

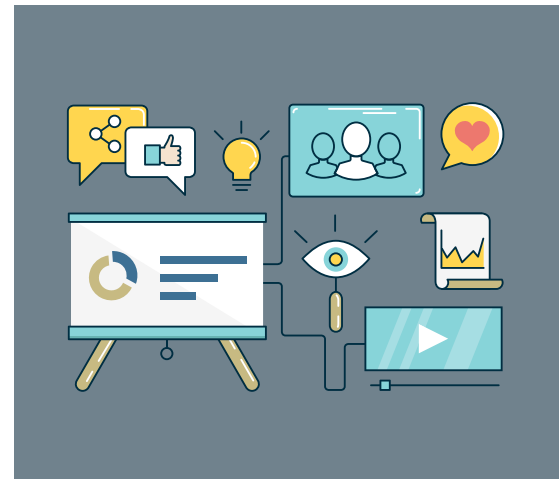
# Making the Most of a Virtual Meeting

*While meeting with a customer to present new products or ideas is always best done in-person, sometimes, that just isn't an option. As we all navigate this changing business landscape due to the impacts of COVID-19, many of us are having to shift our norm and get creative in order to keep things moving.*

But before we get into how you can rock a virtual presentation, let's be real for a moment. It's really hard out there right now. Many customers aren't accepting phone calls, let alone presentations. So, what do you do? This is the time to strengthen your relationships with your existing customers and those in your community. Reach out and ask how they're doing. See how you can help. If a customer has a cancelled event, get creative with ways they can still use the products they've pre-purchased. It's tough for the majority of us out there right now – if we work together we will get through this.

If you do have a presentation that now needs to be virtual, there are some relatively easy steps you can take to make sure it's as successful as possible.

- 1. Send an agenda to the customer.** This gives you a chance to confirm the meeting and get them thinking about what you're going to discuss.
- 2. Double-check your customer's technology.** Make sure the customer is able to connect with the tool you're going to use. Whether it's WebEx, Skype, Google Hangouts, Zoom or some other virtual conferencing platform, make sure they are comfortable using it. If you are flexible with your technology, you can even ask them if they prefer one over the other.
- 3. Send samples to your customer.** One of the most important pieces of a presentation is getting your product in front of your customer. If you can't be there in person to show, then the next best thing is sending it to them! Consider sending their brand colors and adding the company's logo to the product. Send it packaged well in a presentation box – if they get excited about the product while “unboxing” the product, you already have a leg up on your presentation.



**4. Set the stage.** Think of the space where you're going to do your presentation as your showroom. Do you have product you can display or a pull-up banner you can set up? Create a welcoming environment that is free of clutter.

**5. Dress the part.** Try to wear something that doesn't have stripes or squares on it – they tend to look bad over video and can actually reduce your video quality. While you may be sitting at a desk in your living room, dress as if you were actually sitting in your customer's office.

**6. Test your tech.** Turn your camera on and take a screenshot with you sitting at your computer. How does everything look? Make any adjustments. Also check that your microphone and camera are working. Perhaps, do a test call just to be sure.

**7. Present complete looks.** While your customer may be looking for a polo, show them a complete, logoed look – perhaps with a ¼-zip, a hat, bag and jacket. Consider including hard goods and create looks for him and her. Inspire your customer to see what is possible. While they may not go for the complete look, they'll know more about what you offer and may ask for something more next time.

**8. Break away from the slides.** No one likes a slide presentation with just a voice talking over it. It isn't very engaging or personal. Instead, take the leap and use video. Show the product yourself and ask your customer to use video as well so you can gauge their reactions.

**9. Ask questions throughout.** Let your customers know from the beginning that you're excited to hear their perspectives, needs and questions. Throughout your presentation, make time to ask them engaging questions – about every two or three minutes. Instead of asking "Are there any questions?" ask "Who has a question about the new product design?" The better you understand their needs challenges, the better you can find a solution for them and seal the deal.

**10. Use digital tools.** Many companies provide digital tools like e-catalogs and selling guides. You can send your customer the link to these and have them follow along with you. Consider using lifestyle images or even video – whatever will best connect with your customer.

**11. Enjoy yourself.** You know your product and business better than anyone. Allow yourself to relax, be yourself and have some fun. Your customer will enjoy it more if you are also having a good time. Let it be a time where you all can relax,

**12. Practice, practice and then practice some more.** We could all use a bit of practice before a presentation, but this is especially true when presenting virtually. Make sure you know your content and your timing, and be sure to practice it using the presentation software/tool you'll use for the meeting.

**13. Remember to follow up.** Ok, so this isn't about the actual presentation, but it could be the most important step. Be sure to follow up with your customer. Ask if they have any questions or if they're ready for any next steps.

### A Few Tips from the Experts

- Avoid choppy video or broken audio by **connecting to your router** instead of using Wi-Fi. Seems like a small thing, but it can make a huge difference.
- When setting up your recording space, arrange your lighting so it's flattering to you – arrange the lights coming from the front, not from behind.
- When you are presenting virtually, your “likeability” factor is often determined by things like your hand gestures, loudness, hand gestures, speed and facial expressions. Be aware that you may seem much closer over video than you would in person, and **speak slowly** enough for everyone to understand.
- If you choose to include slides in your presentation, keep them simple. Remember that they are what icing is to cake. Your words and expertise are the cake and the slides just give it that little bit of “extra.” Avoid using too many words, graphics or animation features. Less is more!
- If your virtual presentation tool allows for customer interactions like voting, polling or live chat, USE IT! The more you can engage in real conversations, the better it will be for you and for your customer.
- Using Zoom for your presentation? Try downloading a Zoom background for fun! It can also be more serious, but if your customer would appreciate it, you can drop it in during your presentation and see what kind of reactions you get.