

The



Orderly  
Conversation

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This is a companion piece to our first book, *The Orderly Conversation*<sup>®</sup>: *Business Presentations Redefined*. Our goal is to give you ways to apply the fundamental ideas presented in that book to the virtual presentations you deliver. As before, we want to make a challenging and sometimes frustrating process easier, more comfortable, and more efficient.

First, some context. If you're familiar with our work, you know that we define business presentations, training sessions, and meetings large and small as Orderly Conversations. This definition allows us to zero in on the most essential characteristic of such a broad range of interactions. That characteristic is the tension between planning and spontaneity.

Everyone agrees that while a presentation needs to be prepared in advance, it succeeds only when it generates a genuine conversation during delivery. Helping every presenter achieve that success—regardless of experience, skill level, or habit—is at the heart of what we do.

As you probably know, succeeding in the virtual environment requires making fundamental adjustments to the face-to-face approach. We will explain what those adjustments are in this brief companion piece.

A word about how this book is organized: as we did with *The Orderly Conversation*, we're going to keep our voices separate here. I (Dale) will lay out key concepts, and Greg will add commentary and real-life examples in the sidebars.



## Making It Comfortable

Using video is a great way to build relationships in the virtual world. It allows others to put a face to your name and voice, making virtual communication feel personal. But communicating through video is rarely easy and certainly not comfortable at first.

To understand why, let's look at what makes communicating face-to-face feel easy and comfortable. When face-to-face, the presenter's responsibility is to engage listeners and manage the conversation. This is done through eye contact and pausing. In everyday conversation, we usually aren't aware of how we're using these skills. It's second nature. In face-to-face training, we encourage presenters to use these skills more intentionally.

**Eye contact** establishes a connection between presenter and listener. Through this connection, listeners are brought into the conversation. When that happens, the presenter is aware of and responds to listener reactions, both verbal and nonverbal.

**Pausing** gives presenters the time they need to think about what's happening with listeners and to react to it. This might be a big reaction, like a drastic change in the presentation's focus, or a small one, like restating something that seems confusing to people.

The same sort of give and take between speaker and audience occurs in the virtual world, but it happens very differently. Thus, the intention behind the use of these two skills changes as well.

## Using Eye Contact in a Virtual Presentation

Let's look at eye contact from both sides of the conversation.

### Eye Contact for Listeners

For the virtual listener, what's important is the appearance of eye contact from the presenter. As listeners look at their screens, it's more comfortable to see someone looking back at them than to see someone looking slightly down, up, or to the side. This sense of connection makes the conversation feel more genuine and focused because listeners are able to take in the speaker's facial expression and tone of voice naturally.

To achieve this effect, presenters should speak directly into their cameras whenever they would look at their listeners face-to-face. Because most cameras on computers are above the screen, this means lifting your gaze to camera level. It's the same technique television newscasters use. When you borrow that technique for your presentations, you'll make your listeners' job easier.

### Eye Contact for Presenters

While looking at a presenter speaking into a camera feels comfortable and normal for listeners, it doesn't feel that way for presenters. Until the virtual technology improves (I keep imaging holograms), the natural feeling of connection through eye contact, which is the foundation of face-to-face communication, is unavailable to virtual presenters.

As I mentioned above, many virtual presenters try to recreate the feeling of face-to-face interaction by looking at listener videos tiled on the screen. But when you do that,

in addition to making things less comfortable for your listeners, the only thing you're seeing is people looking at their screens. You're observing them as they observe you, but there's no connection happening.

Instead of relying on eye contact to create a connection with listeners, focus instead on how listeners are perceiving you. As you speak into the camera, imagine you're in the same room with your listeners. This will improve the tone of your presentation because your vocal enthusiasm will increase, your facial expression will be more animated, and you'll gesture more. While you may not be as connected with people as you would be face-to-face, you will be more engaging and interesting. That's important for virtual audiences.

This approach is hard work, and sometimes it feels like you're acting. But it will get easier for you the more you do it. Here's how to know when you've succeeded with vocal enthusiasm: you're delivering a virtual presentation in your home office or living room when your kids or spouse walk by. If they think you sound like you're talking to a group of people in the conference room at work—and not a single person on the phone—you've made it.

A few years ago, I was delivering a face-to-face workshop for one of our clients. One of the products this company produced was hand-carved wooden back bars, the sort of bar you see in older hotels. These bars always have mirrors. One of their original bars was situated in their conference room directly across from the projector screen. That meant I had to deliver the workshop facing the bar and looking at myself in the mirror. It was unnerving at first, but by the end of the day, I wasn't bothered by it.

The same thing happens when you're speaking on video, only instead of looking at yourself in the mirror, you're looking at a video of yourself. It can be distracting. However, just as with the mirrored training room, it becomes less so the more you do it.

In some platforms, you can choose to hide your own video from yourself. While this might seem like a good idea, it's inviting trouble because, while seeing yourself can be distracting, you need to know how you're coming across to others. So, keep your camera on and check in with your own image on occasion to make sure you're coming across to others as you intend.

## Pausing, Stopping, and Checking in During a Virtual Presentation

While the appearance of good eye contact is important for listeners, the benefits of genuine eye contact are missing for the virtual presenter. That means you have to rely on pausing to stay connected with listeners.

When we work on pausing in a face-to-face workshop, our conversation with presenters is almost always about the length of the pause. They worry that a long pause makes them appear unprepared or as if they don't know what they're talking about. Of course, the opposite is true. Effective pauses give presenters time to think and react, making them appear more confident and in control, not less. The same is true in the virtual environment where pausing communicates comfort and gives presenters time to think.

The simplest example of the need for pausing in the virtual environment is when you have technical problems, when the video freezes, or when lag times are long. When these things happen, it's important to stop and wait until the issue is resolved. The more comfortable you are with these pauses, the more comfortable your audience will be with you.

The more people in a virtual meeting, the more challenging audio can be. In most situations, we recommend placing everyone on mute except the person speaking. This eliminates background noise and other audio distractions. Of course, if it's a small team that meets regularly and is used to interacting remotely together, this may not be necessary.

Beyond technical issues though, it's also necessary to check in with your audience more frequently during virtual presentations. Stop delivering information and ask, "What questions do you have?" or "Have I been clear with that?" These check-ins are especially appropriate if no one has interrupted you with a question or comment for a period of time. With the loss of the feedback face-to-face eye contact provides, you need to check in on listeners frequently.

The benefit of these listener check-ins is that a fruitful conversation is more likely to take place. There is a risk that your presentation will be pulled off course, but it's a risk worth taking. Even when comments or interactions need to be steered back on track, you're gaining important insight into how your presentation is being received.

Speaking to the camera, keeping your enthusiasm up, and managing the stop and start of virtual presentations is exhausting for presenters. Knowing that these techniques are effective makes them worth the effort.

**A note about silence:** When interacting with people in the virtual space, you must get used to longer periods of silence. Pausing and making way for others to speak can feel awkward because you have to wait longer than you do in face-to-face situations. Beyond the delay that may exist, there are several reasons you need to wait for people to chime in to the conversation. They include:

- People are reluctant to speak, so they wait for others to break the silence.
- People have to think, formulate a response, look around to see if anyone else looks as if they're about to speak, and then find a way to unmute themselves.
- If you're asking them to communicate with you through chat, you have to give them time to type, fix typos, and hit send.

All of this takes time, and it's up to you as the presenter to ensure the silence is long enough to make these things possible.

## Easing Video Fatigue

Presenters aren't the only people exhausted by virtual communication. Your listeners are feeling it, too. Here are a few suggestions for easing their video fatigue. All of them involve the judicious use of speaker and listener video.

- **Screen Share Only:** In some situations, you may want to take everyone, including yourself, off video and simply share your screen. This is appropriate when you want to direct attention to the slide for an extended period of time—for example, when you're talking about a spreadsheet or a detailed timeline.
- **Speaker Only:** You may want to take your listeners off video but leave yours on. This will help them focus on you and your slides. When you pause to check in, or when an interruption pulls you off course for a while, bring their videos back.
- **Bookend Video:** When it's not appropriate to take questions or comments as you present—during a formal presentation or webinar, for example—use video at the beginning and the end of your presentation. You will help listeners focus on your slides without losing the personal connection video provides.

Get to know your platform so that you'll be able to choose the most effective, efficient, and least distracting ways to use video.

I've seen the bookend video technique used to great effect during sales calls and product demos. Turn the camera on at the beginning of the conversation so that buyers and customers can put a face to your name and voice. Turn the camera off when you get to the meat of your presentation or demo. I can also see this helping with customer support calls.



## Making It Easy for Them to Follow Along

Making it easy for your audience to understand, follow along, and participate in meetings and presentations is important in every environment.

Because virtual presentations are more challenging for listeners than face-to-face ones, it's crucial to build a strong frame to communicate relevance and efficiency. The frame is the introduction of your presentation and communicates that (1) what you're presenting is of interest and importance to your listeners, (2) you will do all that you can to be efficient, and (3) understanding you will be easy.

## Framing the Conversation

Note that these are process goals, distinct from the practical business goal of the presentation. The *business* goal of a presentation might be to get buy-in for a new proposal. The *process* goal of that presentation would be for the presenter to come across as interested in the audience's input and respectful of the audience's time. In short, process goals are about how listeners feel about you and the conversation you're leading.

In the virtual environment, you should also include in the frame a brief overview of how the tools available on the platform are going to be used.

To reach these process goals, take the first minute or so to frame your presentation. Focus on these five things.

- 1. Current Situation**
- 2. Purpose Statement**
- 3. Agenda**
- 4. Listener Benefits**
- 5. Virtual Process**

Here's what each step accomplishes:

<b>Current Situation</b>	The current situation places the conversation in business context. In other words, it states how the presentation fits into listeners' work life.
<b>Purpose Statement</b>	The purpose statement communicates your goal, or what you want them to do, think, or understand when you're finished.
<b>Agenda</b>	The agenda communicates how the presentation is organized and promises efficiency.
<b>Listener Benefits</b>	By identifying the listener benefits, you're naming what the listeners will take away from the conversation. What's in it for them?
<b>Virtual Process</b>	Let everyone know which virtual tools you will be using and how you'll use them.

When you arrive to a live face-to-face meeting, there's always going to be some sort of informal chit-chat before the meeting begins. Sometimes it's a simple greeting, and other times it's an animated conversation about something going on in the world. The same thing should happen in a virtual meeting. Greet people as they arrive in the virtual room. Engage them in conversation. That type of human connection doesn't have to be diminished or cut short just because you're not in the same physical space. When you engage others in this way, relationships are nurtured, and trust is built. This is also a good time to address any technical glitches such as poor audio quality or video latency. When it's time to kick things off and formally begin the conversation, the 5-step framing strategy helps you get everyone's attention and provide proper context for the conversation to proceed.

Two final things to remember about the frame. First, it's a promise of what's to come, communicating your goal and how you plan to reach it. Second, the frame should have a clear, concise, let's-get-down-to-business quality. A shaky frame will not generate the confidence and focus you need from your listeners in the virtual environment

### Framing Examples

Let's look at an example. Here's a frame for an internal meeting.

Let's say you are presenting a project update to your team. You need them to understand where they are in the process and agree to move on to the next stage. Here's what you might say, following the order listed above.

<b>Current Situation</b>	Hello everyone, today we're doing an update on Project Go Forward. It's been three weeks since our last update, and a lot has happened since then.
<b>Purpose Statement</b>	What we need to do today is agree that we have adequately completed Phase 2 and are ready to go on to Phase 3.
<b>Agenda</b>	Here's the agenda I've put together. I will review the Phase 2 reports you've turned in to me. After that, we'll review the benchmarks for moving to Phase 3, which I believe we've met. Finally, we need to discuss any concerns you have at this point.
<b>Listener Benefits</b>	In the end, I hope all of us feel confident and comfortable moving forward.
<b>Virtual Process</b>	To keep things efficient, please use the chat function when I'm delivering slides. I'll pause frequently to address your questions and comments. Hector has agreed to help me with that by monitoring chat. After that, we'll open things up to discussion. We'll all be on video at that point.

In this example, there's no ambiguity around what the group is to accomplish. This type of focus and clarity is important because it gets things started in the right direction and it provides relevance and structure to the conversation that's about to take place.

Here's a frame for an external presentation to a customer. It follows a slightly different order.

<b>Current Situation</b>	As you all know, it's time for our second quarter business review.
<b>Agenda</b>	The first thing I'll do is go over our numbers, as I always do. Then I'll go into detail about a new program we're rolling out in the second half. It's called NorthStar.
<b>Purpose Statement</b>	I think you'll see that NorthStar is a really good fit for you, and I encourage you to consider it.
<b>Listener Benefits</b>	When I'm finished, I hope to have answered all of your questions about Q2 and to have given you the information you need to make decisions about the second half of the year.
<b>Virtual Process</b>	To keep things moving along efficiently, let's turn our videos off as I go over the numbers. That way we can focus on the data. After that, we'll fire the cameras back up, and I'll bring everyone's videos into view to make the conversation a little easier. I'm going to mute everyone so that we can keep the audio quality high, but that doesn't mean I'm not interested in taking questions. As always, stop me whenever you want if you have questions—in chat or verbally, either way.

The number of slides used in the frame varies. There will be times when it's appropriate to use a separate slide for each step in the frame. At other times, steps can be combined on a single slide. In informal presentations, you might use an agenda slide only. We do recommend, though, that you use at least one slide for the frame (typically an agenda) because it helps you meet the getting-down-to-business goal of the frame.

When you do use slides or some other type of visual support, you'll need to share your screen or the application you're using. Each platform treats this function differently, but regardless of platform, you should have the documents or apps open on your computer and ready to go so that the transition into the screen share is as seamless as possible.

The interactive tools that are included in virtual platforms are not necessarily intuitive to use. We recommend getting in there and tinkering. Have a colleague join you so you can compare what each of you is seeing on your screens, since depending on role (host, co-host, or attendee), the platform and tools look different. As you work through the tools, get to know what's available, where the tools are located, how to use them, and how to tell others where they are.

## Easing Slide Fatigue

Continue to think about how you can make listening easy as you move into the body of your presentation. In face-to-face presentations, delivering slides well is about bringing them into the conversation. Presenters direct focus to and from the slide, guiding listeners along and monitoring their responses. The challenge with virtual delivery is that you cannot see where your listeners are looking or how they're reacting.

One thing you do know, though, is that they are dealing with a lot of distractions, both on their screen and not.

As you plan and deliver your presentation, think about the following recommendations.

<p><b>Context Before Content</b></p>	<p>When you bring a slide up on the screen tell your listeners what it is before you talk about what it means. Let's go back to newscasters for a moment. Most of them are really bad at this. If they show a graphic to support their story, they assume that we understand the data and the image as they move quickly to the takeaway. Don't do that to your listeners. Examples of placing context before content:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "The graphic shows the historic rise in catastrophic floods in the last 10 years."</li> <li>• "This graph highlights sales by category year over year."</li> <li>• "The timeline highlights key events that..."</li> </ul>
<p><b>Directional and Descriptive Language</b></p>	<p>Tell listeners where they should look and what they should see.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Let's focus on the product samples on the lower left-hand part of the slide."</li> <li>• "The pie chart shows us our percentage of income by product line."</li> <li>• "Moving down the list..."</li> <li>• "I want to call your attention to the spreadsheet rows highlighted in green..."</li> </ul>
<p><b>Pointers, Markers, and Highlighters</b></p>	<p>Pull attention to specific items on a slide by using a pointer, marker, or highlighter tool.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Here you can see I'm pointing to/highlighting the column I'd like us to focus on."</li> <li>• "I'll use the red marker to show you the biggest surprises I had when I looked at the data more closely."</li> </ul>

<p><b>Slide Titles</b></p>	<p>Create and use meaningful slide titles that are specific and tee up the conversation you want to have.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>5 Most Profitable Product Lines</i> is better than <i>Product Lines</i>.</li> <li>• <i>Faster Service Times Keep Customers Happy</i> is better than <i>Service Times</i>.</li> </ul> <p>Once the conversation starts, rely on the slide title to orient you to what you planned to say. Using the same examples as above:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Let’s take a look at our five most profitable product lines. Running from left to right, they are...”</li> <li>• “Our faster service times are keeping our customers happy. Let’s take a look at some of the recent testimonials.”</li> </ul>
<p><b>So-What Statements</b></p>	<p>You probably use so-what statements for face-to-face presentations when your slide deck is also a takeaway document. A so-what statement is a quick summary of the relevant implication or action step from the slide. Including them on virtual slides will increase understanding in the moment.</p> <p>So-what statements will also help you remember and reinforce key points.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Key Takeaway: 9 out of 10 products meet or exceed sales projections at end of Q2.”</li> <li>• “Passing inspection is critical to keeping Project Palm on schedule.”</li> </ul>
<p><b>Pause Often</b></p>	<p>If you’re using a complex slide, give listeners time to take a look at it. Make this a real pause, much longer than you think it needs to be, and tell listeners that you’re doing so.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “There’s a lot to take in here, so I’ll give you a minute to read through everything.”</li> <li>• “As you can see, the process is complex. Take a minute to get yourself acclimated to it, then I’ll walk you through it in detail.”</li> </ul>

<p><b>Animation</b></p>	<p>Use animation on your slides. This is the opposite of what we recommend in face-to-face presentations. In a virtual environment though, movement on slides focuses (and re-focuses) listeners' attention.</p> <p>Pay attention to the animation settings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use "appear" animation because slow fades take up bandwidth and can create lag. Avoid slide morphs and transitions for the same reason.</li> <li>• Set duration to "Auto" and delay to 0.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Screen Share vs. Video</b></p>	<p>Move in and out of screen sharing. If a slide is no longer part of the conversation taking place, take it away. Tile the group's videos on the screen so that everyone can see them, or just put yourself on video.</p>
<p><b>Narrate What You're Doing</b></p>	<p>Finally, to keep listeners focused, presenters should talk about what they're doing. For example,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Closing out of my PowerPoint and bringing up the videos."</li> <li>• "I'm sharing my screen; give me a thumbs up if you can see it."</li> <li>• "Let's close out of PowerPoint; I want to show you the demo now."</li> <li>• "I'm going to pause and give you a moment to let that sink in."</li> <li>• "Janae, I'm done with my portion. Let me stop sharing so you can share your screen."</li> </ul>

Think back to your high school history class. It's very likely that, from time to time, your teacher said, "pay attention, this is going to be on the test." When she did that, you, along with everyone else in the class, perked up and grabbed a pen to take a note. Let's call that an "eye-opening" moment. Work to create as many of those moments as you can. It will make following along easier for listeners. Use phrases such as "The key takeaway is..." and "The most relevant set of data for the decision we're trying to make is..."



## Making It Efficient

In face-to-face presentations, it's the presenter's job to encourage and control the interaction that takes place. This is important because presenters need input from their audience, but they don't want the interaction to get out of control. This goes back to relevance and efficiency. You need input (to keep things relevant), and you want to stay on track (to keep things efficient).

## Managing Group Interactions

We've all be in situations where the presenter asks a question of the group only to be met by silence. A lot of silence. On the other hand, we've also experienced a group of people talking over each other, rabbit-hole tangents from questioners, or a single listener dominating the discussion inappropriately. All of this behavior is made more uncomfortable and frustrating when it occurs virtually, giving the people not involved in the interaction an invitation to check out.

Let's focus on the two types of interaction that take place during your meetings. The first is spontaneous interaction—questions and comments initiated by your listeners. The second is intentional interaction, initiated by you. Let's talk about spontaneous interaction first.

### Facilitating Spontaneous Interaction

To *encourage* questions and interruptions, let people decide for themselves how they want to interact. Some people may prefer to type into chat. Others may like hand raising. Some may prefer to come off of mute and verbally interrupt. Allowing all of these options gives people a choice. Just be sure to have someone, a host or another participant, monitor chat and hand raising so that you can respond appropriately.

To *control* this type of interaction, place everyone on mute when you are delivering your slides. They can unmute themselves, of course. But by making mute the default setting, you're adding a step for them, which may lead to more thoughtful or more carefully timed interruptions from listeners.

Here are other gentle but effective control techniques:

- With large groups or very talkative listeners, require hand raising, either using the platform tool or visibly raising their hands on video. This may seem condescending when face-to-face, but listeners will appreciate the efficiency it brings virtually. If you've asked someone to act as your host to handle the technical aspects of the presentation (which we generally suggest you do), give the host permission to interrupt you if someone does raise their hand.
- When people start speaking over each other ("You go." "No, you go."), step in and give one person permission to speak, then another. Again, this is usually unnecessary in face-to-face situations, but in virtual, it's often the smoothest solution: "Ola, you go first, then Alex, I'll call on you after that."
- As you do with slide delivery, talk about what you're doing.
  - "I can see Ari has a comment in chat, let me read that out loud for the group."
  - "To make this less frustrating, I'll call on you when you want to speak, so let me know you have something to say and I'll do that."

Some of these techniques may feel overly controlling or even heavy handed to you. But given the often messy nature of virtual communication, they're necessary. Remember, the people you're working with are craving efficiency, and it's your responsibility to provide it. So exercise the control necessary to get the job done and do it with a smile. Everyone will appreciate your good intentions.

### **Initiating Intentional Interaction**

Intentional interactions are discussions or activities planned by you. These include brainstorming on a white board, using polls, asking people to contribute through chat, and using annotation tools. The good news is that you can use these tools to reach a variety of goals, some of which are not available in face-to-face settings. For example, polls are a quick way to gather anonymous feedback from listeners, something that would feel

strange face-to-face. Using breakout rooms might be impossible in a face-to-face meeting, but it's quick and easy virtually.

When you want to gather information or feedback from the group quickly, consider these options:

- Use annotation tools, hand raising, or polls. This gives you input you can use, for example, to prioritize the information you're going to present or to make a decision.
  - **Annotation:** "I've drawn four boxes on the screen and labeled each. Use the annotation tool to type your name on the box containing the solution you believe to be the best one."
  - **Hand-raising:** "Give me a virtual show of hands if you want me to go into more detail on this topic."
  - **Poll:** "As we've discussed, there are three options for moving this project forward after the pilot. Go, No Go, and Go with Modifications. I've made a poll, and you each get one vote."
- Pose open-ended questions and ask listeners to respond in chat. This is a great check-in strategy to make sure they're still with you. This will also give you a good amount of feedback in a short period of time, which you can use in any way you want.
  - "What are your thoughts about what I just presented?"
  - "How do you think this option will positively or negatively affect your work?"

When facilitating discussions in face-to-face situations, I can rely on my instincts to get the job done. This is not the same in the virtual space. For example, when planning to facilitate a discussion, I have to craft questions in advance and really think through where the conversation might go. Keep in mind, open-ended questions are better than "yes" or "no" questions because they invite nuanced answers that can move the conversation forward. Open-ended questions don't always come naturally to me, so I have to think about them in advance.

I also have to work much harder in the virtual space to include shy or introverted people. Sometimes this means redirecting conversations so that the single loudest voice isn't the only one heard. For example, "Milani, we haven't heard from you yet, what are your thoughts?" or "Carlo, you typed something into chat, I want to make sure everyone sees what you said. I think you bring up an excellent point. Talk more about that."

When you want to bring a conversation to a close around a particular topic, use virtual tools to summarize and move on. Ask listeners to use chat or the white board to record something specific, like their biggest concern about the topic at hand or the solution they feel is best for the problem under discussion. For example:

- "In your view, what's the most important thing we've discussed so far? Drop your answer in chat." You can follow-up on this input after the meeting is over.
- "We've been talking about this from just about every possible angle. On the white board, tell me the most important thing you want me to take away from this discussion."

This input can be used to focus the conversation that immediately follows or to delay some topics until later.

One of the reasons to use chat and whiteboards is that you can save the results for use later. This is the equivalent of rolling up flip chart paper and stuffing it in your luggage for the flight home or taking a photo of the drawings on the whiteboard. Each platform does this differently, so you'll want to plan ahead. You can also take screen shots of whatever is on the screen.

## Enlisting Some Help

Dealing with the virtual tools and technology hiccups can be overwhelming if you attempt to do it all yourself. Here are some ideas for easing the burden.

### Using a Host

When the group is big, when the stakes are high, or when you're using more than a few tools in the virtual space, we recommend asking someone to serve as a host. A host will take over the responsibilities of managing the tools, and when you're presenting, monitoring chat. This will free you to focus on your presentation and listeners.

You may want to consider sharing presenting responsibility with a colleague. Not only will it ease the burden for you, but having a second voice will make it more interesting for your listeners. Working together, you'll be able to connect dots, answer questions from different points of view, and generally have each other's backs.

### **Engaging a Scribe**

In some instances, you may want to use a scribe. Having someone take notes is useful if you're facilitating a complex discussion or making decisions. Ask your scribe to open a Word or OneNote file and share their screen with the group. If the platform includes a whiteboard feature, that can work as well. Since everyone can see what's being typed, people will see if something they've said or heard has been misunderstood or misconstrued. This means there will be no ambiguity or confusion later.

When using this technique, make sure the scribe understands that you're not after a word-for-word recount of the conversation, which would be distracting to others. Rather, you want to capture key concepts. By doing so, you'll prevent people from fixating on what's being typed and the inevitable typos that appear.



### **Wrapping Up**

Everyone has the ability to communicate effectively in the virtual space, but we can't rely on the same instincts, habits, skills, and techniques that work for us in face-to-face situations. We hope we've addressed the most important adjustments you need to make here. Get comfortable with the camera, prepare more intentionally, stay focused on efficiency, get to know your virtual platform, and practice with it.

Maybe what we learn from the challenge of managing communication virtually will carry over and make future face-to-face meetings easier, more comfortable, more efficient.

## About the Authors

Turpin Communication's Founder, Dale Ludwig, and Vice President, Greg Owen-Boger, are the co-authors of *The Orderly Conversation: Business Presentations Redefined*. That book challenges conventional thinking about what it means to present and facilitate in today's business environment. It has been called "ground-breaking" and "eminently practical." They also co-authored *Effective SMEs: A Trainer's Guide to Helping Subject Matter Experts Facilitate Learning*, which came out in 2017. Both Dale and Greg hold the Bates ExPI™ (Executive Presence Index) coaching certification.

Wanting to do good in the world, Dale, Greg, and a mutual friend named Olive founded a philanthropic wing of the company in 2014. Through it, they provide food, toiletries, and comfort items to the homeless and food insecure in and around the south side of Chicago, an area in which they all live. [www.turpincares.org](http://www.turpincares.org)



**DALE LUDWIG** is the Founder and President of Turpin. Over the past 28 years, he and his partners have developed methodologies that rethink and refine communication skills development. Working with presenters, facilitators and trainers, Turpin's work (1) focuses on The Orderly Conversation that must take place, (2) acknowledges the Default Approach that every presenter and facilitator brings to that process, and (3) helps communicators develop the skills they need to engage listeners in a productive interaction. Dale has a PhD in Communication from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He is a frequent blogger and is the author of the white paper "Getting Past 101," which can be downloaded at [www.turpincommunication.com](http://www.turpincommunication.com).



**GREG OWEN-BOGER** is the Vice President of Turpin. Schooled in management and the performing arts and possessing an entrepreneurial spirit, Greg brings a diverse set of skills and experiences to the organization. He joined Turpin in 1995 as a cameraman and quickly worked his way up. He now serves as a communication trainer and coach for Turpin's largest clients. He was the 2015 President of the Chicagoland Chapter of the Association for Talent Development. Like Dale, he is a frequent blogger and makes guest appearances on several blogs and podcasts. He is among many thought leaders who contributed to *Master Presenter: Lessons from the World's Top Experts on Becoming a More Influential Speaker*.

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