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The 7 rules of virtual meeting etiquette every professional should know

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Malini Saba

“Manners Maketh the Man/Woman”

This proverb is more than 600 years old but holds even true to this date.

Manners or etiquette, as we often refer to them, are flexible and can be implemented in any situation. This holds especially true when it comes to business etiquette. Before the pandemic, the manners required a professional to fit in their formal physical environment. Now that we are working from home, there might be changes in the said etiquettes but the concept prevails when we are virtually interacting with our colleagues.

Here are seven rules of virtual meeting etiquette every professional must know.

Check your audio and visuals before the meeting

It is a joke these days that the new ‘hi’ is ‘am I audible?’ While there is no disputing that virtual meetings are prone to interruptions, ensuring that your microphone and camera are working beforehand will save everyone from intermittent meetings that would otherwise have no value because no one heard you. Keeping your tools in check will help you save your and colleagues’ time as well.

Stay present

Long meetings are drab, no denying that. However, as a part of the meeting, it is important that you are present in that moment, giving the participants your undivided attention. This includes doing away with the horrible habit of checking your phone or nodding off. If the meeting goes for long, you can always request a short 10-minute break and circle back.

Respect your colleagues’ time

Keeping people waiting with no prior note and intimation is a strict no-no. There are times when you might be running late or have a software breakdown, and that’s okay. However, as a courtesy to your teammates, who are busy folks themselves, inform them maybe request a new time to connect. Rescheduling will be more acceptable than delays.

Mute when not talking

We are all working from homes where most of us are living with our families, including little children and pets. While having pets and kids pop up once in a while is a much-needed break for all, their noise in the background can be quite distracting. You can either walk into another room or simply mute yourself when not talking, allowing others to focus on the meeting.

It’s a meeting, not dining

You might be playing catch up with your routine and probably missed your breakfast for that morning meeting. However, it does not mean that you grace your virtual meetings with food in your mouth. Imagine walking in your conference meetings with your lunch tray. Grab a quick bite before you join the meeting to keep the hunger pangs at bay.

Know your surroundings

You are at your home and it is understandable that it cannot meet the formal orderliness of office space. However, you can tidy up the space to be presentable. It is ideal that you blur your surroundings as well but one can still see the mess. A general rule of thumb — try not to show your bed in virtual meetings, made or unmade.

Be presentable

The thought of attending the meeting in your pajamas and disheveled hair seems tempting, you are after all working from home. However, don’t. No one is asking you to don a formal dress (do it if you want to) but before you hop on a virtual call, ensure that your face has been washed, your shirt is appropriate and your hair has been brushed to maintain a normal level of neatness.

Professional presentation is imperative, irrespective of the situation and the discussed seven etiquette rules will help you stay on track.

The writer is Founder & Chairman, Saba Group & Anannke Foundation

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