Maximizing the impact of your virtual presentations.

When presenting virtually, all the basics of effective presentations still apply. However, you must consider the essential differences in how you plan, prepare, and connect to your audience. Here's how to deliver memorable virtual presentations with confidence.

Make (virtual) eye contact.
- Making eye contact is critical in a presentation, but in a virtual presentation, you are looking into a camera. Make eye contact with the camera, stay relaxed, and look at the lens directly. *Don't fall into staring at the screen.*

Speak to an audience of one.
- It's counter-intuitive, but you have to pretend that you have an audience of one. In a large room, you'd look around, making eye contact with dozens, if not hundreds, of people. In a virtual setting, you must assume you're talking with just one person. Look at the lens, speak to her (or him) as if no one else were in the room.

Anticipate audience reactions.
- You and the audience know that they can't speak up, talk back, or respond to what you say. So, you'll have to anticipate their questions, their concerns, and their objections. That means you'll have to deal with whatever they're worried about as a matter of direct communication.

Speak in the second person.
- Saying "I know *you're* concerned about this," or "I've thought about what's most important to *you,* and . . . " If the audience thinks you're speaking directly (and only) to them, they'll stay focused and make your words their principal concern. The most important issue here is your concern for their interest.

Create contrast.
- Varying your presentation style, types of visuals, and mediums to convey information. Audience members will quickly get bored with just a talking head. Include well-designed visuals as an extension of you. Switch back and forth between you, your voice, and your slides to help keep your audience engaged.

Plan your space.
- Choose a quiet spot, prevent distractions; clean up and stage the background area; test the lighting; and be wary of windows and moving parts.
- Set up a scenario that mimics talking to actual people (if you can't see faces on your screen). For example, printing off three photos and pasting them on the wall behind your computer forces you to look into your computer camera rather than down at your notes. It also tricks your brain into thinking that people are there in the room listening to you, which then encourages you to be more conversational.

Plan your appearance for the camera.
- Avoid bright colors and busy patterns; keep your hair out of your eyes, so you don't have to push it back during the presentation; wear only small jewelry.

Be mindful of your nonverbals.
- Stand if you can, but don't move around too much. If you are sitting, sit up straight.
- Practice your movements because simple movements can appear bigger on screen. Try to avoid distracting movements like scratching your chin or pushing your hair back. Keep your gestures controlled and don't move in and out of the camera's view. Keeping some distance between you and the camera can be helpful.

Be prepared.
- Practice with the technology and be prepared for things to possibly go wrong. Have a helping hand available, if possible. Try to work out all of the kinks beforehand, especially if you are presenting with others. Practicing transitions will reveal any content inconsistencies or logistical problems with the platform.
- Have a Plan B and Plan C. Think through what can happen and what you can do about it.
- Be early.
- Send slides ahead.
- Have a phone number for a conference call as a back-up.
- Be aware of time zones.