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THE VIDEOCALLER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY

GUIDELINES FOR ALL VIDEO CALLERS, AVAILABLE FOR THE ENTIRE GALAXY

SHORT PREAMBLE

It could be trivial or superfluous to say, but a webmeeting has the same value as a face-to-face meeting, of those we did before, we would dare to say in the previous era.

No one would think of showing up for a meeting of any kind, not only in the workplace, late, with a scruffy appearance - we woke up five minutes ago - or lacking the necessary preparation and documents.

The webmeeting, although it makes us and our interlocutors more tolerant due to the technical problems always lurking, absurdly in some way accentuates a whole series of details that in a normal meeting we would hardly notice. The reasons are both psychological and objective and we will certainly not go into detail here.

Just to mention one of these, in a very simple way, during a webmeeting our face is always in the foreground, as if we were all fifty centimeters away from each other, which obviously does not happen when we meet in physical presence.

So, better to be in perfect order: the webmeeting has the exact same value as an in-person meeting and must be treated in the same way, even more.

Let's see how...

FIRST OF ALL LET'S CHECK THE CABLES AND WIRELESS CONNECTIONS!

Whether we fall into the category of super nerds, or whether we use various devices for webmeetings at the minimum wage, here's what to do before starting a video meeting

1. Always check that we are connected to an electrical socket, a mains socket or a battery (storage) to be sure of having enough autonomy. Otherwise, if the webmeeting goes on for a long time, we risk the classic interruption for technical reasons. It wastes everyone's time and doesn't qualify us as being particularly careful.

2. Always and only use headphones / earphones with a microphone to avoid having to activate the external audio and, first, check its correct functioning. If something is wrong they will not hear us, or we will not hear the other participants. Result: we lose pieces of information, we have to interrupt and maybe we misunderstand that it is the connection that has problems with further waste of time.

3. Check the video part! Check that the camera is ok or we will have the same effects as above.

4. Check that the worktop is not wobbly to avoid making annoying noises or making us (and making) seasick with swaying images.

5. If we connect remotely, home, bar or any place other than our workstation, let's check the stability of the line and activate the backgrounds we deem appropriate. All major webmeetings platforms have a background feature. Let's use it. In case our office is crowded or noisy, therefore a source of distractions, let's activate wallpapers even in that case and look for a place as free of noise as possible.

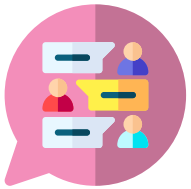
BEFORE THE WEBMEETING

It can be very useful to add a short text in the email for each invitee with the courtesy rules, for example:

Maximum wait 10 minutes for delays then the webmeeting will be canceled and to be scheduled again, or it will start anyway with the current participants.

Reiterate the use of headphones.

Mute the microphone when you are not speaking.



If possible, avoid noisy places.

Make sure you have a stable line.

DURING THE WEBMEETING

1

In case of a meeting with more colleagues of our staff, before to start the webmeeting, designate a MODERATOR so that the reference in case of both technical and content problems is a single person. The same person will be designated to possibly consult other figures participating in the call (for example technicians when information is to be transmitted in that area).

2

Once the call has started, as the first step after the greetings of ritual, propose a presentation "table tour" also indicating the figure of the MODERATOR, that is who will put order in case of overlapping or interruptions.

3

Where it has not been possible: as soon as we receive the word or have to enter the conversation, let us introduce ourselves.

4

It could be useful to have a digital business card and make it available in chat.
At the end of the meeting, inform that the MODERATOR will send a summary email with a follow-up and references of the participants.

(A simple and usable format of a digital business card could be a web page with contacts, role and facilities such as downloading a VCard for quick entry into the address book)

5

When we're not talking: always keep the microphone off.

6

Always wait for our turn to enter the conversation. Avoid overlaps in speaking, they create confusion. If there are other interlocutors who intervene while we are speaking, the moderator must politely intervene. Otherwise, interrupt ourselves with patience and wait until the end to continue.

7

Could be smart to keep pen / paper available for notes: helpful not to lose the thread in the event of any interruptions or for any interventions we may want to do when we have the floor.

8

Always leave the closure of the webmeeting to whoever has been designated as Moderator.

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HOT DETAILS (IN THE SENSE OF SPICY)

Let's face it: seeing someone on video who, while a participant exhibits their content, fiddling with their smartphone, is irritating and even vaguely inelegant. Avoid!
If the reason why we are holding the phone is related to the context of the meeting, it is better to point it out to everyone, simply by saying it. If it is absolutely essential to answer a call we can temporarily block the video and then apologize as soon as we return to the meeting.

The same applies if we use the PC keyboard. If we use to take notes in this way, it is better to tell everyone in advance.

In the event of excessive latency / delay in the interlocutor's audio, let us know, after which let us be patient and respect the breaks due to delays. Otherwise everything overlaps and we all waste time.

In case we are having problems with audio delays, apologize for the inconvenience and ask our interlocutors to be patient and respect the breaks in turn.

If for any reason, technical or not, we are late in connecting to a webmeeting, we should behave as we do for an in-person appointment, or notify us promptly and apologize for the inconvenience. Then we propose solutions.

Question: is it better to have group meetings seated at a table with a single video camera or each at their own single station? Obviously it depends from case to case and the evaluations are strictly subjective.
However, take into account that, often, the problem is not so much the video which still presents us with a series of limitations such as faces on average too far away to have a clear idea of who the person is talking, but the audio. Unless we have an audio control unit available to equip all people with their own microphone, on the other hand they will understand yes and no thirty percent of what we say at our beautiful meeting table. In this way we will force ourselves and our poor guests to perform in the circus of the 'I did not understand sorry, you can repeat, it can get closer' and gradually until you are exhausted. Maybe we can also present ourselves sitting at the same table but better each with their own device in front with independent earphones and microphone.
Then no one prevents us from still having a good general camera that frames everyone but strictly without audio.

TIPS & TRICKS

When we are in the office, surrounded by colleagues or in any case in the presence of others, get a nice sheet to be placed on the desk or stuck on the back of our monitor with the wording "I'M ON VIDEO CALL". We will avoid a lot of annoying interruptions for us and our interlocutors on the other side.

If we have our own office, get the same sheet to put on the door. If we want to give ourselves a tone, even nicely, a nice light signal "on air".

If we necessarily have to move from the station, we always warn.

All platforms have the CHAT button available. Invite everyone to activate it, it is a precious tool to have an open communication channel with all the participants that allows us not to interrupt the flow of information of the speaker. As long as the chat is activated by everyone it makes it easy and acceptable, even nice, a "sorry but I really have to go to the bathroom for a minute!"

FINALLY we can hang a beautiful memo in evidence in the meeting room or anywhere in our office clearly visible to everyone.
Which points to list you decide!