

**LIZ LATHAN, CMP**

**HOW TO  
MAKE YOUR  
VIRTUAL  
EVENTS  
NOT SUCK**



**An eBook on creating and  
delivering content for  
remote audiences.**

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In mid-March everything changed. Since then, we've spent the last month running remote advisory councils, remote HD Strategy Sessions, remote HD(x) events, and consulting with people on virtual experiences.

We've attempted to join a couple of virtual events, as well, and some were AWESOME... but most of them have been unbearable information vomits - as though any of us have the time or attention span to sit and listen...

After gathering feedback from our events, we wanted to share our top 10 ways to make your virtual events not suck.



# 10. THE WELCOME.

The welcoming moments into your experience are just as vital to the online experience as they are at your in-person event. Have some background music, have trivia wallpaper going, have someone welcome people, whether it's in chat or via voice-over as people join to let them know they have been noticed and you're glad they're here.





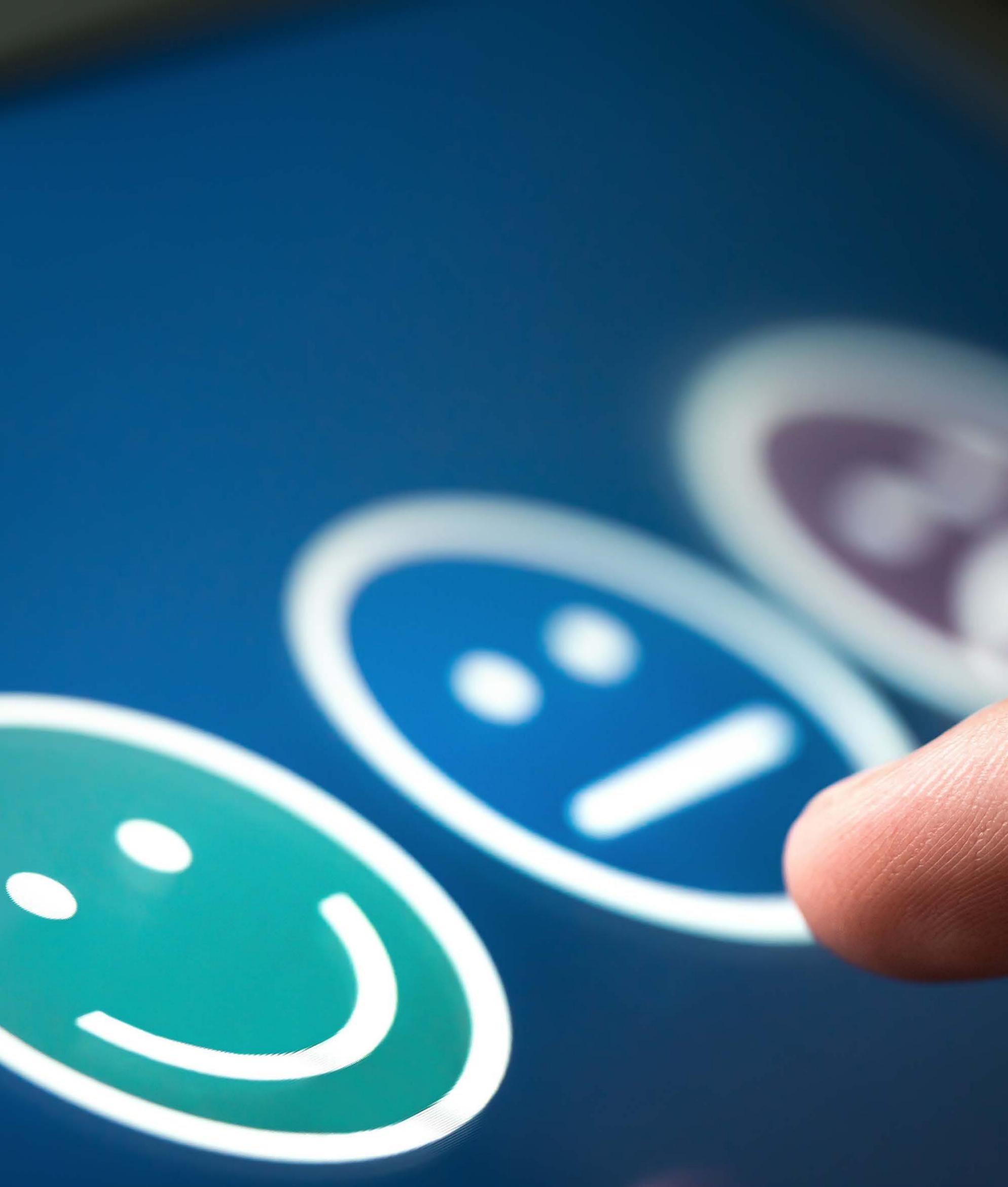
## 9. STAFF CORRECTLY.

This isn't a one-man show. Virtual events are a team sport. If you have breakout rooms, you need a room administrator in each room. You need a host/emcee to welcome everyone, and you need a host/administrator to "personably" manage the technical aspects of the experience for the attendees (this is a combination of customer support and technical administration). And have an extra room administrator in case one of the primary folks lose internet, ditto if you have notetakers in the rooms - have a few extra people!

# 8. VARY THE PRESENTATION FORMATS.

Include slides, conversation, and chat. A meeting that is all "Brady Bunch" view is great for conversation, but not for delivering actual content. Participants are looking for someplace for their eyes to go. An event that is all presentation, on the other hand, provides no eye contact or ability to feel the humanity through the screen. Do both.





## **7. PROVIDE INTERACTIVITY.**

Polls, annotating, whiteboarding, Muraling, or even an old-fashioned thumbs up to the camera; make sure you are pausing to involve your participants and get feedback along the way.

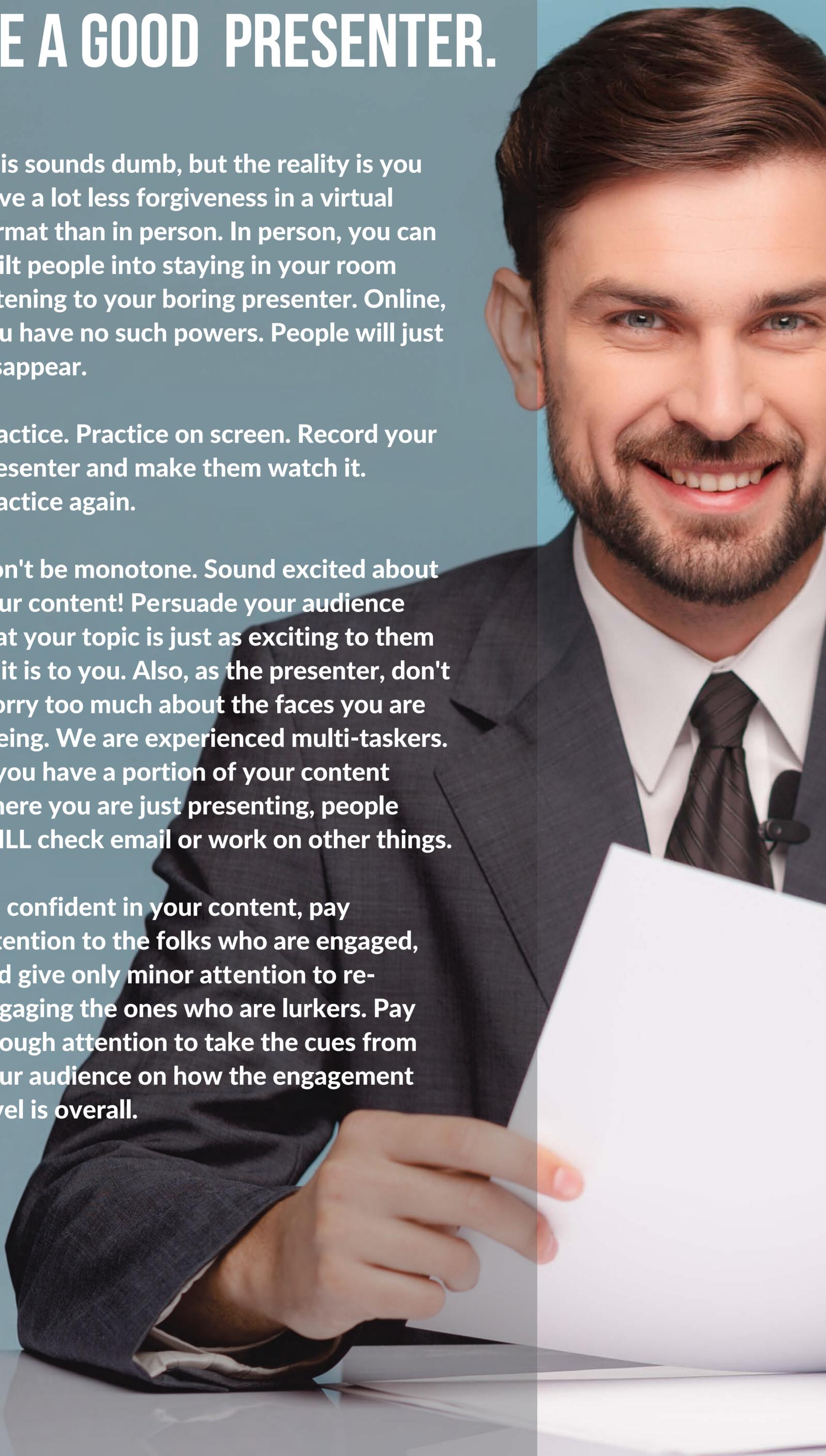
# 6. BE A GOOD PRESENTER.

This sounds dumb, but the reality is you have a lot less forgiveness in a virtual format than in person. In person, you can guilt people into staying in your room listening to your boring presenter. Online, you have no such powers. People will just disappear.

Practice. Practice on screen. Record your presenter and make them watch it. Practice again.

Don't be monotone. Sound excited about your content! Persuade your audience that your topic is just as exciting to them as it is to you. Also, as the presenter, don't worry too much about the faces you are seeing. We are experienced multi-taskers. If you have a portion of your content where you are just presenting, people **WILL** check email or work on other things.

Be confident in your content, pay attention to the folks who are engaged, and give only minor attention to re-engaging the ones who are lurkers. Pay enough attention to take the cues from your audience on how the engagement level is overall.





## 5. ENTERTAIN AND OFFER ICEBREAKERS.

Now more than ever, we are stuck at our computers staring at our screens without a break. Anything to get us moving and laughing.

Offer a stretch break with a yoga instructor for 5 minutes before a break. Bring in a magician for virtual happy hour. Do an in-home scavenger hunt and ask participants to grab their favorite kitchen utensil, or grab the nearest human and put them on screen! If you're doing polls or quizzes, throw in some old-school Jeopardy music to jazz up the dull moments while people are answering.

It's the little touches that make people smile and talk about the experience.



## 4. USE BREAKOUT ROOMS.

Just like onsite events, people attend events to learn and network. Putting people in a keynote session for 8 hours doesn't work in a ballroom, and it sure as heck won't work in a virtual environment.

Make sure some of your sessions are small enough to provide for actual interaction among participants.

Fewer than 50 participants is ideal for interaction on tools like Zoom.

# 3. MAKE ROOM MANAGEMENT EASY.



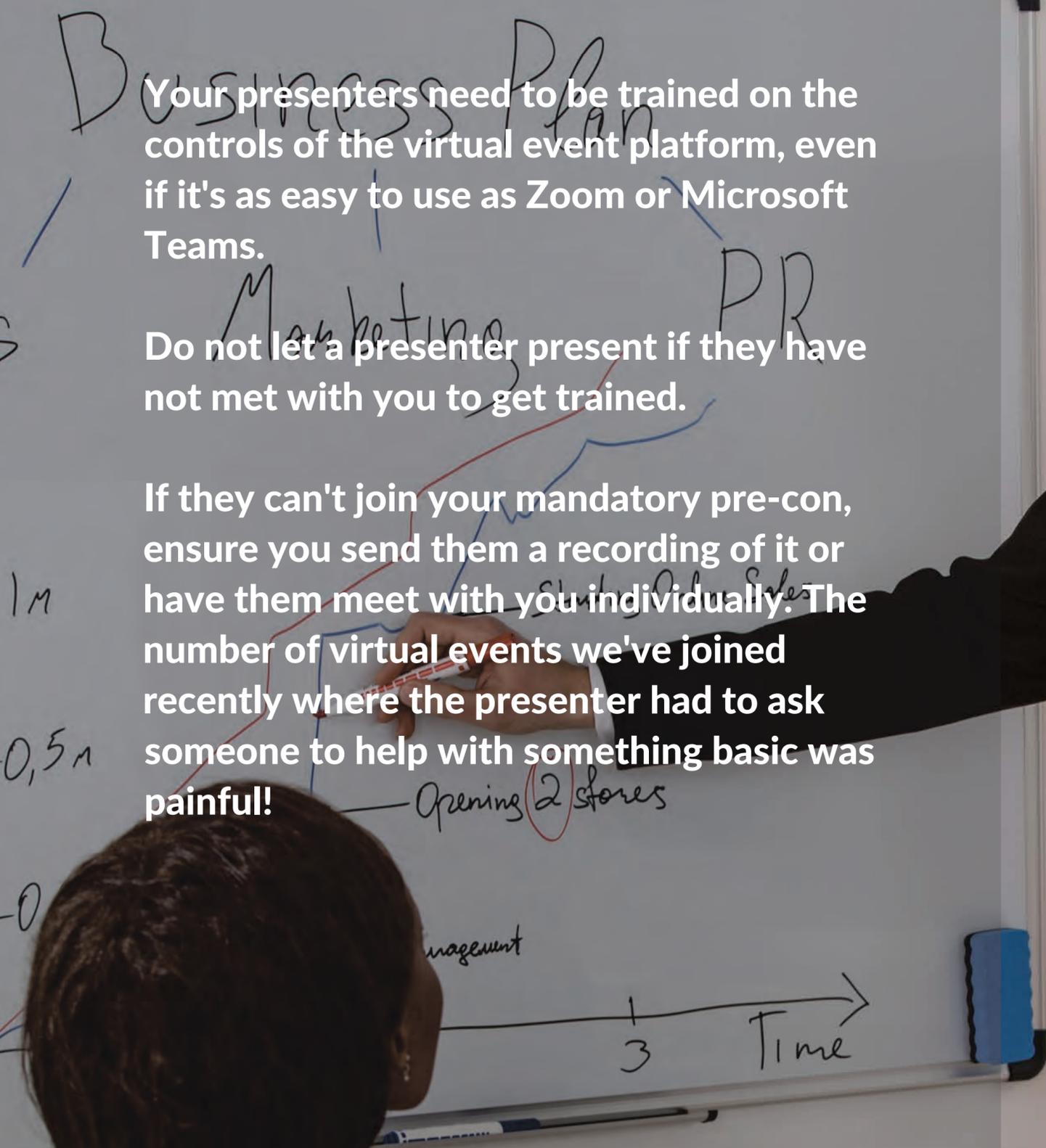
Create a checklist for room admins (welcome participants, intro yourself, hit Record, take roll off screen, know where to upload screen shots and recordings for post-event), as well as a back channel like Slack, WhatsApp, or another instant messaging tool that isn't in the virtual event platform's chat, just to avoid the accidental "message to everyone" mistake.

## 2. REQUIRE PRESENTERS TO JOIN YOUR PRE-CONFERENCE MEETING.

Your presenters need to be trained on the controls of the virtual event platform, even if it's as easy to use as Zoom or Microsoft Teams.

Do not let a presenter present if they have not met with you to get trained.

If they can't join your mandatory pre-con, ensure you send them a recording of it or have them meet with you individually. The number of virtual events we've joined recently where the presenter had to ask someone to help with something basic was painful!





# 1. DON'T OVERPRODUCE IT.

Right now, authenticity is the name of the game. A good home setup, or a nice home studio is amazing, and good lighting (even if just from a selfie ring light) is required, but in our current economic time, using a fully-built studio may come across as wasteful spending, and in lock-down situations, its comforting to know that people are staying home.

Take a cue from John Krasinski and go lo-fi. Make no mistake, though, that video was NOT underproduced. The exact right amount of all of the above 9 points were used in the creation of this video. The set design/lighting, the content, those guests, and that incredible script were craftily designed and executed.

So yes, you still have to produce your content, just don't OVERproduce it.



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At Haute Dokimazo and Haute Companies, human connection is our business, so let us know if we can help you keep the humanity in your virtual events.

We're happy to advise, counsel, listen, learn, share, or help!

Contact us:

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