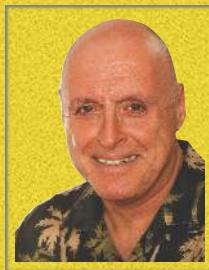


THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



560 Video Conferencing Basics – Part 1

The number of organizations that are using video conferences to replace the regular team meeting has grown rapidly since the virus changed the rules for everybody. I'm Jerry Roberts and as this may be the way many of us meet in the future, let's talk about some dos and don'ts, today on The Extra Point.

As we begin to plan for eventually reopening workplaces around the island, we have to ask: will the traditional staff meeting be retained or could it be replaced by video meetings?

The state of Georgia has begun the process of reopening and one of the key guidelines they listed was that all meetings and conferences should be replaced with virtual gatherings. Georgia is not alone in that, as I've seen the same thing mentioned by officials in numerous other states.

Zoom and other video conferencing services have seen mammoth growth in the past weeks, much of it driven by organizations, and now that teams are used to the process there seems to be a widespread acceptance for video to replace the in-person meetings — at least for the near future. If you've been thinking about it and haven't got your approach down pat, here are a few ideas to improve the quality of your meetings.

Before we get started, let me say that it's important to know your technology. Iron out problems before your actual meetings, if possible. Nobody wants to see you fumble around, trying to figure things out.

1. Just like any other group meeting, have an agenda. Send it to everybody either in email or WhatsApp. An agenda tells everybody that the meeting is organized.

2. Start on time. If you say 9:00 a.m., have the technology lined up by 8:30 and be ready to go. Don't delay for late arrivals.

3. If your conferencing app has a feature for a "waiting room," it allows attendees to join and be prepared for the start, without gaining access to the main screen. Then, when you begin you bring everybody in at the same time.

4. My suggestion is that you keep microphones muted by default, for everyone but the person speaking. After having participated in a number of these online meetings, one of the things that is irritating is the noise that is picked up because microphones are unmuted. Kids, dogs, chickens, somebody blasting a TV in the next room. There may be times when you want all microphones open so people can exchange freely, but otherwise it's best to mute them.

5. Give everybody a chance to contribute. That will help keep them engaged.

6. At the end of the meeting give a brief summary of what was accomplished, as well as what the next steps may be, such as assignments handed out.

7. Announce the next meeting and close it off. Don't spend any more time than you need to on the official meeting. If team members wish to stay logged in and talk for a while, that's usually okay.

There's more but this will give you the basics of how to get going as the organizer. Tomorrow, we move to how participants should prepare and conduct themselves.

That's The Extra Point. Stay home and make something good happen today. For 93.3 and the Ray Gibson Show, I'm Jerry Roberts.

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