

# SIXTEEN SUGGESTIONS

*for Successful  
Videoconferences*



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**T**elecommunication has come a long way since the early days of corporate/industrial videoconferencing. Communicating to numerous remote locations simultaneously via video and audio connections has become increasingly popular and technologically viable. Connecting multiple sites for a business meeting, once a complicated and expensive process, now is a much more widespread method of information sharing.

As with any progressing technology, telecommunications involves numerous protocols, procedures, and rules of etiquette. While it is easy to become engrossed in the passion of the efficient and expeditious “virtual meeting,” users should be aware of techniques that will ensure that the technology offers the most effective communication.

Below are eight operational tips and eight rules of etiquette to help those conducting videoconferences to plan and conduct productive, timely, and user-friendly meetings.

**Operational Tips**

1. Ensure that all videoconference participants are prepared by sending meeting materials to all receiving sites in advance of the meeting.
2. Become familiar with the layout of the conference room, operation of the equipment, and features of your system before the conference begins.
3. If *PowerPoint* or other presentation software is used, ensure in advance that the necessary computer hookups are available. Test the system to ensure visual quality.
4. Position the cameras properly, using wide shots to capture all participants at one time whenever appropriate. Avoid long shots for individual speakers; it is easier to concentrate on what they are saying in close-ups.
5. Ensure that the camera is always on the current speaker, and ensure that the speaker stays within camera range if static cameras are used. Vary camera positions: Use multiple cameras and a switcher if possible. If static cameras are used, adjust positioning for optimal angles before the videoconference.
6. Put a sheet of pastel paper behind transparencies. Use background colors such as blue, green, purple, or gray instead of black or white for film slides. When preparing documents to be broadcast, use large, boldface type with a point size of 18 or larger. Use no more than eight lines of type per transparency and no more than six words per line. Leave a wide border around the edge of each graphic. If a whiteboard is used, write with wide, dark-colored markers. Following these guidelines will ensure that professionally produced graphics are "video safe."
7. Avoid busy (especially striped) patterns or overly bright (especially white) colors in clothing, as well as solids such as black, red, or navy. Pas-

tel shades and muted colors ensure better images with video cameras. Appropriate colors include bright pink, blue, green, and fuchsia. Avoid glittery jewelry that can catch the light and distract viewers. Observe newscasters' clothing and their surrounding graphics for ideas.

8. Consider time zones and daylight savings time when scheduling videoconferences. Ensure that both domestic and international participants understand dates and times for the conference. If Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) is used as the standard, make sure that all participants understand how to relate GMT to local time.

**Rules of Etiquette**

1. Introduce all participants as you would at any roundtable discussion. Also, inform viewers of others who may not be visible but who are involved in the conference via audio connections or other monitoring devices.
2. Remember that the entire room may not be visible to viewers, and announce when participants are entering or leaving the room.
3. Use tent name cards if appropriate, displaying participants' names in large, bold characters.

4. Be conscious of the fact that directions are reversed on video. Remember when introducing participants, for instance, that someone on your right will appear to viewers to be on your left.
5. Keep other sites informed of the agenda and types of cameras that will be used.
6. Position microphones where necessary, and remember to speak naturally. Recognize that videoconferencing audio systems may be amplified.
7. Avoid distracting noises such as side conversations, finger or pen tapping, or paper rustling: Videoconferencing audio systems can be extremely sensitive. If audio problems do occur, mute each site to isolate the cause of the audio problems, informing remote participants when you are going to mute the microphone.
8. When speaking, pause at appropriate intervals (if the format of the videoconference permits) to allow others to comment. Also, avoid interrupting a speaker or otherwise speaking out of turn. (This could cancel the audio of the speaker for all other participants.)

Following these practices should go a long way to ensuring a professional videoconferencing experience. **i**



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