



Boardroom etiquette: do's and don'ts

The effectiveness of a boardroom meeting is largely determined by the attitude and etiquette displayed by its participants. With this in mind, all the rules of great face-to-face communication still apply when staging a video conference in your boardroom although there are some additional elements to take into consideration. Ultimately, an effective meeting conducted via video conferencing boils down to clear, direct communication between all its participants, with minimum distractions and the correct usage of the boardroom's audio visual equipment.

Here are some practical do's and don'ts to keep in mind the next time you attend a boardroom meeting - particularly one where video conferencing plays a central role:

Do:

- Show up to the video conference (VC) venue a few minutes early to test your audio and visual connections.
- Be punctual - arrive at your meeting a few minutes prior to its starting time.
- Establish and maintain eye contact with the speaker.
- Listen to whoever is speaking - don't try to talk over another person.
- Pause occasionally while speaking to allow others to interject comments.
- Eliminate distractions by keeping your boardroom table as free from clutter as possible.
- Deal with conflict or differences in opinion in a calm, professional manner.
- Try to involve everyone in the discussion.
- Identify yourself when speaking for the first time and always address other participants by name.
- Speak naturally and clearly - modern VC microphones are very sensitive and are able to pick up voice and sounds from up to 8 metres away.
- Use the mute button when it's absolutely necessary such as when you need to take an urgent phone call.
- Assume that all your VC equipment is working correctly - don't waste time asking if the person on the other end of the microphone can hear you.
- Ensure that your VC cameras are focused correctly and that they aren't placed too near to or far away from participants.
- Ensure that you're fairly centred in the VC screen's frame and that the area surrounding you is neat and presentable.
- Treat your colleagues and remote participants in a courteous, professional and respectful manner at all times.

Don't:

- Be afraid to share differing or personal opinions as this is one of the most effective ways to inspire positive change.
- Fidget, slouch or make excessive movements that could distract your viewers.
- Tense up, act reserved or speak timidly just because you're on camera.
- Wear lots of sparkling jewellery that could create distracting reflections in the broadcast image.
- Rustle pages near a microphone as this will most likely create a jarring noise.
- Type on a laptop if you're not taking the minutes as this can be very distracting for remote participants.
- Move out of range of your VC cameras and mics.
- Be afraid to treat your remote participants the same way you would if they were sitting across the table from you.
- Unnecessarily adjust the sound and image being broadcast by your VC equipment.
- Look directly at the camera - rather focus your gaze on the speaker as most VC cameras are slightly offset from the speaker's image.

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