How to Project Leadership and Get Results on Video Conferences with Dr. Laura SIcola, as originally aired Sept. 22, 2020.

Laura Sicola: Hello, everybody, thank you so much for joining me today. I'm Dr. Laura Sicola with Vocal Impact Productions, and we are going to be talking about three really important things: confidence, presence, and influence on video. Confidence is what you need to feel internally, as you're sitting here, presence is what you're projecting outwardly so that other people see that confidence and buy into it in order to get influence in order to have more influence and get the results that you want. This is the outcome that we're looking for. And most people can do that really well in person, right, you're good at your job, you have a great reputation, lots of experience, but we need to make sure that all of that translates to the virtual presence. And that's where most people really feel short.

This is what I've been working with, with people all over the place for the last six months, certainly on an almost daily basis and, for that matter, even before that, and we'll be doing it moving forward. Given that the practice, video is here to stay. So let's make a real quick, simple distinction. The difference between a webinar and a video conference. First, a webinar is typically one way sharing. So right now, this is kind of webinar style, where I'm the person who's leading the conversation, I'm the person who is doing the instruction, doing the training, and whoever else is watching it real time or not.

In this case, this is an asynchronous training where it's pre recorded, versus a video conference, which is where you're really just trying to have a meeting with people, one person, 10 people, 100 people, but you're trying to achieve something that you would otherwise be doing in person, except now it's mediated through this digital platform. And at that point, whether you're reviewing a budget trying to interview for a job on either side of the desk, for that matter, or you are looking at other proposals, projects, designs, you're talking with your team, and you're trying to come to a decision come to a result in that meeting, you need to be able to be as effective over video as you would in person. So we're going to look at some of the things that are required to do that. And it is important, of course, to be mindful as you're preparing to lead or participate in some sort of virtual event to figure out which one it is because of the way that you conduct yourself, and the way that you otherwise plan your interaction.

You need to think about how you're going to make that happen, and how you're going to convey what you need to convey whether there are or are not people interrupting, or people who you're trying to get to participate more actively. And whether or not there's anyone even live for you to

talk to in the moment, because those are the kinds of things that can really mess people up, shall we say.

So bearing in mind this, the reality check, of course, as I mentioned a moment ago is that video based communication is the new normal. And not just until things go back to normal. Once we've got COVID under control, or whatever else it happens to be. It's here permanently, because now people have the tech, and they know, "hey, it works, we really can achieve things in person." So we want to make sure that you're clear on the fact that your ability to be your best self, and to achieve results on video, is going to be your personal and your organizational brand.

That branding is crucial. So when you're trying to do something virtually your primary job, frankly, is to reduce any distractions that would otherwise make people focus on anything else, consciously or subconsciously, besides what you're trying to get across to them, to make them forget that you're on video, and just be able to focus on you, your message, your results and what they need to do in order to have that achieved. So one of the things that you need to do first and foremost, is to represent yourself. Now I don't know what platform you may or may not be using.

We're using Zoom today. It's my preferred platform. I think it has the most functionality. But see if whichever platform you're using, what's your name, you know, right now under mine, it should say Laura Sicola, right in my little window, under my name, I have that labeled there. But you can if you move your mouse up to your own image, you should see a little blue box with those three dots on it. And if you click on that one of the options is "rename." And you can type in whatever you want there.

So perhaps, if you're meeting with a bunch of people from different organizations, after your name, you'll put in the name of the company the name of the organization, or perhaps you borrowed somebody else's iPad, to login because yours is being repaired or something. Does it say Jr's iPad? Does it say Frank when your name is Marsha. Make sure that you have changed that so people know what to call you, or maybe your name is hard to pronounce, it doesn't look like it sounds. So after you put your name, type in a little Pronunciation Guide to help people. I've even seen people use pronouns. In case that helps, although virtually most people will just refer to you as you. But if someone else wants to say, "when Laura said x, I think she was," help them know which pronouns you prefer. So lots of options. Don't let that real estate go unutilized maximize its value to help people feel comfortable in knowing how to talk to and about you. Now, let's talk about cameras. Cameras are one of the most distracting pieces of equipment in all video, because it's frankly what creates our image in the first place.

But now I want you to look at something and if you want to do this in the chat box, I want you to think for yourself, if Laura ran the rest of this program like this, how would my impression change?

Okay, what do you think? If I ran the rest of my training down here, and this is what most people do, they draw this imaginary line across the middle of the screen, and they're ahead on the bottom. Or if they're taking big vacation selfies, they'll have their bodies from here down, and then it's loss of ceiling or lots of sky. And when I do this in live trainings, and live conferences, usually the responses that I get in the chat are things like you look small, you look unprofessional, immature, not confident and weak. And then some of them get a little bit more colorful. From there. Sometimes people are thinking, well, is she wearing her pajamas? or What does she want us to see? Does she have, you know, like lions feet or something ridiculous down there. So we want to make sure that I need to be. I think I look like Mr. Potato Head just sitting on the table, it certainly doesn't look authoritative.

So here's the trick. You hold up one hand, do this with me now, hold up one hand. Yes, you. Okay, now make the small shape with your fingers, the itty bitty like an inch or so. Put that on top of your head, sit back into wherever you would be comfortably in your chair. And then reach over and adjust your screen so that your index finger touches the top of your screen. Now if you sit back and it's not there, do not do this. That's cheating. This is not my first rodeo, put your fingers back to the original position and readjust the camera angle a little bit so that when you sit back comfortably, you are now taking up the majority of your screen. Watch the news anchors on any channel, whichever direction you like to go as far as your news is concerned.

But watch, they take up the whole screen, they're never just done at the bottom with all sorts of ceilings and screens and lights above them. This is where you are most powerful. And if possible, you want to do it so that it's getting you from kind of mid-torso on upward as opposed to just being the giant face in the middle of the screen, which is okay. But frankly, most cameras you can see kind of distorts your features. It makes my nose look even bigger. And I don't really need that kind of help. So from back here, it allows us to have a little bit more body language, you can see me gesture, and it's a lot more like we were just sitting across the table from each other right? Folding my arms, doing one of these, it feels a little bit more like we're actually sitting together across the table in real time, not just that. Well, from here, clearly, I'm just a great big face, right? That feels kind of weird. So the camera distance matters as much as the angle matters. And not only the angle, but the height. So right now my camera height is even with the top of my head. And that also allows for that more full body, full image.

But most people and I'm betting yours is the same right now, if you're using your laptop, or tablet, it's down somewhere around here. Right when you've opened it up, you've got your laptop, it opens up, but you're not going to have it just straight, you have to tip it back so that it's aiming up at your face. So what you end up with is this image where you have this sort of weird triangle shape coming down, you've got this little pin head pointed at the top and you're an odd pyramid. It's a nice nostril shot. And then of course you have to look down so you start to get all the extra

stuff going on down here. But if you have your camera at a good height, then it's your head on shot again, as if we're looking at each other across the table. It's a much more natural conversational placement. So if you are on a desk, on a laptop or a tablet of some sort, prop it up. You can just put it all under over a bunch of books, binders, boxes, whatever you have, but make sure that it is giving you the space to be able to get your camera at a good angle.

Now if you don't feel like you want to type up here, and you know what, for $15 go to Amazon and get a peripheral keyboard or better yet go into that dusty box in your basement which has all your old peripherals keyboards, mouse whatever is left over and just plug those into the USB. That way you can participate and type at a more ergonomically comfortable and safer angle, but you still look your best. It shouldn't be uncomfortable to look good to others.

Do you want to project that confidence and authority? Remember, everything that I teach, whether it's one on one executive coaching, or team training is about mastering the three C's. And that is the ability to command the room, connect with the audience and close the deal. The first one, command the room, translates now into commanding the screen. This commands the screen, this doesn't command the screen, this doesn't command the screen. And when you're down here, looking up. It does not command the screen. Take it over. Number one, that is part of projecting that confidence.

All right, enough about the cameras. Let's go back.

Number two, once your cameras are in place, you must get your lighting, right. Lighting is the biggest saboteur of projecting confidence and leadership image. Because most people, at best, walk in the room, flick on the light and feel like "Hey, that should do it." If you're like this guy, you've got this beautiful picture window behind you. But it's so backlit that your camera Iris doesn't know how to adjust. So you look like him. He looks like he's in the witness protection program. Does that say confidence to you? Does that say trust me to you? Does that say hey, you know what you should trust your money with us. You should trust your children with us. We're not going to let you see who we are. But sure, give us your business Anyway, you can trust me. Of course not. You need to have your face lit and you need to have it balanced.

So something as simple as this, maybe you need to take your setup and turn around, put your laptop on a tray table, whatever you need to set up so that the window is in your face, and you're getting that nice natural light if you can. Now I've got a light, a window here. Frankly, it doesn't let much light in because it's facing in the wrong direction for the sun. So you need to set things up differently. Now I want you to be aware of something. And I'm going to show you a little bit of behind the scenes for me now. Yes, this is my studio. But frankly, my studio is just an extra room

in my house that I've converted. I would love to think that I could just walk in and flick the light switch and have it look like this. But it doesn't.

I'm going to pause my video for just a second. As I turn off the rest of the lights, I want you to see what the reality is if I just walked in the room and turned on the light. Ready? Okay.

If I were just to walk in my room and turn on the light, here's what you would see. What do you think is pretty different, isn't it? But most people say, "Well, I can see you It's fine." Is it? I mean, let me ask you a different question. Is that what you want your brand to be? "It's fine." What kind of competitive advantage is fine? I mean, I'm an executive coach. I work with people on media readiness. I work with people on getting ready to talk to the board. I work with people on job interviews. Who aims for fine? Like good enough. That's kind of a C minus that barely got you through high school, if it did.

And I'm guessing for most of you, it did not. So why aim for good enough, C minus now? I mean, technically it is passing but blah. So what I had to do to turn this on, number one, maybe you got a desk lamp, like a little desk lamp up here. Okay, well, it's better, but still kind of Okay. I got a ring light up here. I'm going to turn this video off for one second. Because note, if you have to reach above your screen, do not lean right into the camera and stick your, you know, whatever body part in there.

So I'm going to turn this off and turn on my ring light. So that's very bright now, but my wall is kind of dingy, grayish, purpleish, yucky. So I got two separate little what's called softbox lights like a photographer would have on either side, just to the back. And when I turn that on, it brightens up my wall on this side. Right, it's up my wall over here. And now with all that going on, it just looks like I walked in and turned on the light. Now, do you have to do this? No. You don't have to go through all these. But do you have to consider what you want your brand to look like? Yes. Do you have to think about where I am? What room am I in? How much control over it do I have? Is there good light coming through the window in the morning? But then in the afternoon, It's blinding me completely, or it's too dark later on? Does the sun change how I come across on video? Do I need to be mindful of that? Yes you do. So you can adjust if you need to go into other rooms in your house and borrow every lamp there is until you're well lit so it's not distracting, and so you just look normal. Yes, then that's what you should be doing.

Again, I'm not saying and I will be making some suggested equipment recommendations. I'm not saying you need to spend $1,000 on things, but you might need to spend a little bit. Again, it's an investment in your personal and professional brand. You do it once, and you're good to go. Alright, moving on from here. We've got our lights. Sound. Sound is the next piece that is absolutely mission critical. Do not use the, if you can at all, do not use the microphone that comes

embedded in your computer. Now, whether you get a nice little headset, with a little boom mic, those are easier. You put it in place and you don't have to worry about it anymore.

You could upgrade a little bit more to something like this. This was the microphone I used to have an Audio Technica, this was the AT 2020 brand. Make sure whatever mic you have comes with a USB connector to it. I don't recommend the Bluetooth headsets, they just are rarely as good. It's easier if it is safer if they're plugged in, or even your AirPods. Again, these are Bluetooth if necessary. They're usually pretty good quality. If you absolutely have to, you can use the earbuds that have the wires that came with your device, get somebody on the other end to test out with you, you know get on a zoom call or on a FaceTime call, whatever it is and say I'm going to try this. Now let me plug these in. Which one sounds better? Here's why. Now right now, okay, I do podcasting. My podcast is speaking to influence, which has been a lot of fun. So I've upgraded my microphone to something a little bit more high- tech. But again, the ones that I just showed you the headphones, 50 bucks and the standalone microphone, probably $100 that AT 2020 by Audio Technica. Here's what it sounds like, if I just went with the microphone that that's built into my computer.

And by the way, I have a desktop 20 something inch iMac. So it's supposed to be higher end, it's certainly cost enough, and it is about two years old. So reasonably new as far as computers are concerned. Here's what the mic sounds like if I just shift to the embedded. Can you hear me now? What does it sound like? It's different, isn't it? Did you just suddenly go "Oh?" Did you feel your face kind of scrunch up? Like, yeah, that's different. Oh, I don't like that. It's unpleasant, isn't it? Now, watch. Can you imagine if I had to go and run this whole hour long training, using this sound quality? After a while, it gets tiresome. And have you heard of zoom fatigue? I think most people have.

Zoom fatigue is not just a thing, which means you're sick of being on video. It is literally, physically, mentally, and cognitively and emotionally even tiring to have to listen to this sound for a prolonged period of time. Because when you have to listen to this fuzzy, foggy sound, your brain has to concentrate harder to sort of peer through the fog of the noise and to decipher what the words are, and then try to figure out what it means. And if you have to sustain that kind of concentration, for hours upon hours all day, you will literally get fatigued. Plus, if you find that you're having a hard time hearing other people because their sound is not so good. You're subconsciously assuming that they have a hard time hearing you.

And as a result, you're going to be pushing harder and assuming that they need help, because they probably can't hear you any better than you can hear them. So you'll end up talking louder, you're forcing yourself from here to work harder. So your voice is going to get tired as well. So you really want to make sure that you let your equipment do the work. Upgrade your mic and let it do

the work for you. And make sure that you can be heard clearly and effectively. Now watch, I'm going to shift back to my good microphone. And I want you to be mindful of your physiological and emotional reactions when I hit the button. Ready 321. Okay, we're back to my plug in microphone, my peripheral device. Do you hear the difference? As soon as that switched? If your ears could exhale, did they? Can you imagine? Did you feel like your ears just went "(sigh) that's better, much easier, right?" So you want to make sure that when everybody else is sounding like this, on the conference call, then suddenly you talk and it sounds like this.

You want to sound better than everybody else, or at the bare minimum as good as, in case they sound like this. You don't want to be the one who talks like this. When everyone else sounds like this. So do yourself a favor and invest a little bit of money in another microphone, it is critical to your leadership image and your ability to get results done. Alright, moving back. Next rule, no Wifi, it's the enemy. I know it's convenient. Everybody loves Wi Fi. But the fact is, you cannot afford to have it chop in and out. You don't want your video to stall, you don't want things to freeze, you don't want your sound to cut in and out. If you go back, find that blue Ethernet cable that was from like 2015 that you thought you wouldn't need anymore. Plug it in.

When I first started when I first set up the studio. I didn't have another router up here. So I had to get a 100 foot long cable, run it from my computer down the hall down the stairs and across the house to where the extra modem was so that I could plug it in. Eventually we got the second router so we could have it closer by but it's still plugged in. Because look, everybody's working from home nowadays. If you've got your significant other in another room or a roommate, not to mention, if you've got kids. Your teenager is doing his or her homework, and they're online now on for class with zoom or with whatever platform they're using, Coursera, all day. And now you've got your little ones who you maybe just gave a tablet to in a 30 minute Mickey Mouse video hoping that it'll keep them still and quiet for you to finish this meeting that you're on, you cannot afford to lose the bandwidth arm wrestling match competition with Mickey Mouse and a four year old.

That doesn't work, you need to make sure that if anybody else's video freezes, it's not your problem. But you are giving clear, consistent, uninterrupted streaming of information. Do not use Wi Fi go and plug in. Next, learn your platform in advance. And what I mean by that is number one, play around it says this is pre recorded we have not had a chance to do any sort of polling or breakout groups and things. But when I do live sessions, I love using all the tools on zoom. I like using whiteboards. I like using annotations. I like doing all sorts of things. But I need to know where they are, I need to have them set up in advance. Make sure you know where those things are. And more importantly, do a little bit of playing to know what your program looks like on different devices.

Because like I mentioned, I'm here on a nice big 20 something inch monitor. So I can do screen sharing, I can do polls, I can look at the chat box, I can look at my participants' windows, I can do all sorts of things at the same time because I have enough real estate. But if you're working on an 11 inch MacBook, something or other or a tablet, it's gonna look very different. Right, I can get 20 people on gallery view on zoom at a time on this device. On a tablet, I can get nine. On a smartphone, I can get four. So if your participants are on a different device, how hard are they have to swipe before they're going to see if you're trying to share screen and demonstrate something personally, if they can't see you, and the shared screen, and you're trying to show them something, you need to tell them "Oh, those of you who want a smartphone, you'll need to swipe over a bunch of screens until you get to this. If you're on a tablet, what is in the toolbar may not be under this you have to go under more or you have to go under participants window in order to find this function."

Things aren't in the same place on every device. If you're in Mac versus PC, if you are using zoom versus teams versus something else. Zoom is my preferred platform. That's what we're using here today. But I do plenty of trainings for other companies who say "Nope, we use GoToMeeting and only Go To Meeting." "Nope. We use teams and only teams, we use WebEx and only WebEx." Okay, then I need to do a couple of practice sessions with your people so I can learn what options do I even have? What functions do you have? Where are they set up? What are they called? How do I use them? Or do you have to give me access? Can I do something on the fly? So make sure that you have practiced all of these things before you do your actual program so that there are as few unpleasant surprises as possible. And it's not a matter of what if something goes wrong.

Look, something always goes wrong. Just accept it. If something doesn't load up right, somebody can't figure out how to get their sound to work, something will always go wrong. But you want to make sure that you have preemptively done your due diligence to ensure that you can take care of it, that you can preempt as much as possible. Another good tool is to have a behind the scenes helper otherwise known as a co host because the co host can handle a lot of those other tools. So if you're trying to really concentrate on just delivering the content, advancing your slides, giving your presentation, leading your meeting, doing what you need to do. Great, but you don't have to, you don't want to have to think about, well, how do I do that, and manage the polls and monitor the chat, and do tech support for the person who can't figure out how to make her camera, turn on and do the breakout rooms. It's like trying to Pat your head, Rub your tummy walk, chew gum, and do underwater BB stacking all at the same time. It can feel overwhelming and distracting, and can really take away from your ability to project authority as the primary source of information if you're leading the discussion, for the presentation.

So if you have your co host, your helper work with you ahead of time, you can delegate certain responsibilities. So I may say, "Look, I'm going to be the host, I'm going to be the main facilitator,

I'm going to give the presentation, do the explanations, and I'll advance my own slides. But you, Joe, Joanne, whoever you are, you're going to monitor the chat box and do any troubleshooting, answer any questions that come up, you are going to launch the polls, you're going to coordinate the breakout rooms, you're going to do all these other things for me, you'll set up this and set up that." Great. So when it comes to that time, you know, click you do all that, you let me know when it's my turn, or for that matter, a co host can be great because maybe you want to be able to get through a good amount of your presentation before you're going to want to take questions or before you're going to have more engagement. So maybe if there are questions or comments, Joanne can help you by simply feeling them for you responding when necessary. Or if she sees something come up that she realizes "Oh, you actually need to know this."

Then she could perhaps be the only one who has the authority to unmute and interrupt you and say, "Hey, Laura, just wanted to let you know, Sam had a question about something. Did you want to take care of that now? Or did you want to hold off?" And then that gives me the choice, I can say, "you know what, thank you for bringing that up? Yes. Let's just address that little thing here. I'll back up a slide into that. Now we'll move on" versus "You know what, that's a great question, I'm going to get to that in about two or three more slides. So let's hold off for just a moment." I have that ability, but she's my gatekeeper. And that takes a huge burden off of me if you can do that.

But if you do have a co host, you just want to make sure that you practice together a couple of times, so that the interaction between the two of you is as seamless as possible. You don't want to make it seem like you're fumbling and you don't know your stuff. And it's disjointed as you're working together, you almost want to let people know that she's there, but not there. At the same time, sort of just magic, just like the little man behind the green curtain. All right. Now finally, one of the other things that we really want to think about is how to maximize engagement.

Because all of those other things, when you set them up, they help you know that from the minute you turn on your light switch, the minute you turn on the camera, the minute you turn on your power, you look and sound great. But then people show up. And people have a wonderful way of messing things up. So there's a few things that we want to make sure that you can do to keep the flow going as smoothly as possible. And to make sure that the interaction is the quality of the interaction that you want to have for your people. Try this. Now I realize we're not live and we're not in a huge group.

But play with me, humor me. I know, I can't see you at the moment. But I know you're there. So don't just watch. Do this with me ready? It's going to take 10 seconds, hold up your hand. I don't care which one it is. Ready? Okay, wave it. Good. Make the okay sign. All right. Make sure you tap it together. Make sure your fingers are working. Good. Now, I want you to take those two fingers

and I want you to touch your fingers to your chin. Can you touch your fingers to your chin, touch your fingers to your chin to your chin to your chin, touch your fingers to your chin.

Now, when I do this in groups of about 1250 100 500 people, about three quarters of the people do exactly what I'm doing. They touch their fingers right here despite the fact that I'm saying chin touch your fingers to your chin minor on my cheek. So they're ignoring what I'm saying. And they're only watching mindlessly and doing what I'm doing. Usually about halfway through my repetitions more and more people move their fingers to their chin and I can tell who it is because aside from watching the hand move, I can see whose face burst out laughing if I've got one gallery view because they catch themselves, sometimes it takes one repetition, sometimes 10.

Sometimes it's not until the very end, when I can say your chin, where is your chin, and then they'll do this. And suddenly everybody again is in hysterics.

But what we're proving what I'm trying to demonstrate to illustrate is that when what you see does not match what you hear. People are very ready to disregard, ignore their audio input, and focus strictly on what's going on on the screen. So if you get people truckloads of information, for example, to look at then they're just going to sit there and keep looking at the screen. And if they feel like they've absorbed what's on the screen, and it's good enough, and you're talking about something else, you become Charlie Brown's teacher, womp womp womp womp while and they're just going to keep looking until they're bored. And then they'll look away, and you've lost them.

So it's not to say that you should have a script, but you do want to make sure that what you're giving them in pieces is something that will allow them to really focus on what you are talking about, to make sure that they're engaged, and that you're not confusing them by making them read truckloads of information on one topic while you're talking about something else. So let's look at a couple of ways to make sure that map for that engagement is maintained. First, you need to set the tone.

And what I mean by that is, most of the time when I watch other people on video engagements of whatever sort, they're kind of dead, they just sort of, you know, "okay, we're all here, and we're going to go through the budget or the agenda, and so and so is going to take over this piece," and if anything, sometimes there's an awkwardness or just an uncertainty or again, the sound really lousy, and you're on your fourth zoom of the day. So you're kind of tired of being on video. I know for me, by the end of the day, I can be really sick of seeing my own face after a while. The problem is, people take their cues from you as a presenter. So if you are projecting that super low key energy and if you don't know who this is, you need to go this weekend and watch Ferris Bueller's Day Off. Good 1980s John Hughes film. But if you do know who this person is, the words that

probably just went right through your mind are "Bueller, Bueller? Anyone? Anyone?" When you set that tone of monotony, or have Okay, we're just here yet again, I don't want to be on video, I'm tired of seeing myself. People take their cues from you. And they will reflect right back to you that exact same energy.

Now not to say you need to be bubbly, bubbly, and a lot of times the pushback I get from people as well. But the stuff I have to talk about isn't really exciting. Okay, it doesn't have to be exciting. And you don't have to sell it like it's exciting. But does it matter? Is it important? Do you care about what you're talking about? If so, you need to project that, first and foremost, that must come through to everyone else that you think this is important. You believe they need to know it. And here's why: share that information while projecting that energy because they will feed off of whatever you exude and reflect it back to you. So be mindful of that as you go forth. Next, when in doubt, you must explicitly set expectations for how you want people to participate.

Number one, you have to actually say to people, please don't multitask. I'm asking you to commit to not multitasking for this during this meeting. Now, what's the definition of multitasking? My definition of multitasking is very simple. It means paying attention to anything except you. That's it. But there's so much temptation, especially on video, because I could turn my camera off, you won't even know it. Or maybe you'll know it but you don't know what I'm doing. I could have my camera on and stare at you and still be checking my email, be checking my Facebook status, whatever it is. So you need to make sure that you have let your group know what I mean by multitasking. So if you want to suggest to people Hey, let's all take our phones and put them on Do Not Disturb mode. Please not just silent, silent means I can't hear when your phone rings doesn't mean that it doesn't distract you. Every time it pings something that you hear the vibration. And really, if you're gonna have your camera on mute anyway, your microphone, your computer, who cares if your phone is on mute, it doesn't really matter. Right? Put it on Do Not Disturb and then put it across the room. Let's all commit to doing that together. Right now, here's another one. Why don't watch people's hair stand on end? Try this one. I'm going to ask everyone to please close or reduce your email window. And watch people go. Wait, what... the email? Yeah, you know why?

Because there's a four letter word that everyone uses in video conferencing to justify not paying attention to you. And that four letter word is "just." "Well, I'm not multitasking, I'm just checking the status of this, I'm just shooting off a quick email to this, I'm just checking my messages, I just need to respond to this one thing." And everybody will justify whatever they want to do, if they're not focused on you, if they don't want to be. And until you say to them, by the way, let's close email windows, please put away the projects you're working on. When you say what it was that they were planning on just doing, that's when the seventh grader in them kind of kicks in and says, "Oh, she said the thing that I was going to Oh, that counts. Oh, really? Oh, you mean that? Oh, well, okay, I guess since she said it, I have to." But if you don't specify things like email, messenger, etc,

their brain goes, "Well, this doesn't count. Because I'm just doing this." It's not actually multitasking.

So be mindful, you do need to be specific, you can be as direct, as diplomatic, as gentle as you like, but be explicit. Now, as far as guidelines are concerned, again, whether you've got two people, 10 people, 100 people participating in something that's more of a video conference, rather than a webinar or a unidirectional presentation, people need to know two things. First, how to participate and tell them in advance, are they going to be able to unmute themselves freely, and blurt as you like? Do they need to do a hand raise virtually somehow or other? To signal to you that they want you to unmute them so they can participate. Do you want them to type something in the chat box instead? Do you want them to use polls? Do you want them to use breakout rooms? Will there be a time and a place for it? Tell them what to expect. If they don't know, they'll either give up and go multitask. Or they'll constantly be trying to interrupt you and be frustrated that you're not receiving what they want to do. Let them know how they will be able to share their input.

Perhaps you're going to say to them, I need to present for about 10 minutes on this information. And then I'll open up to unmute everybody, and you can have questions. Or freely, maybe from the very beginning, you want it to be an organic conversation, people are going to start on mute, so that we're not hearing dogs barking, kids crying, mail trucks in the background. But then as needed, people can unmute themselves to ask questions or share comments, etc. When will people be able to participate? And tell? Let them know? And of course, then the question becomes when do you set these expectations? With regard to when they can participate at three different times: first, ahead of time, in an email, or whatever other correspondence you do to communicate before the meeting starts. I like sending it out with the agenda before the meeting. So people know what to expect. They've read it, their expectations have been set, and they're not surprised by certain things.

And then number two, at the start of the meeting, when you open it, you welcome, you set the talk about the agenda or whatever else is going to happen. You remind them orally, what those expectations are. Why? Frankly, because for as many people as there will be who will be mad if you don't send out the instructions ahead of time. The other half of the world won't have read the email anyway. So they need you to explicitly tell them what to expect. So ahead of time, at the start, and then as needed. You know, if you're having conversations with people and or you're trying to open the floor to discussions and everybody's staring at you like a roomful of cats on video. And you're saying things like, "Okay, so what do we think about x?" You're getting a lot of nothing. Perhaps this is an indicator that people are multitasking or not focusing and you don't want to have to go back to seventh grade and call on people one by one to participate. "So a reminder, everyone please stop multitasking, close out your windows, put your phones away. I'm sensing that there are a lot of distractions going on and we need to achieve result x and we've only

got another 15 minutes. So let's please get this done, we don't want to have to have a second meeting to conclude what we didn't achieve this time because everybody's distracted."

So gentle reminders to get people, or not so gentle depending on your role, but to get people focused once again. Your students are every bit going to be the same. So you know, whether you're working with adults or children, everybody in developmentally and professionally appropriate manners needs to have these things reminded.

And with that, I am going to recommend, as well, that you take a look at some places where you can see all of these things in action. So one, for example, is on my podcast that I mentioned to you earlier, which is speaking to influence now, in that podcast. This is a weekly interview that I do with leaders of all different organizations, from Business and Commerce, through nonprofits, environment, education, and otherwise. And it's all talking about the unique role of communication in leadership. It's available in all your standard platforms. But in discussing it, it's not just on those platforms, you can also go to my YouTube channel and you'll see the actual video recordings of me talking through zoom with those guests, leaders of all difference for a nonprofit institution. And you'll be able to see how it shows up for real, in real time, how we apply all these things we've been talking about. But also, you'll get to hear us talk about communication and the things that they had to learn along the way, and how they need to run their teams in order to be effective.

So there's a lot of lessons to be learned from them as well.

I also want to thank all of you for joining me today. And to invite each of you to connect with me on social media, there's lots of different ways that you can do it by your platform of choice, I do simply request that if you are going to reach out on LinkedIn, that with the invitation shoot a little one line message that says "I watched your video, here's what I liked or didn't like" or whatever it is, but to let me know that it was through this video that you watched, through Sidecar through different groups through if you saw one of my other videos as well, terrific, but it just helps me to know that you're not to some random stranger, I get a lot of invitations and people you know, sometimes don't tell me how they found me. So I want to make sure that we're connecting because we can be good resources for each other, I don't typically accept the non personalized invitations that I would recommend the same for you that as you reach out to others, you make sure that you also tell them why you want to connect or you ask them why they want to connect with you. It's not where he who dies with the most connections wins, right? The whole point is that we want to be good resources for each other.

And this is another video tip to be able to use to establish that leadership presence with others. So I'm going to ask you all in the chat box now to have some "aha" moments to share, what are your

big takeaways? What are the things that stuck with you today? And I realized that for the most part, when you think about each of these individual items, none of them are rocket science. But most of them, you probably either didn't realize, or kind of sort of knew, but couldn't put your finger on until today. So what hit you today that you know what, this matters more than I thought, yes, I do need to take care of this. I need to prioritize making an investment in this or in that.

So going through all the takeaways today, what's your priority? What are some things you're going to take care of to make sure that you project your greatest confidence, presence and influence on video? I hope you'll reach out to me either by email or through one of the social media platforms and just tell me what stuck. What did you do? And how has it changed either how you feel about yourself being on video or some feedback that you've received from others. And the feedback is sometimes the most fun, frankly, because, for example, there was a company. There is a company that I've been working with for a while and I did a little bit more extensive training on this with their strategy team. And about a week or two later, I got a call from the chief strategy officer who said "I thought you'd appreciate that after my group ran a couple of trainings. I got a call from one of the other senior executives who said, 'What happened? What did you do to your team? Why are they also good on this?'" And he just laughed and "this is what we did. We went through these trainings," and you don't realize that all these little teeny knobs and buttons that you just tweak a little here, a little there.

When you add them together, the whole is so much greater than the sum of the parts. And that is what we want for you. So I thank you for joining me today for really taking the time to think about all of these pieces. And I hope from my heart that you put them into action so that you feel great, look and sound confident, approachable, relatable, and everything else that you want to come across as in building your brand, and that you get the results that you look for, that you have that influence on video.

With that, I'm Dr. Laura Sicola with Vocal Impact Productions. Thank you so much for joining me today and I wish you success.