



"Facilitator Skills: What Skills Do I Need?"

Transcript

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Karyn: Hello everyone, welcome back to Virtual Classroom Online Conference. We are going to be treated to Melissa Chambers: "Facilitator Skills: What Skills Do I Need?" So I'm going to just hand it over to Melissa because we've been sharing this day with you, so hopefully you'll stay with us for this session and our last session.

Mel: Welcome everybody to facilitation skills. My name is Mel Chambers. You might notice that I turned my webcam on. We've got a lot of questions about "Should we have our webcam on?" And we're going to actually be talking about webcams in a little bit later on in this session I have a whole section dedicated to that discussion. But I just wanted to turn my webcam on here for a moment so you can see me, kind of see my setup for today and virtually say hello to all of you. I'm going to actually pause my webcam because I'm not going to have it turned on for the whole session, so please stand by. Cover that up. So welcome everybody. Welcome back if you were here for our other sessions. Welcome if you're just joining us. Glad to have you here live. This is virtual facilitations skills.

So I'm going to kick us off with a poll. I like to learn "What is your level of experience presenting online?" Whether you're facilitating or just presenting. I've got some options here for you. You've facilitated face to face, but you're brand new to online. Some experience delivering live, online classes but you're still learning. You're experienced presenting webinars, but not necessarily courses themselves. Experienced conducting meetings online. I'm just here to learn anything about virtual classroom. Or I'm a total expert, just want to hear what Mel has to say today. Maybe some validation. OK I'm going to give that a few more seconds. There is no submit button for these polls, just simply select your answers and it's automatically recorded. If you're on a mobile device and you're having some problems seeing the poll, you're welcome to type in chat as well.

OK so I see this. I'm going to go ahead and broadcast the results. Yes Nina, there is a poll on the screen, but if you're on a mobile device it might be hard to see. So it's looking like a lot of you have some experience delivering online or live online classes, but definitely still learning. We have a lot of folks that are really experienced in face-to-face, but brand new to online. All the way to a couple of experts which by all means we always love to hear from everyone, so feel free to also give advice in the chat – the more, the merrier. So thank you for answering

that poll for me, gives me a sense of who is in here today. As always you can type your questions in chat. Karen, the Karens, will be monitoring. I'll try to do my best monitoring, we do have quite a large group in here today.

So this is for chat, what is different in a virtual classroom? What's different in a virtual classroom vs a face-to-face? I've got some images here on the screen to give you some hints. And go ahead and type in chat what you feel are really the big differences from delivering face to face vs delivering in a virtual classroom. You can't see your students. You can't read the body language. Lack of feedback. Yeah, these are really great. Lot more distractions. Seeing body language quite a bit. The learning curve for the technology, yes. Great keep those coming. I've got some already what we call "cooked" answers for you I'm going to bring up on the screen, and you're already saying a lot of these in chat.

Probably the biggest one is lack of body language and eye contact. And you might think OK well if we have our webcams on, we have the body language there, but oftentimes it's just the facilitator who has the webcam on, not everybody. So the facilitator doesn't have that body language to feed off of like you do when you're standing up in front of a classroom. You don't have that eye contact. You can't really tell if somebody is not understanding just by looking around the room. You can't walk around and you can't listen when people are doing activities. Well, you can in breakout rooms. But not as readily.

Again, you can't understand if there's confusion, and they might not have as quick of access to you. You don't, obviously, have the human contact! We know about that right now, don't we? With everything that's going on. And we don't have the hands-on activities that we might actually have, like sitting at a table asking a group to work together. Maybe putting a puzzle together or doing some sort of hands-on activity – we don't really see that in the virtual environment. So there's quite a bit that is different in a virtual classroom.

But I want to get even more specific about what's the difference in the physical classroom? What do we rely on in the physical classroom vs what we rely on a virtual classroom. And I'm going to actually bring up two chat pods. And on the left is "In the physical classroom, we rely on" go ahead and type in that. Versus the chat pod on the right "In the virtual classroom, we rely on" And it might feel a little bit redundant, but I am looking for kind of different answers here. OK yeah. In the physical classroom yeah nonverbals. Interactions. Group activities and discussions. Our tools are a lot different in the physical classroom. Yeah these are really great. Good technology I'm seeing that quite a bit.

Karyn: Please stand by.

Mel: OK let me know, is my audio back on now? I'm in the green, I was in the red there for a moment. OK I'm thinking with all that fabulous chat going, my system got a little taxed. And I realized that my system was getting taxed. One, I was looking at my bandwidth meter and, two, I realize, you know, we've got about 600 people hitting those chat functions right now. So I do want to just thank you for answering there. And I've got again some pre-cooked ideas of what I believe is happening in the physical classroom versus what is happening in the virtual classroom. And it's a lot of what I was seeing coming in in the chat.

In the physical classroom, the presenter is the focal point, right? We're standing at the front. We're standing at the front of the room. Here we're not really standing at the front of the room. If I don't have my webcam on, I'm definitely not the focal point, at least not visually. We've got tables and chairs, we've got the body language – we already talked about that. We might have paper documents which we don't necessarily have in a virtual. You can turn to your neighbor and – which you can't really do in the virtual.

But let's really look at what's really – what do we rely on in a virtual classroom. One of the biggest things is participants are responsible for their own setup. In a physical classroom, they usually just show up. Right? We show up. We sit down. We might have our participant guide already printed out for us. Everything is set up.

But in a virtual classroom there is a lot more onus on the participants to be ready to join. And if you come to the production session, Karen's going to talk more about what that means. We have to, we're really reliant on the technology. OK, we're really reliant on the network connections. Case in point of what just happened.

What becomes more of the focal point is our presentation, more so than in the physical classroom. Again, the presenter is more of the focal point, and in here it's more of the presentation and the tools and the interface. We're using electronic files more than we're using physical paper files. We're learning in shorter segments. Again, we don't want to ask them to sit at their computer for 8 hours straight, we're tending to chunk it up, maybe for 90 minutes or an hour or 2 hours.

And there's a lot more simultaneous participation. I think this is really interesting, and you might go "Oh, I hadn't really thought of that before." But think about all the chat that's going on right now, while I'm presenting – and I'm OK with that. I feel comfortable with that, that's how this is designed. But you usually don't have that simultaneous participation happening in a face-to-face. Usually people are individually raising their hands. They're answering. Maybe the closest you have to simultaneous participation is doing small group work at tables. But even then it's table to table. Here, everybody can participate at the same time, look at the chat – two chat pods that I had up earlier. The poll that I had up earlier. So there is a lot of differences in the virtual classroom than there is in the physical classroom.

And these are probably the biggest things in all that we're going to talk about today. One is, obviously, the technology and the tools. That's what's driving live, virtual, instructor-led training. Is the technology and the tools that you are working in. How you engage. And we're going to talk about engagement techniques and some best practices as a facilitator. How you use your voice. Your voice represents you in a way that it doesn't represent you in a face-to-face, and we're going to talk about that and some best practices. And how you use visuals to engage learners and to keep learners engaged throughout a session. So these are the different areas that we're going to be discussing today in this session.

So I want to ask you, what do you think makes an online session great? Again I've got two chat pods, let's see if my system can handle it. On the left, what is the facilitator doing? If you've been in an online session, what is the facilitator doing that's really engaging the participants or you feel is just so great that this makes for a fantastic

session? And what are the participants doing? So if you want to answer that on the right-hand side chat. What are the participants doing that makes an online session great? And I'll give you a few moments to answer.

OK I see asking questions, for the facilitators, asking questions. Short discussions. Practice, practice, practice – Janet I saw you saying that a lot in the other sessions – I could not agree with you more. Practice, practice, practice. Asking for input. Taking breaks, keeping the engagement going. And let's see, what do you have to say about what participants are doing. They're communicating, they're chatting. Yeah, they're multitasking, and you know you might think that's a bad thing, but aren't we all – the facilitator and the participants you're asking them to multitask in here. I'm right now asking you to multitask by answering two different chat pods.

They're staying active, they're asking questions. Perfect. You all are fantastic. Thank you. I'm going to go back to showing just my slides. So again, I've got – oops got a little sticky there, there we go. What is the facilitator doing? The facilitator is stating a purpose or objective. They're using the tools effectively. You know you're in a good session when you know that that facilitator really understands how to use the tools, and uses them well. Can mitigate technical issues. If you don't have a producer, does your facilitator know how to mitigate and help and troubleshoot in the moment without it becoming a huge distraction? They can communicate well, and we're going to talk about communication techniques in here. They engage learners in relevant ways and in different ways throughout the session. They use their voice to engage, and they make it personal.

What are the participants doing? They're participating! Of course, in a good session. They try to resist distractions. If you were in Karen's session, she kicked hers off with some housekeeping slides. She asked you to shut down any unneeded applications, she's asking you to try to not be distracted to the best of your ability. They're asking questions. More of the onus is on the participants in an online session to stay engaged. To shut down that email, and to ask relevant questions. To answer those polls. To do the things that the facilitator is asking them to do. They're sharing their thoughts. And they're really helping. There's a lot more on the participants to make an online session great than maybe there was in a face-to-face.

So some things to think about – we're going to delve into some of these a little deeper. So let me ask you. And I – you can do this in the chat on the left hand side of the screen – What ways might you engage participants in a virtual environment? What do you find engaging? Go ahead and type that in chat on the left-hand side of your screen. What ways might you engage participants in a virtual environment? Storytelling. Relevant polls, I like that. Asking questions, chat. Quiz. Open-ended questions, thank you for saying that, we're going to talk about the best way to ask questions in here. Icebreakers. Use a lot of chat. Oh I like using images in a meaningful way, yes. OK, all – all really great things that you shared. I want to share some of what I think are some good engagement tips.

There's all different ways to engage. It's probably the number one question that I get is "How do I know my participants are engaged?" How do I know my participants are engaged. And to be honest I have a little bit of a snarky answer to that sometimes. Which is – you don't. I don't know what you are doing on the other side of the line here. And the best I can do as a facilitator is try to ensure that I am getting some sort of feedback from you. If you came to the design episode, we talked about one of the key principles is design for regular feedback.

Now this is facilitation skills, so maybe you weren't the designer or the architect of the course. But it's still your responsibility to make it your own. So some engagement tips. So you can look like this woman who's like super excited to be online. Like every time she's online "Yay! Virtual learning!" You want to engage early and engage often. It's that checking in. And how might that look?

You want to set the expectation of engagement. What is it that I want you to do throughout the session today? I kicked off this session right out of the gate with a question for you, and a poll. And maybe that's not in the design itself of the class that you've been asked to facilitate, but you can still set the expectation of engagement by engaging your participants from the moment they enter the room. The moment you open that room for them.

"Hi, how are you doing? Please type in chat, where are you joining from today?" I'm immediately setting that expectation that I want this to be a two-way with you and not just me talking to you for the next hour. And get participants using the tools early. So if I know I'm going to be using chat throughout the session, immediately start asking them to use chat. If I know I'm going to be asking them to use the annotation tool, have them do some sort of activity with the annotation tool. If I know I want them to use the green check for yes, just do a quick check-in. These are really easy things to do at the beginning of a session when you're using some sort of a housekeeping slides. So engage early, and engage often, and check in with your participants.

Be inclusive. Well, for me I work in a very global environment. I produce and I facilitate for organizations all over the world. And when I say be inclusive, I mean this on many different levels. A lot of people that might be coming to your sessions, English might not be their first language, and you might be teaching in English. So, how can you adjust your facilitation in order to be more inclusive?

One of the things to consider here, because we don't have that verbal – I mean, sorry, we don't have that body language to understand if someone's not understanding, and you're asking people to type in chat – if English is not their first language, remember that you have to take a moment to let them process what it is they want to answer. They have to think about typing it up. And then they have to type it up. Right? And that's not just if English isn't your first language. Everything takes a little bit longer in here. So really try to be inclusive and engage people on an individual level as well. Make them feel welcome.

Did you notice that every time I've asked you to do something, I thanked you for doing that? Thank you for answering the poll. Thank you for answering in chat, it's much appreciated. I saw a lot of people say "Ask open-ended questions," and I want to talk about asking questions in here because you want to ask questions and you want to ask a lot of questions. It's a great way to keep people engaged on a very simple level.

So, closed versus open-ended. When we say closed, we mean usually the answer is yes or no. And that might look like "Do you have any questions?" Yes or no. Open-ended is: "What questions do you have?" That's more open-ended. So you have to be really careful about are you using closed or are you using open-ended? Open-ended questions are a little more preferable, if you're facilitating it's a better way to start and engage your participants.

However, here are some tips about asking questions. You have to tell them where and how to answer your questions. So, do you have any questions? Click green check for yes or red X for no. What questions do you have? Please type in chat or click Raise Hand if you have a question, I'll call on you and I'll ask you to come off of mute. So I'm telling you where it is I want you to answer the question. I'm telling you how to answer that question.

What happens when I don't do that? When I skip that step? Do you have any questions? OK that pause was on purpose. Yeah silence. No, you know what, not everyone says no. They don't do anything. It's what we call in the U.S. "crickets." Maybe they call that other places, too, I don't know. Whatever your equivalent is to just hearing nothing. We call that crickets. And then, if you're a new facilitator, oh boy do you get nervous. You're like, did you hear my question? So, also be very succinct. Do you have any questions? Click green check for yes or red X for no. You'll find these at the top of your screen where it looks like a person raising their hand, click the drop-down arrow and select yes – green check for yes or red X for no. If you're doing open-ended: What questions do you have? Please type in chat or click Raise Hand. You'll find the Raise Hand icon at the top of your screen where it looks like a person raising their hand. So be very succinct.

And this isn't just about asking questions, this is also about giving any sort of instructions in the virtual classroom. Remember, everyone is multitasking. Everyone has some sort of distraction probably happening. You have to let them know exactly what it is that you want them to do and where they can find the tool if you're asking them to use a specific tool. OK so then repeat yourself. Do you have any questions? Please give me a green check for yes or a red X for no. This is where you can find the green check for X and no and then repeat the question. And then wait for the responses.

Be silent, maybe go on mute. Take a sip of water. And let me ask all of you, how long should you wait for a response from your participants? How long do you feel you should wait for a response? Go ahead and type in chat for me. I'm seeing everywhere from 10 seconds to 2 minutes. Well, I think you're going to get a different answer from anybody who's been doing this for a really long time.

For my folks who would say they're experts, you know by all means chime in. The answer to that is it really depends. Often when I'm coaching new facilitators I'll say if nothing else, go on mute, take a sip of water, count to 10. And this is one of the hardest things for new online facilitators to do. If you're used to having that body language, if you're used to that immediate reaction from the participants by clicking their raise hand, remember everybody has to process a little bit more what it is you're asking them to do. I'm asking you to click green check for yes or red X for no, but you've still got to go find it. You've still got to go up, you've got to find it, and you've got to click on it. And that's after deciding how you want to answer. I'm asking you to type in chat – you've got to think about what you want to type. And then you've got to type and then if you're a perfectionist, you've got to delete and fix all your typos as well. By the way, typos are always fine in these environments, we all do it.

So you have to wait. And why it's so hard to do, though, because what ends up happening is people ask the question or they ask the participants to do something, they don't wait, and then they immediately go, "OK, well, I guess nobody has any questions and I'm going to move on." And I'm a participant and I'm in the middle of typing a question to you, and now you're moving on, I guess I won't ask that question anymore. You just shut down

maybe half your class from asking a question. So you have to be quiet, and wait for those responses. And then if the responses don't come, if say maybe after about 30 seconds, repeat the question. OK? Asking questions – those are my tips for asking questions.

So let's go back to our really excited person that is online learning. So engage early. Engage often. Be inclusive. Ask open-ended questions. Mitigate what I call virtual lurking. Those are the folks that you see are online, but not once did you see them type in chat, answer a poll, ask a question, raise their hand, come on microphone. But you see them. They're in the attendee pod. I have called that virtual lurking.

Now, it is up to you, and what you are teaching, whether you feel you need to mitigate this or not. If you are in a class where it's a requirement that you hear from every single person, this goes back to, you better set that expectation at the very beginning of your session. I want to hear from everybody today. I expect to hear from everybody today. That can be in chat. That can be click raise hand. So you really have to set that expectation. Now, I'm going to go back to this whole being inclusive. Yes and class size is important Vanessa, if you get a class of 50, guess what? The virtual lurking is going to happen. If you have a class of 15, it's a little bit easier to mitigate this. And this goes back to the whole being inclusive though.

You have to think, if you're in a global environment though, don't necessarily think virtual lurking is a bad thing. I do not want this to sound like a bad connotation. You have to think about who you're teaching to. In certain cultures, that is, that is more of how they learn. They sit back and they learn. They're not as engaged. They're not maybe what you consider as engaged. And that's OK. So please be cognizant of who your audience is and how you feel if you want to mitigate.

One of the questions I also get besides "How do you know people are engaged?" is "Should I call on people?" Should I directly call on people? And I'm not a fan, personally, but that's my facilitation style. And I'm also an introvert. And I despise being called on, personally. However, let's say I really need to hear from people and I haven't seen a certain person or couple people responding in polls. You can be a little lighthearted about it and go "I really need everybody to respond. I've got this poll going, I don't have 100% yet, please make sure you're answering."

If you can see who isn't answering and you really need to, send them a private chat. This is my recommendation. Before you call them out, send them a private chat and say, "Hey Barb, is everything OK on your end? I haven't seen you engage yet. How can I help you?" Or ask your producer to send them a private chat. More times than not, that's going to perk them up. They were probably checking email or something and not listening and that's going to get their attention as well. Yeah, private chat is your friend. I always like to give the benefit of the doubt. I don't know what's going on on the other side of that computer. I don't know, maybe you got a phone call from your school that your child is sick, and that obviously is going to take priority to the class that you are sitting in right now. So do the best you can there.

And my last tip here is use your tools wisely. Again, you might not be in charge of what the actual design is. So normally I would say, don't poll just to poll. I've seen a lot of people write "if you're going to poll, make it

relevant.” If you’re new to this, and if you’re looking at chat right now, and you think it’s overwhelming, imagine how that chat looks to me right now and I’m facilitating. There’s no way with almost 600 people in here that I could possibly read all of that chat and stay focused on what I’m trying to teach. But you have noticed that I’ve caught a few here and there.

And a really great tip is: check your chat in batches. It’s OK to stop and tell your participants, “hey, I realize there’s a lot of chat going on, I’m going to take a moment, I’m going to be silent. I’m going to read through your chat. I want to make sure that I am not missing anything, please stand by.” This is a good time to go on mute. This is a good time to take a drink of water as you read through the chat. And then as you’re reading through the chat, if you’re going to answer a question that you see in chat, repeat that question, because not everybody is reading what you’re reading. You’re scrolling on your own. So you’ll say, “Joe had a question about an LMS,” and you want to read the question out and then answer the question. Don’t just start answering the question, there’s no context for everybody else.

And the other thing I want to offer up is the pointer tool is your friend. OK, the pointer tool is your friend. You see me use the little green pointer tool here in Adobe Connect. Almost every platform has some sort of variation of the pointer tool. If you’re in Zoom, you actually find it on your annotation toolbar; this is a Zoom example here, so there’s an arrow. There’s also a little red spotlight type of thing that follows your cursor around. WebEx is the same way. Both in Zoom and WebEx, if you use your arrow tool, it actually has your name on it as well, so you know who’s using. So, use your pointer tool. And I say this because this is another way to engage is that visual engagement that’s happening. I’m pointing to you where it is I need you to be – that you need to be focusing on at any given time. Of course, just like everything else, if you’re not paying attention, this could maybe make you a little sick, so be careful how you use it. Oh, funny, Karen – your cat will like the red pointer. Yeah be careful with that with the kitty cats.

OK let me stop, let me go back just a slide let me stop here. What questions do you have about these engagement tips? I’m just going to stop and take a couple quick questions here. Is there a pointer tool in Adobe Connect? Yes I’m using it, it’s that green pointer that you see on the screen right now. That is found up near the top in the share pod. You can also use your annotation tools as well. WebEx does have a pointer, it’s found in the annotation tools. OK. Rashanda, you said what about whiteboards? Did you have a specific question about whiteboards? OK. So Rashanda I might answer your question a little later, if not, we’ll see if we can come back to it. Oh good question: Is it possible to get some engagement in a meeting tool? Of course there is! You don’t have to rely just on the tools themselves. And where I’m going here, what I’ve got planned here for you I think you’re going to see that in action.

We keep getting this question: To webcam or not to webcam? You all have been asking this over the last couple of hours. It’s one of the number one questions I get behind “How do I know my participants are engaged?” So here are the top four questions that I get about webcams and then I have a question for you.

Here they are: What do you think about me using my webcam? It’s like the first question. I get that all the time from presenters “What do you think about me using my webcam?” Should I have it on the whole time I’m

teaching? Someone asked that earlier in this session. Should all the participants have their webcam on? And what are the max number of people you should have that should have their webcams on at any given time? So, these are the top questions I get. I'm going to answer each one of these.

But, before I do, I'm going to bring a poll over here for you: Should you use a webcam? Make that a little bit bigger. "Yes, always, it fosters connection." "Yes, but sparingly, as it can be a distraction." "Yes, but only if the facilitator is well practiced." "Maybe just at the beginning and during Q&A." "Depends on the situation." "No, it eats up bandwidth." I'm going to give you a second to answer that. OK. I'm going to go ahead and broadcast the results.

Looks like the winner is "Depends on the situation," and I wholeheartedly agree with that. It also depends on a lot of other factors as well. Bandwidth, how savvy is your facilitator, what exactly is the course that you're doing, what is the intent of having the webcam on? Let me address each one of these real quick.

What do you think about me using my webcam? Number one question I get from presenters. And I'll say – well, that is your prerogative, to have your webcam on, but let me give you some food for thought. Me, personally? I am not a huge advocate of having a webcam on when I am teaching a class, and here's the reason why. One, it eats up bandwidth and Karen talked about that in the last session. It's first thing that's going to start making your audio hitchy. Second of all, what exactly is it that you need the participants look at during a session? We're asking them to do a lot of multitasking. I'm asking you to type in chat. I'm asking you to look at my screen. To answer a poll. Maybe I have a whiteboard going on. Do I really need them to be looking at me as well? Am I able to make that virtual eye contact and have that connection with you?

For me, I can't. Because what is the facilitator doing? They're looking at chat, they're looking at PowerPoint, they're running a poll, they're running a whiteboard, they're not looking into the camera, they're looking all over the screen. And if you're like me who has two dual monitors, if you were here at the very beginning when I turned my webcam on, it was really hard for me because my Adobe is on my larger screen and that's not where my camera is. My notes are on my laptop, which is where my camera is. So there's no way that I would ever be looking at the screen, and to me that becomes quite the distraction, for me as a facilitator. And, it can become quite the distraction for the participants. Agree to disagree. That's OK, that's just my advice. And if you're really savvy and you're on one monitor and you love being on webcam and you feel that you – that what you're teaching it makes it really valuable – by all means, be on the webcam.

"Should I be on the webcam the whole time?" I like the whole just be on it at the very beginning when you're saying hello and then maybe at the end when you're doing Q&A. Again, it eats up the bandwidth, and if you have – like today, I would not recommend it. 600 of us on here, that's just one more thing to hitch. So it really depends.

"Should all participants have theirs on?" Also depends. If you have a really small group, by all means have everybody on webcam. But just make sure that they have the right settings for that, that they feel comfortable. That you set some ground rules for how to use your webcam.

And then “What are the max number of people who should have their webcams on?” That is such a tricky question. You’ve got 600 people; do you think that would be a great idea for all of us to be on our webcam today? Talk about crashing the server. Not a great idea. I don’t really have an answer to that one. Sometimes it’s going to be dependent on your platform. And let’s remember too, that we are dependent on the platform and their capabilities. We are dependent on the servers that all of this is running off of. We have no control of how many people are hitting servers.

So I think what happens here, now remember I’m talking in the context of teaching a course. I am not talking in the context of being in a meeting or virtual teaming. Right, by all means, we need that more than ever right now, is to see each other and have that human connection. So by all means turn it on. But I’m talking about full on engagement to me it can be a – it can be a distraction. It just depends on what you’re teaching though. I hope. I hope that answers your questions about webcams.

If you’re going to use your webcam, though, I do have some advice for you. So let me ask you this question: What’s wrong with this webcam picture? Go ahead and type in chat. What’s wrong with this webcam picture? By the way, that’s me. Background, bad lighting, looks bored. Messy background. Fuzzy. Not engaged. Yeah, but you know what happens, people come on webcam and they don’t realize they look like this. OK, yeah you’re right. It’s not professional, I’m in a sweatshirt, I’m like leaning into the computer. I’ve got this garish overhead light. That’s quite a mess back there. That was my art space back there. I look tired, like I don’t want to be there. I hope that wasn’t my own session. This is another one. We were in the process of, we had just sold our house and we were moving. I’ve got like a dog crate behind me, I’ve got all these boxes. If I knew this was going on, I by no means would be on a webcam that day. Right? There’s no way that I could – I think I was actually working on a stack of boxes that day.

This is probably a better setup. Hopefully you agree. First of all, I’ve got more of the daylight helping me out. The lighting is much better. I’m wearing more professional clothes. I think that mess is still in the back corner, but I’ve hidden it with this nifty whiteboard so you can’t see it. I actually have a clean desk, it’s amazing how many times you might see really messy desks. I don’t have anything that might be offensive in the background. Thank you Karen for saying I look great. I’m actually dressed with makeup and hair done. All right, so a big difference. If you are going to use your webcam, be really cognizant of your space. Test it out. Make sure that you’ve got good lighting.

Here’s some kind of quick best practices. Determine the use of your webcam. Is it really relevant to be using your webcam? Practice, practice, practice with your webcam, practice that virtual eye contact. Make sure that you have the right equipment. Look the part. Even if it’s just from the chest up – you all know what I’m talking about. How many of you are in your pajama bottoms right now? Still. And that’s OK, because we’re only seeing the head up. So at least make sure you look professional from the head up. Balance your light source. Clean up your space. And, you might be tired of looking at me, here’s the beautiful Karen Hyder, she’s got it all going on here. With the virtual eye contact, the beautiful purple clean wall behind her, her headset. She’s smiling into the computer. And that brings me to my next.

We'll talk about smiling in a little bit. So let's move on to another way that's really important to engage the participants, and that's using your voice. OK, your voice will represent you in a way that is different in a face-to-face. In face-to-face, you know I've done a lot of face-to-face. You're usually standing in the front of the room. You're using your hand gestures. You're walking around. You're using your body language.

You don't have that. In fact, moving around is not a great idea because your headset might rub on things, you can hear – a lot of times I hear presenters and their cords are moving, which becomes a distraction. Their chairs are constantly moving, which becomes a distraction. Your voice is going to represent you in a way that it might not have had to before. And I want you to think about your favorite podcast personality or radio personality – and what was it about that radio or podcast personality that made them engaging? Go ahead and type that in chat. Your favorite podcast or radio personality – what makes them engaging? You're not seeing anything on the screen. Yeah, they have a great voice. They're modulating. They have enthusiasm. They have humor. I could shift – If I'm really, really good, I don't need to have a lot of slides. I'm going to engage you with my voice. And if I'm talking like this the whole time, and I sound like I'm reading from the screen and I'm very monotone, you're probably going to disengage very quickly. Right? You need to have the voice inflection. For the sake of time, I'm not going to do this next activity.

I was going to ask you, what are best practices for using your voice effectively? I'm just going to go ahead and bring up some best practices here. Modulate and project your voice. Talk outward. Repeat your instructions. I talked about that before. Repeat your instructions, repeat your questions. Give very clear, succinct instructions.

Do you notice that every time I ask you to do something, I tell you how to do it? Keep your tone conversational, don't read. It's OK to script things out, but don't read from the screen, people can read for themselves. And if you are going to read, practice it so you sound more conversational. That's going to be more engaging. And when you're not speaking, mute your mic.

Some things to avoid. Well, I just said some of these. Reading from the screen. Don't be afraid of the silence. If you're teaching a 2-hour session, you need to give yourself breaks as well. So, be OK with the silence. That's one of the hardest things for new virtual facilitators to do. Is to be OK with the silence. It makes them crazy.

Again, mute your mic. Take a drink of water. Be careful of filler words – I hope I don't have a lot of filler words or sounds coming today. If you're not sure what your filler words are, I always recommend that you put together maybe a 10-minute presentation, and record yourself. Listen to yourself. Determine what your filler words are. And see if you can coach those out of you. That's a whole other session about coaching filler words. Common filler words are OK, um, uh. Common fillers are smacking your lips. I often have to tell facilitators "Please stop smacking your lips."

OK. The last thing you might see there is apologizing for the tool. We do that a lot. "Sorry it's not working." "Sorry for the bandwidth." sorry sorry. Try not to apologize for the tool. We're all on the tool together, we understand technology fails. That's not on you. The best that you can do, is if you're going to apologize, don't apologize

necessarily, just say, “Thank you for your patience. We are working through this right now. We’ll be back on shortly.”

Smile! And sit up straight! You’re projecting your voice. Guess what? We can tell if you’re being all slouchy. And you don’t want to be there. Be like this guy – or gal, I don’t know if it’s a guy or gal, I just thought he was cute with his smile. Smile and sit up straight. Heck, stand up! A lot of us have those stand-up desks, and if you’re a stand-up facilitator, maybe you feel more comfortable with your stand-up desk and teaching. Just be really careful doing a lot of big movements, because if they’re hearing that in your microphone, it can get distracting. And I don’t say just smile and sit up straight because you’re on camera. You’re actually – your diaphragm is going to have more room, you’re going to be able to fill your lungs more when you sit up straight, and you’re going to be able to project your voice more when you’re sitting up straight.

I’ve already talked a little bit about giving succinct instructions. If you’re new to facilitating online, get really comfortable and really savvy on the best way to give instructions on the platform that you are using. So we’ll just do a couple of these for the sake of time. But let me ask you, and you can type these in chat, we’ll start with this very first one: If in the physical classroom, you were going to demonstrate, you might have said, “Let me demonstrate.”

In the virtual classroom, what might you say instead? I’m going to share my screen. Look for my pointer. Watch what is happening on my screen. Right, if you’re demonstrating, you’re likely using application sharing and you’re going to say something like “please look at my screen as I start my sharing.” “I’m going to start application sharing now, please give me a green check that you’re able to see my screen.” “You should be seeing X, Y, and Z right now.” Very succinct instructions. Because, again, I can’t tell if you’re confused. Choose this or this. You might want to say, “Please respond by giving me a green check for yes or a red X for no.”

Share an example of your own. I might say “If you’d like to share an example, please click raise hand. I will then call on you.” Say “Karen, thank you for raising your hand. If you’d like to come off of mute, the floor is yours.” That’s a lot of instruction. So these are just a few examples. We have a table of these that we’re going to provide in our [handout](#) as well, so I think the most important thing for you is to really understand the platform and the tools that you’re going to be using.

If you came to Karen’s session, you learned that all these platforms, although they have the same feature functionalities, they all behave differently. And the tools are found in different places. So let’s say you’re starting a poll, you might have a visual cue on the screen that there is going to be a poll, and your verbal cue might be: “You will now see a poll appear on the right hand side of your screen. Please take one minute to select your answer. Don’t forget to click submit button!” And then you wait.

Let’s say you’re using the annotation tools. Again, you might have a visual cue so they know what to look for. Where to find it. “Using your annotation tools down at the top left corner of your screen, please use the text tool. It looks like a T, it’s the second one over. Click on the T and then click on the screen where you would like to respond.” If answering a yes or no question, you’ve already heard us do this. “Using your status indicators down

at the right-hand side of the screen, please give a green check for yes or a red X for no.” So hopefully what you’re seeing is how succinct these are.

And if you're doing a lot of training, over time you're not going to have to say the full thing – I'm not going to have to say every single “You'll find this at the right-hand side of your screen.” As I'm in these sessions more and more with the same people, eventually I can say “Just give me a green check for yes or a red X for no.” But if you are new, script these out, and really understand so they're just sort of second nature in your tool. And when someone goes “I can't find my annotation tools” you know to say – if you're in Zoom – “Please hover your mouse at the top of your screen, you're going to get a drop-down menu. From there you're going to click more options. You'll then see your annotation tools there. Click on annotation tools and that will bring up your bar.” OK, so it's a lot to say. If you came to the design session, you might remember me saying “Time online is different than time face-to-face.” This right here? Case in point. You have to give – and everything requires – instructions, and this is one of the reasons why.

I'm going to close out about some preparation techniques to make sure that you are successful. And then of course Karen's going to take an even deeper dive, I'm going to scratch the surface here, just from a facilitator perspective, and then hopefully have a little bit of time for questions.

Equipment – what do you need for equipment? I mean, there's probably some obvious things, but I want to talk a little bit about each one. A good, wired, headset. A good wired headset. I get a lot of presenters who come in and say “Oh I have, you know I have my earbuds,” and yeah the earbuds sound great, or “I've got the Bluetooth” and “Oh it worked just fine in Skype, how come it's not working in here?”

If you can, try to be wired. I know that's becoming harder and harder to do, but in our experience. Karen Hyder and Karyn Gleeson, any of us who do production work, a lot of production work, we're going to tell you: a lot of times when your microphone – I'm sorry, your headset – is not working, we're going to say “Can you go buy a wired headset?” And guess what? It works much better. What brand to use? OK, this is the reason I said good and not the most expensive great. Honestly, I find the more expensive the headset, the worse it works. Especially here in Adobe Connect.

Yes I have the Plantronics, they work terrible in here. My favorite one, I'm going to date myself, was like a 1990 \$19 at Radio Shack. I don't think Radio Shack exists any more, but hopefully you're getting the idea of what I'm saying. Don't feel like you have to go get the most expensive headset out there. Your gaming. If you've got a teenager or somebody at home, you could try their gaming headset too, just go steal that from them, they probably need a break from that anyways. It does still exist! OK well I don't know, I never see anymore, but OK. That's my favorite.

Have a main computer and, if you can, a backup computer. In the session before, I'm sorry I can't remember your name, you were giving some really great advice about your setup. Again, Karen's going to talk more about this. I have my main setup. I have a second computer that I'm logged on in case I need to suddenly move over to the

other one. I have two – actually, I have three monitors. But I always have two monitors going on, it does make life easier. Especially if you're working in Zoom; I won't deep dive into that.

Have a wired internet, if you can. Again I know that's becoming harder and harder to do. If nothing else, have an alternate internet source. Karen alluded to this. So, on my main computer I'm on my internet for home. On my second computer, I'm using my hotspot on my iPhone. I'm using the hotspot on my iPhone. So if all else fails on my main computer, I can move over to my secondary computer and my secondary alternate source.

Know your platform! Hopefully that's coming across in all of the sessions. If you don't have a producer to help troubleshoot for you, you need to be able to troubleshoot very quickly if you're the only one in there. Plus it's going to help you to be better at engaging if you know your platform.

Have a plan B. So I've got a short little list of some things that could happen to you when you're the facilitator. That is coming up on your screen. Again I'm not going to deep dive here, these are all things that have happened to me that will happen to you. I can almost guarantee it. These things happen and you need to know how to be able to punt – and this is why it is so important to have that backup equipment. Backup internet source. And a backup plan. If your application sharing is suddenly not working, what are you going to do instead? Your internet goes out – what are you going to use instead? Am I still using my webcam? No, I am not using my webcam, Holly.

So backup plans, here's just a couple quick tips. Print out a copy of your slides. So, maybe you suddenly can't see but the participants can still hear you, and your producer can continue to move forward on your behalf. Then great, at least you know where you are and you can keep talking because you have your notes handy. Have a backup presenter if you can. That's ideal. It's not – doesn't usually happen, it's really hard to find that, but have some sort of backup plan. Log on to a second machine. Have your IT department or tech support on speed dial so they can jump in. Sometimes I have sessions where maybe tech support comes in the first 10 to 15 minutes of my session for me, and then when I know everything is good to go, they can log off. Place videos outside of the platform. That's sort of an outlier for this list. And know the tools. Be flexible. Be ready to punt.

Final tips. Oh my goodness. These are – you're going to know all of these, I already talked about all of these. Be succinct. Monitor chat regularly. Reference questions and give thanks. So that is "Great question Kimberly, thank you for asking that question. Kimberly's question was ..." Encourage contribution from participants.

My last little tip here is have a glass of water and wear lip balm. You might go "Gosh, that's a weird thing to say" but remember me talking about the smacking of the lips? Sometimes that comes from dry mouth. Dry mouth comes from nerves. Guess what helps with that? Well, it won't help your nerves. Lip balm. Well maybe it does. But if you put some lip balm on, it will help with the smacking and the dry mouth sound. And that can become a distraction very quickly.

OK. Plan. Practice. Know the tools. Test everything. Have a backup plan.

We've got a minute for questions. I forgot to put my contact information up last time, for my last session. I'll bring it up here. What questions do you have? Please type in chat. Ah yes Hall's lozenge helps. Going back one slide – to the final tips slide? Which slide? There you go. This one? Before this one? You know, I'm going to provide all this in a handout as well. OK. What other questions? All right, I know we're at time. I know we've been pushing a lot of information as Karen and I like to say. We could talk about this stuff all day long. In fact, we do talk about this stuff all day long. In some ways we're scratching the surface. We're both very available after session. Contact us. Connect with us on LinkedIn. We are notorious for giving out resources as well. So thank you very much for joining. We're going to put the room on hold. Thank you again, it was a pleasure having all of you. Good luck to you in whatever your endeavor is in the virtual classroom training. Thank you.

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