HD makeup powder for men and women

Last but not least, let's talk about shiny skin. It's quite natural. Bald men, especially, reflect oil from their heads in response to lighting. This is nothing to be ashamed of (I'm a firm believer that bald is beautiful). However, the glare can be distracting. TV studios nearly always apply makeup for this reason. You can too. Visit a makeup counter or go online and purchase what is called HD power. A little goes a long way. People have differing levels of oil in their skin. If lighting causes a strong reflection on your face, consider HD powder.



NYX Professional Makeup, Amazon.com



NYX Professional Makeup, Amazon.com

Pictured here is a product from NYX Professional Makeup, which I have used to diminish the hot glare of lights. However, I am not a makeup expert, so please feel free to investigate whatever may work best for you.

And finally ...

A fan. Yeah that doesn't take a lot of explaining does it? You close yourself in a room and turn on extra lights. You may also be nervous. So you start sweating. Plug in a small, quiet fan near you and no one will notice – especially if you follow my audio advice in the following chapters.



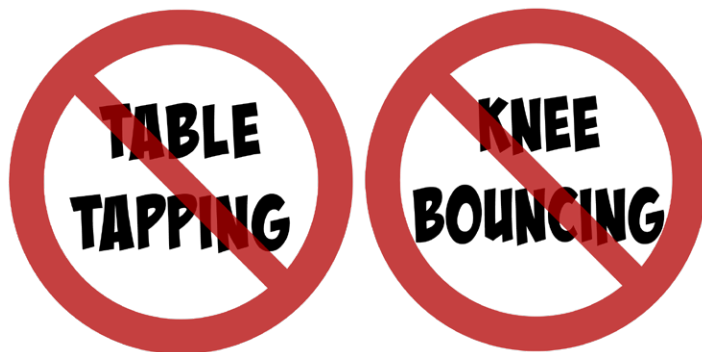
Chapter 4

Sit Still. The Video You Save May Be Your Own.

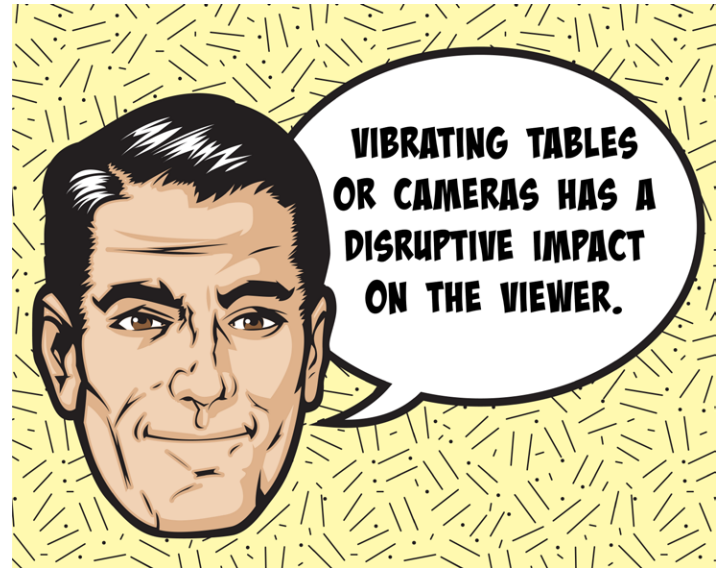
Are you a fidgeter? Do you work next to one? Fidgeting seems tied to our personality type.

When streaming, fidgeting is natural because we may be nervous and it's a subtle way to release pressure. But if your camera is sitting on your desk, your fidgeting is causing a small earthquake for viewers.

Tapping fingers, clicking pens and bouncing knees cause tremors in your meetings and webinars. From the viewers' perspective, it looks like an actual earthquake is happening in your home or office. *Could that possibly be distracting?* We'll get to audio matters in another chapter, but twitching and fidgeting also cause the microphone to pick up static sounds and pop, pop, pop, popping.



Whatever it takes, find a way to sit still. If you must fidget (I often do), just make sure your hands, arms or feet are not touching the table supporting your computer and camera.



Other disruptive gestures

Most of us aren't used to being on camera. You may only speak for one-third of the webinar, but you'll likely appear in the vast majority of the webinar – even as a quiet observer.

So what? That means people are observing you. Like it or not, you are under a microscope of sorts. In order to keep the focus on the content (and not you scratching your nose), minimize:

- Chug-a-lugging a bottle of water (you can sip water, but this ain't the locker room)
- Nose picking and scratching
- Getting up and walking away
- Explosive coughing and throat clearing
- Doing anything but listening and taking notes

Chapter 5

Don't Be Keen on Green Screens.



Everybody likes them, right? You can put the beach behind you during your sales meeting. Or a dancing bear. Or whatever.

But just because you can doesn't mean you should. We have to remember that we're seeking to represent our brand. The green screen, in a studio, is meant to put the focus on the person talking so the viewer is not distracted by a mediocre background. In the days of Zoom, we've got it reversed: The background distracts from the presentation. How? There are couple of ways.

One is that the waves rolling in on the beach are a lot more interesting than anything you have to say. Sorry!

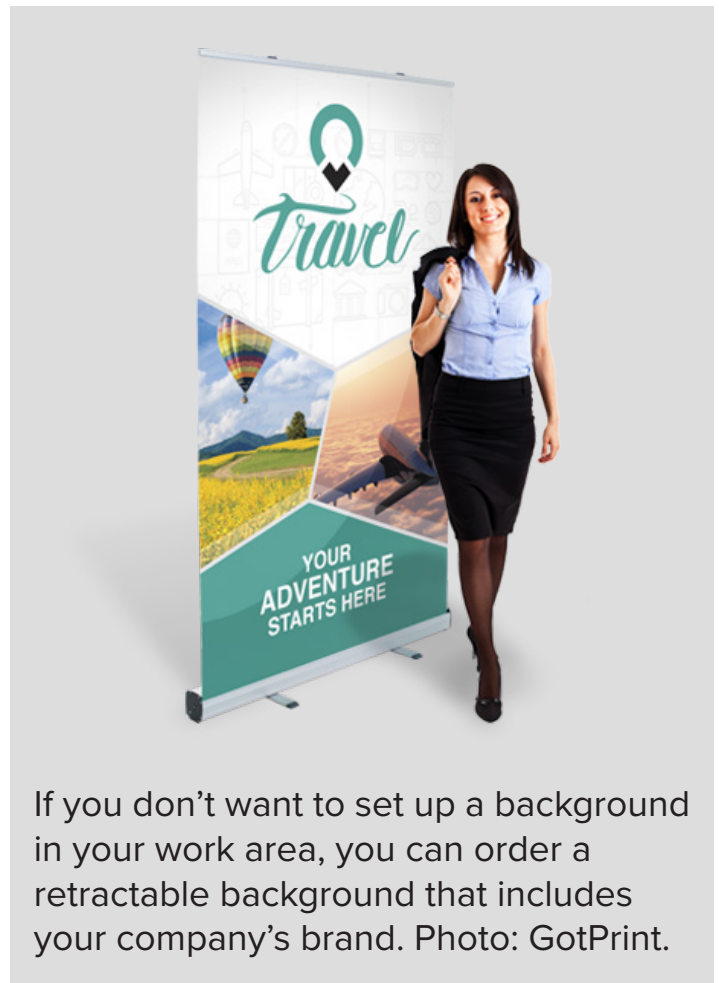
The other factor is this: Green screens tend to flicker and "ghost" at the edges. This is extremely distracting. I can't listen when your hair is moving around or images of your office occasionally flicker through your sternum. That's just plain weird. And it certainly does nothing to enhance your brand's image.

The exception is if you light the green screen *perfectly*. However, this is rarely done. My vote? Set up your own “non-virtual” background.

I have a permanent backdrop in my home office so when it’s time to go live, I’m always ready. I bought some fabric at Hobby Lobby and tacked it to my wall behind some book cases. You can probably do better than this. Go nuts!

I’ve also locked down my lights so they’re set up and ready to go. I spent less than \$200 on all of this. You can spend 100 times that if you want. But it’s not necessary for most people.

Another option is to order a background with dimensions large enough to fill out the space behind you. It can even be branded to reflect your organization. When you’re done, click a button and it will roll down into a box that can fit under your desk. Note: Glossy surfaces may harshly reflect your light source. Matte or cloth are better.



If you don’t want to set up a background in your work area, you can order a retractable background that includes your company’s brand. Photo: GotPrint.

I’ve included some background ideas on the next page. But don’t overthink it or be a perfectionist. Clear the clutter, remove distractions and you’re ready to go.

“If you want to be taken seriously, use a real background. Fake backgrounds are cheesy. ... Image matters. [Fake backgrounds] almost always pixelate ... are distracting at best and disastrous at worst.”

– David Meerman Scott and Michelle Manafy, “Standout Virtual Events”

What to Wear on a Webcast?

I'm certainly not one to give fashion advice. Just be aware that the lighting on camera will appear different than the lighting in front of the bedroom mirror.

If I wear a dark shirt against a dark background, I will appear as a floating head.

If your clothing is too bright, it may be blown out (overexposed) by your lights. So experiment and leave some margin to make a last-minute change.

Finally, a small room with a closed door can get hot. So consider using a fan or wearing short sleeves (or shorts) to keep from sweating under the lights.

Real (Non-Virtual) Backgrounds That Work



Chapter 6

Sounding Off

This may surprise you, but audio is the most important part of your live streaming presentation. Studies have shown that people are willing to tolerate bad video, but not bad audio. I guess it's all part of that nails-on-the-chalkboard syndrome.

So what's the cause of this disqualifying audio? Often, the villain is ambient noise – that is, any noise competing with your vocal chords.

A major factor may be your microphone. Your webcam's built-in microphone sounds terrible. This is true whether the webcam is built into your laptop, you have an external webcam or are using your phone. External noise, even seemingly quiet sounds like ventilation systems, can blow up your streaming audio. The key, therefore, is to get the microphone as close to the source (AKA your mouth) as possible.

Many people use their built-in microphone for business phone calls or video meetings and no one complains. My response: The standards for a webinar and a routine phone call are much different. You don't want your webinar to sound like you're on a speakerphone. In addition, if the webinar will be uploaded to YouTube, the bad audio will live on forever. *If you could improve the quality, why wouldn't you?*

Just say no to the built-in mic in your computer, webcam or phone. Instead, get an external microphone.

You have three options:

1. A headset
2. A lapel mic
3. A podcasting mic



The headset

My preference is a headset. You only have to manage one piece of equipment because the input (mic) and output (headset) are together in one device. You can spend a little or a lot. Most headsets that are made for phones (earbuds, Airbuds, AirPods) don't get close enough to your vocal chords to block ambient noise. They're fine for phone calls, but not presentations.

One critic has said headsets are “ugly.” This may have been true in the 1970s when they weighed five pounds. But today's devices are sleek and



lightweight. They're also ubiquitous in traditional TV broadcasting, particularly at sporting events. In addition, an entire generation of youngsters and hipsters do 100% of their online/YouTube activity wearing a headset and nobody seems to mind.

listening to another presenter through external speakers, they're reverberating into your lapel and creating a sonic boom/echo effect. When you hear loud echoes in a Zoom call, that's what's happening. I'm hearing you hearing me – and so is everyone else on the call. (To better understand this, see the illustration on the next page.)

To stop the booms and echoes, you need to plug in earphones. That means you've got to set up earphones *and* a lapel mic. If your concern with a headset is that it's ugly, make sure your earphones are minimalist and somewhat hidden. In addition, if they are wired, they have to reach your computer. Usually they don't, and this will require an extension cable.



Lapel mic

The second option is a USB lapel mic. Just plug it into your computer or phone. If your computer or phone don't have any input slots, you're going to have to find a wireless alternative. I prefer wired options because they always work and there is never wireless interference.

Why wouldn't everyone wear a wireless lapel mic? Because it doesn't stop the ambient noise for your viewers. If you're



Podcast or other external microphone

The final option for streaming sound is a podcast microphone. Why wouldn't someone want to use a high-quality microphone like this? Well the first problem is that it doesn't fix the sonic boom issue. So you'll have to wear earbuds with it.

ORIGIN STORY: THE SONIC BOOM!



THE IMPACT: WEBINAR DESTROYED!



The second problem is that many podcast mics are simply too sensitive. They can pick up the sound of a gnat buzzing. I've recorded an interview in a quiet, remote classroom and was later stunned at the amount of ventilation noise I picked up. I didn't hear it during the interview, but the mic was far more powerful than my ears. I had to work hard in post-production to minimize the ventilation and was never fully satisfied.



Podcast mics can also pick up electromagnetic vibrations from your computer. If your mic and computer are on the same table, you can record a hum that's inaudible to you, but will show up on your recording. The remedy is to put the mic on a different table than the computer. All of this can be done, but it's a matter of how hard you want to work for it.

Podcast microphones have their place, but outside a studio environment, they can pick up distracting ambient noise. They also do nothing to reduce incoming noise you receive through a speaker system.

My vote: A headset. It fixes all these problems at minimal cost.

Note: Switching the audio input and output from your webcam to another source may "confuse" your computer. It's used to pulling audio from one source and you've just plugged in something else. This can be worked out easily enough, but don't wait until the last minute.

Is this a lot to absorb? Take it one step at a time. Do the best you can and evaluate each webinar as you go. Make adjustments and you'll keep getting better every time.



Computers, processors and upload speeds have come a long ways in a short period of time. What was nearly

Chapter 7

“I need more power captain!”

Computers, processors and upload speeds have come a long ways in a short period of time. What was nearly impossible a few years ago is now routine. However, since there are multiple generations of computers in workplaces, these principles are still relevant.

Three things that will impact your delivery of your live webinar are:

- The processing power of your computer.
- The upload speed of your internet connection.
- The network you are using to connect to the internet.

Processing power

First, let's talk processing power. Computers can be cheap. And you get what you pay for. Old, sluggish computers or even new ones with weak processors may not have the heft to adequately push your live stream onto the internet. Although my laptop was hip with touch screens, its processor was lame and couldn't handle the task. I had to upgrade to a “gaming” laptop, although I don't game. The difference was huge. Make sure your machine can get the job done. If necessary, upgrade or use a different computer.

Upload speed

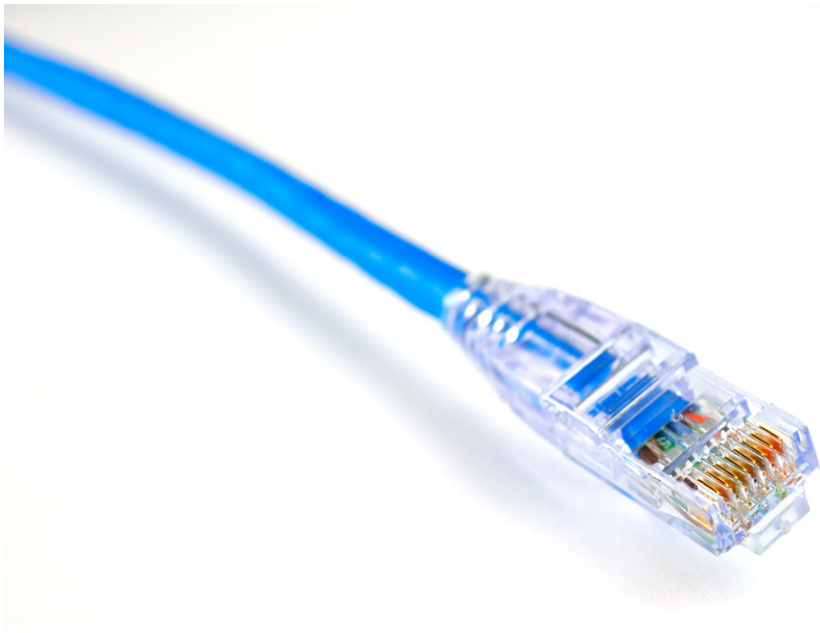
Next, let's talk upload speed. Test this



before you go live and make sure your particular internet setup can support live streaming without hiccups, blackouts and interruptions. Many wireless networks, particularly at home or at a small business, are not built to support massive streams of data. They're created to support watching a movie and surfing the web. If you don't have enough juice, you may have to consider another location or pay for more speed. In addition, bandwidth matters. If you're in Office A live streaming, and someone in Office B decides to watch a pay-per-view boxing event, your webinar may crash. Make sure there is enough digital pipeline.

The network

Finally, the network matters. Almost universally, a *wired* connection is better than a wireless network connection. This sounds anachronistic in a world where everything is wireless. Yet it's true. Wireless networks tend to be



slower and more prone to interruption from wireless interference. Wired networks don't experience this. For this reason, your best experience will be when you plug directly into the wired network. The connection is simply more direct and powerful.

Since we're so used to wireless, this may raise some questions:

- Where is the wired port?
- How can I connect to it?
- Will my IT team let me connect to it?

If you have an IT department and they refuse to give you access, try to explain what you're doing and why. Since IT isn't known for flexibility, you may have to simply go with what's available to you and make the best of it. If that's the case, make sure you are not using a public network (like at the library, store, etc.). These are slow, sluggish and have potential security problems.

If you *do* have access to the wired connection, you may have to purchase

an internet cable that's long enough to reach the port. I ran a Facebook Live show for two years that featured a beautiful bed and breakfast home as the backdrop. However, the port was out of reach and the wireless network could not support our uploads. The solution? I purchased a 50-foot cable and plugged it in. Voila!



Epilogue and Checklist

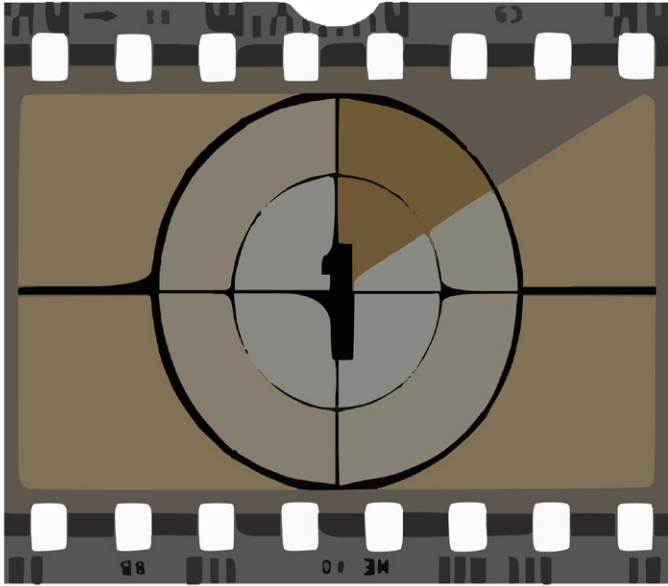
Stream Like a Semi-Pro

There you have it: A cheat sheet for your live streaming. May your webinars live long and prosper. If you make new discoveries along the way, please send them my way!

Summary

- Resolution = lots of dots: Set all hosts/panelists to HD.
- An external webcam is better than a built-in webcam (on a laptop or phone).
- Lighting goes in front of you. Always.
- Eyes fixed on the camera, not the person on your screen.
- Got nose hairs? Put the camera at eye level.
- Cranium inflation: Panelists should have “head parity” and height parity (not Paul Bunyan interviewing an oompa loompa).
- Shiny? Get HD powder.
- Sit still: Don’t tap, shake or bounce.
- Get a real background; don’t use a fake green screen background.
- Audio: Get the mic to your mouth; close the sonic interference loop with headphones.
- Test your computer’s processing power and your network’s upload speed before you go live.
- Use a wired connection instead of wireless whenever possible.
- **Seize the day!**

Countdown checklist + teamwork



Countdown List: Check these before you go live

- Do I know how to access the webinar? Do I need a code, link or login?
- Phone silenced?
- Computer alerts silenced?
- Microphone is on & working?
- Earphones are on & working?
- Can they see me? Not too bright or silhouetted?
- Door closed?
- Remove visual distractions.
- Hot? Get a fan.
- Need to use the restroom.
Do it now!

A team approach to webinars and presentations

Running a webinar (or a video meeting or whatever) is a tall order. Big businesses have dozens of people working behind the scenes on a single web event. If you're reading this guide, that's not you. But the point remains: Get help if you can. How?

- One person is responsible for being the “on air” personality. This person could be called the emcee, the host or a panelist. She only has to focus on dialogue with the guest (or if there is no guest, then simply communicating her message).
- Another person is the “monitor.” He monitors the chatroom, social media or other incoming audience messages and responds to them. If the emcee needs to be alerted to a particular comment, the monitor will let her know. The monitor stays off camera.
- The visual aids guru can be responsible for sharing images, slides and videos whenever they are supposed to appear in the timeline. She also stays off camera.

Use your imagination. I'm sure you can also think of other ways to involve people in this project and share the workload. This also makes it more likely you will succeed. *And that's our goal for you!*

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