

# Virtual Presentation? You've Got This!



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# Virtual Presentations - You've Got This!

Our company, Kassalen Meetings & Events, LLC, is an association management company. We opened our doors in 1996 and have been providing outsourced business services to multiple professional associations ever since. One component of those business services is meeting planning. Our team has coordinated hundreds of international, national, state-wide, regional congresses, conventions, conferences, board meetings, and workshops over several decades.

Great meeting planners and convention coordinators all share the same talent – that of “crisis manager” and the COVID-19 global pandemic would have left those less experienced professional planners shaking in their boots/heels/Clarks, but not us, not my amazing team. We have twirled, bent, rotated, oscillated, spun, swiveled, and thrust ourselves into the digital meeting world. Notice that I did not say the ‘p-’ word.

Just when everything we have learned over many years seems to have become irrelevant, not applicable, and we are starting at square one, we must also remember that speaker presentations and those delivering expert content to our audiences also need a new road map to succeed. Kassalen Meetings & Events has provided this ebook to help presenters deliver expert content in the digital realm.

## Virtual Presentation Best Practices 101 (or should we say 2020?)

It's easy. Think Lights, Camera, Action as a start. There is a new meaning for “Presentation in a Box” and you are the star. You will be delivering your presentation on a tiny screen in pixel dimensions such as 1280 x 720 or 1920 x 1080 to desktop computers, laptops, tablets, or maybe even cell phones. You are going to deliver succinct content, be energized, smile, and connect with your audience - virtually.

**1. Check Your Connection** – Your internet connection will make or break your presentation. Being able to effectively record yourself online takes trial and error, practice, and watching YouTube video demos. Knowing that you are prerecording and that your video will be edited will allow you to breathe a sigh of relief, yet as a best practice, you want to check your tech.

- a. If you can plug your computer directly into your internet modem using an Ethernet cable, do so. It will help avoid voice dragging and keep your audio and video image in sync. Close all other apps while you are recording, turn off your cell phone, put the dog in the yard, and disable computer notifications and sounds.

**2. Lights** – Lighting is key to virtual presentations. You want to have your face be well-lit so that those sitting 12 inches away from their screens see you looking your best. Speakers whose faces are poorly lit, or those washed out from the sunlight beaming in, are sure to lose the attention of their audience. While some natural light is good, avoid sitting very close to a window or having a window behind you.

Tips: Avoid overhead lights. Try giving your face that on-camera glow using side lighting from a desk lamp, or even an O-ring light that many professional speakers use. Do a few tests runs using the lights in different areas around your desk. Record yourself and view the results. You may also need to touch up your make up, change your lip color, or powder your nose, literally, to avoid glare. Eyeglasses present a special problem. I remove my lenses, if possible, and make sure that I deliver my content in brief sections that I can easily recite from memory.

**3. Camera** – Consider the placement of your camera. You only have a few seconds to get the audience attuned with your face, voice, and the content you are about to deliver. LOOK AT THE CAMERA and not at your computer screen. Capture the attention of your audience.

- a. Your camera should be eye level. Elevate your camera in some way, whether you place your laptop on boxes, affix your cell phone to a tripod or use a clip-on apparatus affixed to your desk. Eye level is the height you are seeking and then speak directly into the camera.

Tips: Place a Post-it note on each slide of your computer camera with the words “Look Here!” or “Smile.” Better yet, tape a picture of your baby, puppy, or partner next to the camera and you will surely emit a natural smile each time you look there.

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- 4. Action** – This is where many best practices contribute to a captivating presentation. Follow one or many of these strategies:
- a. Stand up! Seriously, it helps you to feel more natural during the presentation and increases your energy level. This strategy might be optimal if you talk with your hands. Just be sure to use slow motions. Again, your camera should be at eye level and speak directly to the camera as if you are having an enthusiastic conversation with friends.
  - b. Slow down! You should pause between sentences and place emphasis on important thoughts. Remember that your voice is transmitting through the audio systems of many different computers. Slowing down your talk will help your audio sync with your on-screen image.
    - i. If you are prerecording, and we certainly hope that you are because that itself is a best practice, pacing yourself and pausing between sentences will help your production team to edit out your bloopers.
    - ii. If you will be having your video recording edited professionally, or by your teenager using iMovie, you will want to count down the start of your talk, and each segment thereafter. Here's an example:

**(CLICK RECORD) then count down 3, 2, 1, take a deep breath, locate your camera, and start your presentation with a big smile. You may be introducing yourself or introducing someone else, but you always want to make sure that you are recording for a few seconds before speaking.**

**Tips:** If you get tongue-twisted, or lose your thought, STOP. Take a deep breath, gather your thoughts and institute the '3-2-1 countdown.' You can do this as many times as you need throughout your recording. All of your great b-roll will be edited together to show your best you. Remember, 3-2-1, deep breath, and begin again.

- c. Watch your back – it is important to know what's behind you before recording. Try using a background that enhances, not detracts, from your professional image. If your recording platform allows for use of a virtual background, try to use one with some depth instead of a flat wall. You want to avoid having laundry, dirty dishes, or moving items in your background during the recording of your presentation. If you or your employer/facility owns a green screen, this type of background would allow your video editor to insert any background she/he wanted for your presentation. Ask your AV Department if it can help you create a good-looking video. Professional backgrounds help you put your best presentation forward when representing yourself and your employer. Don't forget, this recording could be repurposed in several ways after your event.



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**TIPS:** Have fun! Be authentic, animated, and play to the camera. Everyone has a front row seat so talk directly to your audience. Your passion and enthusiasm will make a connection with the audience. Let your personality come through the camera.

**5. Dress for Success** – You must dress for the occasion and the impression you want to make. If you are presenting at an Awards Dinner, wear something appropriate that matches with the theme of the event. If you are presenting to high school students, you may want to wear something more relaxed and casual. Using our suggestion of standing during your presentation might rule out wearing your favorite shorts.

- a. Solid colors work best. You do not want a busy pattern confusing the brains of those you have important content to deliver. You want your key points, not your outfit, to be the talk of the online chat. Bright colors work well to help capture audience attention as well and make sure that your outfit does not blend into your background.
- b. If seated, you will be seen from the waist up so focus on hair, makeup, and bling. Get ready for that close-up. Think nicely groomed hair, scarf, earrings, lapel pin, necklace, clean-shaven face, funky frames, interesting tie, and a nice neckline. Look well-assembled without being distracting.

**6. Can You Hear Me?** Testing the sound through the microphone that you will be using for your recording is essential. External mics are best for capturing commanding sound from a speaker. If one is not available, opt for use of a headset, air pods, or earbuds with a microphone. Using the microphone on your laptop or computer will work, but you will need to ensure that you are speaking loudly and clearly. Remember, you are transferring your energy through an audio system with no queues from your audience. Record, listen, and adjust your sound.

**Tips:** Test different microphones to see which gives you the best audio playback. Try a plug-in headset, try your air pods, or just speak loudly into your computer's microphone. Then listen to the recordings until you find a microphone that provides the quality you seek.

**7. Prepare and Practice!** You have earned the right to speak on this subject therefore know your key points and deliver them.

- a. Write your content, then cut it in half. While content is King/Queen, it is very difficult to command someone's attention during a long presentation. People value their time and are easily distracted – two things working against virtual presentations. You need to deliver content, keep people engaged, use animation, voice inflection, and maintain eye contact. Write a script or use note cards with key points to trigger your next thoughts. Remember, you can record in short intervals, stop to take a break, review your next paragraph, and repeat the '3-2-1 countdown' as many times as needed.

**Tips:** Find out exactly how much time you have to deliver your presentation. Practice with a stopwatch from your phone app or with a kitchen timer. Digital platforms control on-screen presentations using pre-built timing schedules so you can bet that no music will start playing before you get cut off. Remember to go slowly, pace yourself, and use your allotted time. This is one area where prerecording has great advantages. Your editor will ensure that your video is exactly the correct length of time.

- b. Have a conversation with your camera and get more comfortable with your body language and voice. Speak passionately about your subject. Tell a story. Set the stage. Create an experience the audience will remember. Use analogies to get your point across and keep your audience interested in who is on screen. Tell them why your presentation is important to them.
- c. Practice with an audience. Tell your family that you need their feedback as you practice your presentation or record with a colleague to learn from each other. Your audience can observe you live or view the practice presentation online and critique your sample recording. You will improve every time you practice. Be yourself, let your personality shine through, and get your message across in short, animated, memorable spurts.

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NOTE: Use of *Microsoft Teams* running on the computer platform of certain employers, such as hospitals, may create issues for those using *Teams* to record their videos. The presenter may need to seek permission from the employer to transfer/send the recording 'outside of the hospital facility' meaning, sending it to a video editor. Avoid using any recording software that is provided on your employer's network and not subscribed to by you personally. *Microsoft Teams* is a great package but our company has run into some issues with receiving recordings without explicit approval from the employer.

**8. Record** Every presenter will have a different level of knowledge when it comes to recording themselves as they present. Many different devices will provide you with the MP4 file that you need to send to your video editor or to use in a video-editing application you can work with your own device to make your final presentation file.

- a. Enlist help. Check to see if your employer has an AV Department that can assist you with your recording. They may have equipment, better cameras and microphones that are available to you. Availability of a green screen will provide the opportunity for a virtual background, or logo, to be placed behind you on video.
- b. Decide which device you would like to use and watch YouTube demonstrations. Zoom and MS Teams are popular platforms to use. Recording oneself is fairly straightforward. Saving the MP4 file and finding it later is another thing. On Zoom, you always want to "Record to the Cloud." This will be the easiest place for you to find your previous video recordings. You may also "Record to Computer" and have the file saved in an assigned folder on your device. Basic Zoom accounts are free and will allow you to record your presentation and save it automatically in the correct format. If you have PowerPoint slides to show, you can use a screencast format and the recording will capture your voice and your slides. You can then email or transfer that MP4 video to your video editor.
- c. One can easily record a video on their iPhone or Android device, much like taking a video at the beach while on vacation. Video camera quality on most cell phones are very good. You will want to secure your cell phone or iPad onto an apparatus such as a clip-on desk clamp or tripod. Remember that cell phone microphones may be located at the BOTTOM of your device so do not cover your mic. Video recordings are best viewed in a landscape format so position your device horizontally.
- d. The recorded video from your device will be MP4 format and you can simply email the video to your editor or transfer it into an application like iMovie if you want to do the editing yourself. Your video will be edited and you will be able to view the final product prior to the event.

**9. Enjoy and be Proud!** You are now able to sit back, relax, and participate in the event without the worry of 'how your presentation will go.' Be active on the live chat, if available, and field questions from the audience during your presentation. When the event arrives, you will feel proud knowing that you have knocked this presentation out of the park by using these tips and best practices for digital presentation delivery.

**STILL NEED HELP?** Our Team at Kassalen Meetings & Events is here to answer your questions and help you through the process of prerecording your video presentation. Our video editor can work with you directly or we can also provide you with a link to connect to our recording system and we will record your video along with you. Call us at 412-343-2235 or email [Beth@Kassalen.org](mailto:Beth@Kassalen.org) or the KME event coordinator for your specific event.