



ALL ZOOMS ARE NOT CREATED EQUAL: 3 Tips to Make Your Virtual Space More Impactful

3. Make it INTERACTIVE

“The mere imparting of information is not education.” Dr. Carter G. Woodson, the founder of Black History Month, dropped this jewel years ago and it especially resonates in these Covid times. In other words, reading from slides in person or virtually is a recipe for a presentation disaster.

Data shows that people primarily process information in three different ways: visual, audio and kinesthetic (think writing, texting, etc.). At first glance, one may think that visual means seeing the presenter (Zoom) but it is directed more towards the content that you are sharing.

Thinking strategically about using programs such as *Prezi* or *PowerPoint* and how to integrate your content with interactive activities such as icebreakers, polls and dialogue in the chat. This is more purposeful than a “boiler plate” presentation and the blend consistently touches all three communication areas and maximizes the participant experience.

The number of participants influences how and in what format you present. For example, at Harbor our general rule is that over 100 participants on Zoom requires what we call *virtual support*: a qualified, skilled virtual “co-presenter” who is sharing definitions in the chat, answering questions (especially sensitive ones that participants may not want to share in front of everyone else (i.e. hazing prevention, sexual assault/misconduct or diversity, equity and inclusion). This helps keep people more engaged kinesthetically. This balanced approach touches on all three areas of communication and increases participants engagement throughout the presentation.

2. Consider the TIME

Sounds simple, right? *Not really*. It is easy to forget that just because your undergraduate members attend school in your district, area, or region doesn't necessarily mean *they are from or in that area*.

Accordingly, considerations should be given to all time zones, both in and out of the country. With members in every time zone a 9 am EDT may sound great on the east coast but not so much for your west coast members. How about your international students? Since March, when we first started seeing the lifestyle impact of Covid, Harbor has conducted several educational experiences on Zoom for national CBFO boards as well as colleges/universities across the country and had instances where students were home with their parents' in the Middle East and Australia. Being inclusive means at least considering this.

With everything going on, it is easy to forget this detail which may seem small but can have larger implications. And oh, yeah, don't forget – in that email or flyer promoting the program,



event or meeting be sure to expressly articulate time, day, and time zone for that very reason: Saturday, December 5 @ 3:00 pm EDT. This leads to the number one issue to consider to maximize engagement – *Your audience*.

1. Know your AUDIENCE

The danger of hoping from Zoom to Zoom (sometimes being in two Zooms at the same time – “messy tasking” is real!) is that you start to conceptualize all Zooms as being equal. In reality, the platform is the same and in some instances the content but the audiences may be very different.

As a regional/national leader you are liaising between multiple groups of people that span a number of age demographics. You work with your peers, who are fellow CBFO leadership, you are working with your “old heads” who are probably, in some instances much older and of course the lifeline of all of our orgs the undergrads.

Understanding each demographic and their needs and adjusting is significant. For example, research in a Forbes magazine article stated that 52% of all Generation Z prefer to have in-person discussion as opposed to text/instant messaging. Surprised? Having a smartphone doesn’t mean it’s always being used for smart things. The research shows us that deeper engagement is necessary. In our educational experiences this academic term we make sure to (and will continue to) provide what we call “The Harbor Hangout.” After a campus-wide program or CBFO training is over, we stay on afterwards to answer questions, have in-depth dialogues and just exchange. Sometimes the conversations have nothing to do with the topic of the program. In about one out of every three engagements we usually dialogue for about an hour with undergrad participants. It is all volunteer, and even after the program is over it shows us that are looking for that type of connection.

This approach applies even in mixed company, when you have events with peers, old heads and undergrads. Zoom breakout rooms are a great way to accommodate this need to make sure you are connecting with each other.

All Zooms are not created equal –now get your participants to recognize why and utilize that to your advantage!