

IMPROVE SKILLS & PRODUCTIVITY W/GOTO

Roger Courville's Virtual Class Handout :: Class sponsored by Tobacco Free Florida

"You know where Brisbane is?"

She sounded a bit hesitant. Like she didn't *actually* expect me to answer yes because, well, Brisbane is in Australia. And despite the fact Brisbane is the third largest city in Australia, she knew she was talking to an American.

"Yup!" I answered. "Been there. Twice actually."

"Well," she continued, "we're about 8 hours out of Brisbane in the outback."

We were talking, of course, because I help people with the technology and skills related to communicating at a distance... primarily "webinars" or virtual classes and meetings. What I learned is that she worked a regional municipality, and they were using webinars to deliver education to farmers. Sheep farmers. About how to be good neighbors and repair fences and sheep farmer stuff.

Like most industries, there are early adopters. But it was at this moment I realized the power of visual and video communication was ready to be ubiquitous.

Even more importantly, the sheep farmer training program illustrated a key point... it wasn't just about an organization becoming more efficient. The sheep farmers began to appreciate and even request virtual training.

Why?

Because it made *their* lives easier. It created value for them beyond the information itself — it saved them a ton of time because *they lived in the outback*. It wasn't exactly convenient for them to get to town.

I've seen the same play itself out many times over in public organizations. A city or state or municipality might not be driven by a profit motive, but you want to be good stewards of budgets that never stretch as far as you need them to. And hey, making it easier for your constituents to learn from you, like the sheep farmers, creates value for them beyond just the information shared.

This handout is created just for you, the employees and partners and grantees and associates of Tobacco Free Florida. It might be useful to remember a couple things:



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1. Our time together, and this handout, isn't a canned presentation. It's one-of-a-kind. As such, there's a possibility that you'll find typos. Consider them my gift to you? <grin>
2. Delivering information in writing has its place, but there is something unique that happens in real time. If you're looking at this and you haven't seen the live session (or recording thereof), I'd highly recommend it. There is *experience* there that doesn't translate to paper.
3. Remember that that experience changes depending on the size of the audience (just like in-person). We had a sizable "room" full of people, so it was a bit more "webinar-ish" and less "workshop-ish." But trust me, I love those hands on sessions, too. This session, though, wasn't that.
4. Finally, thank you. I mean it. You "paid" with your attention, and I'm in the service business, too (aren't we all in one way or another?). And since I like to think I help people who help people, if I can be of service to you and your team, I won't send you an invoice if you call with a question.

Peace~

Roger

CLASS, PART 1

What follows is the content of the presentation, minus the slides, but in a format designed to be quickly reference-able. I hope this serves you by filling in gaps or things you didn't remember from a two-hour online class.

Deconstruct the opening sequence

Unlike most propositional statements (e.g., "do <this>"), the point of deconstructing the opening sequence was to demonstrate how many tactics got baked into the first portion of the webinar. *It's important to start strong, because it totally differentiates you and your session from all the other "talk AT you" meetings and webinars your audience is experiencing.*

Start conversation early "in the hallway"

Most events and classes naturally include social interaction *around* the presentation, starting when someone arrives onsite. Why don't web seminars (webinars)? Because people repeat poor practice. But that's not how people naturally connect...so we want to facilitate something closer to how people naturally connect (and *of course* it's not the same as in-person, but the point is it can usually be way better than typical practice).

Immediately set an expectation of connection

This follows from the previous point. The key is *immediately*. Before they just put you on in the background until and unless you say something differently. Remember, unless it's a keynote presentation, most 'real' classes don't just talk AT you for 45 minutes and then take questions. Or at least they shouldn't, which leads to...

Interact more frequently (than offline)

Research shows that the majority of people multitask while watching TV. It's passive. Yes, this is a shorter attention span environment than onsite environments. Note that it's terribly unnatural to say, "You should interact every five minutes" online like it'd be unnatural to do so offline. But whatever you do, lean toward more frequent interaction online.

Ask explicitly for participation and attention

Learning and development professionals sometimes go as far as having written “learning contracts.” The reason: when person A in the audience participates, person B benefits. So for person A to show up and *not* participate is, well, leaning toward selfish. I typically just ask for attention. No, not everybody pays attention or participates, but that’s reality in any environment. But asking is better than hoping.

Blend interaction tools

We used a poll (a quantitative measure) that also invited explanation in the Questions box (a qualitative measure). The benefit: quantitative results are like mini research projects, but qualitative results are more personal. You learn different things from both.

Use participants’ names

Recognizing our own name is a known early childhood development — a powerful attention getter. And even if you respond to Prakesh, Julie knows you’re being real and interactive. It makes a big difference.

Think “popcorn principle” for polls

Polls are a fab interaction tool for more reasons than I’ll go into here. But unless you absolutely need an answer from every last participant, waiting until the last person votes means most of your audience is waiting. Remember the instructions for microwave popcorn...if you wait until you hear the last kernel pop, other kernels get burnt. Wait til the pace of responses slows down, but then call it good and keep moving.

P.S. For more than you probably ever wanted to learn about polls, see this series of blog posts: <https://thevirtualpresenter.com/content/engage-with-more-brain-friendly-polls-for-webinars-and-virtual-class-sessions/>

Direct attention with drawing tools

You can use PowerPoint design and animations to accomplish attention-getting if you want, but drawing tools are fast and powerful precisely because they change up the visuals. Draw to draw eyeballs.

Reward those who show up to the live event

This might be an extra giveaway, or it could be as simple as facilitating plenty of interaction or question-answer time. Remember, you can’t ask a personal question of a video. That’s part of what makes “real time” so powerful in relation to on-demand media.

Pause for questions naturally

What’s natural to each person may vary, but as you saw in this session, there was a natural transition between presentation segments. Benefit: When you’re an audience member, is it better to get your question answered closer to when you ask it or 45 minutes later? Yup, I thought so.

Design interactions to your setup

Create a dashboard with your “at a glance” tools

Dashboards give you a place to *glance* to get meaningful feedback. What *you* want may be different than another person, but keeping an eye on questions is a good start. Or being able to see that someone raised their hand. Or whatever. The key is that if you have to go hunting for it, it’s a LOT less natural.

Keep your eye on your audience with two computers or monitors

More visual real estate makes it a LOT easier to create a dashboard or arrange your tools for glancing. I cover this in a lot of detail in this blog post: <https://www.goto.com/blog/posts/maximize-audience-engagement-by-using-two-computers-or-monitors-with-gotowebinar>.

Know your setup scenario: relationships to cameras and tools

If you want to maximize interaction, it helps to understand the environment your audience finds themselves in. For instance, in a hybrid scenario (the worst, IMHO!) where some participants are online and some are onsite, how would you conduct a poll? (Believe it or not, it's actually *easier* to do it when everyone's online!). That said, you have to know *your* relationship to your camera and ability to touch GoTo controls *and* theirs so you can design/adapt your interactions effectively.

Bridge “transactional distance” with “analyze -> map/adapt -> discover”

Transactional distance is one way academics refer to the nature of your relationship to your audience or learners when that relationship is “mediated” (uses media). Bridging that experience gap is a skill that is first applied in design — thinking it through in advance. First, analyze what you do when you're in person. Then map those interactions to a new set of tools. Finally, don't stop until you discover what you can actually do better in the new environment (any new medium *always* brings a loss of something, but it also brings a gain of something else).

NOTE: I shared an example in the live session. Too, check out the “Translate Your In Person Interactions...” paper that you find on the goodies page here for a chart of ideas: <https://thevirtualpresenter.com/tffgoodies/>

Deliver engagement beyond interaction

Interaction and engagement are often fairly synonymous, but for the sake of teaching I use this distinction:

- Interactions involve reciprocal action (like “I ask a question using a poll, and they respond”)
- Engagement is purposeful action that triggers attention or response, but may not be an interaction

Stimulate mental responses (even if there isn't an actual verbal or textual response)

Go watch, or rewatch, Sir Ken Robinson's TED talk, *Do Schools Kill Creativity?* That's the example we used in our session together because in a TED talk the point is NOT to *interact*, but he asks rhetorical questions that stimulate mental response (i.e., “am I right?”)

From neurolinguistic programming (NLP) we know that two things you can do trigger the brain: Interrogatives (asking a question) and imperatives (delivering a command).

Direct attention visually and verbally

We addressed using annotation/drawing tools before...but what if someone's not looking when you draw? Then you're not directing their attention at that moment. Couple that with a verbal command. Go watch the recording to see how I did it. You'll be surprised (I think!) at how subtly you can do this to great effect.

Finish the phrase before breaking eye contact

In *Presenting to Win*, Jerry Weisman points out that when in-person you make eye contact with someone in the audience...and that you should “finish the phrase” while doing so or you may come across as shiftily or untrustworthy. So how do we do that online? Eye contact with the camera. It doesn't have to be all the time...but you should “finish the phrase.”

CLASS, PART 2

If we demonstrated webinar skills in part 1, part 2 was a grab bag of various skills and knowledge tidbits tantamount to “a trip backstage.”

Sound good first

Remember that it's common with live events that participants may be just listening. Reasons may include things like multitasking because a recording is “watched” in the background. Or maybe they dial in to listen because they're driving. Further, research shows that your voice is more important in online meetings and events than onsite.

Include pre-made video

Playing a video with GoToWebinar isn't hard, but you do have to upload it first. I'll spare you the tech reason, but just playing something from your desktop doesn't get the sound through to the audience. Watch the recording for the test we did using a “compare microphones” video I made.

Choose the right “room” for audio

Choose the right tool — remember that GoToMeeting brings people in for collaboration, so all audio lines are open, whereas GoToWebinar presumes it's more of a presentation, so attendees join muted.

GoTo audio tactics

Feedback (or sometimes echo) is caused when the audio coming out of a speaker goes into an open microphone... like a singer in a band holding her mic up in front of the PA speaker. The fastest way to deal with that is to turn down the audio volume (and yes, muting that line can be done, too...but doesn't solve the problem overall when you want that person to unmute).

Bonus: In GoTo someone can dial in with a regular telephone, but GoTo doesn't know which phone belongs to which desktop application until the PIN is entered. But they make it easy to connect — have the user find the PIN in the audio panel and enter it with #PIN# (with their personal PIN in between two pound signs).

Leverage recordings in community with your GoToStage page

GoToStage is included with every GoToWebinar account, and it gives you an easy place to publicly publish webinar recordings. The bonus here is that you can customize the banner (even change it frequently if desired). But I've found that not everyone can easily customize a graphic with the right dimensions, so I created a PowerPoint deck with just that. Customize the look, export as an image (typically .jpeg), and voila! Find that “banner maker” on my hidden goodies page: <https://thevirtualpresenter.com/tffgoodies/>

Customize GoToWebinar emails to refresh the “why”

People often forget why they registered for an event. After all, that might have been weeks ago. One often overlooked feature of GoToWebinar is your ability to customize the various automated emails. Use that space to remind people of the “why.”

Speak from your lower middle voice

I already argued that your voice is more important in online meetings. Find *your* optimum resonance by speaking diaphragmatically from your lower-mid range. The goal isn't to 'go low,' but it *is* to get your sound-making out of your head and upper chest to the lower part of your range.

Remember, “Problem Promise Path”

This is an abbreviated tip from a whole-day workshop that I do about mapping your content structure to how the brain likes to see information. We know that people remember stories, right? Experts don't agree on exactly how many story forms there are (the majority probably land on about seven), but one thing common to all stories is the introduction of, and resolution of, conflict or tension.

You can use this to your advantage by creating and resolving tension by making that tension and resolution more explicit (as in obvious, not as in NSFW). The key is to increase the pain of remaining at Point A (the current status quo) and increasing their vision of the desired future outcome, Point B. Then you map how to get there (the path). Problem, Promise, Path.

Remember, this doesn't mean you're necessarily *telling* stories...you're using the core principle of what makes stories compelling.

Reclaim attention with “pattern interrupts”

We covered some academic research in the webinar that demonstrates that there is no such thing as 100% attention. But one study of the blockbuster movies from 1935 to 2005 found they had a common characteristic, what researchers called a “moment of urgency.” *What* that moment of urgency is varies (it could be a loud noise, change of scene or color, etc), but the point is that it's something that cuts through to bring attention back to the screen.

Engage with “back of room” font sizes”

You'll just have to watch the recording to see this cool exercise. In short, just like using PowerPoint fonts of sufficient size to be seen by people in the back of the room (perhaps even with some form of visual impairment), when you're online you don't control the viewing environment of your audience. They might even be using GoTo on a smartphone, right? (nod your head 'yes' here) There's no magic font size number (as we demonstrated), but bigger is better. Go watch the recording for a simple tactic demonstrated as to how.

Increase the signal-to-noise ratio for each slide's key message

This is a powerful tactic...because it's simple. Watch the recording to see the before/after portion of the study, but the study found that putting a complete sentence in a slide title more than doubled recall of the slide's message.

I extrapolate this to be “make sure the point is clear.” This begins with having one main point per slide. It just doesn't have to be in the slide title.

Increase the rate of visual change

A lesson from Hollywood: visual change is embedded in everything our audience watches...except the typical PowerPoint presentation. Thinking visually doesn't have to mean 'pretty slides,' but it very well might mean that you spread your content out over more slides so the rate of visual change is higher. NOTE: I'm not saying have more content, just more slides.

Lighten things up by mimicking a gameshow or board game

Here we used a poll to demonstrate not only a learning point that supports the previous assertions, but played off the theme of the TV show “Are You Smarter than a 5th Grader?” There was also an example of doing that with a boardgame (we used “Fact or Crap” to setup a true-false type question.

Turn up the mirth with the “rule of three”

Finally, one simple tactic is to use the “rule of three” in humor — setting up surprise by using two things in one category and then something else in contrast. For instance, this might be three points made as “Serious-Serious-Ridiculous” or “Real-Real-Self Deprecating” or “Big-Big-Small.”

THE BOTTOM LINE

If there’s a single answer to the question, “How do I take the best of human connectedness from onsite to online?” it might be summed up like this:

Talk *with*, not *at* by connecting *through* instead of *to*.

It was an honor to be in the same “room” with you today. Thank you.