

Golden

Almost everyone regularly communicates with friends and family via a screen. Skype, FaceTime and WhatsApp are installed on almost every laptop and cellphone. Nowadays it is also normal to meet professionally via a screen.

Numerous business communication applications are available online free of charge. Larger corporations often dispose of professional equipment for videoconferencing. The advantages hereof are evident. There is much more flexibility at much lower costs. It moreover results in a tremendous (travelling) time saving. It goes without saying that there are also disadvantages. It is wise to gather information about this. Then you can take measures.

What are the do's and don'ts of videoconferencing? If videoconferencing is used for meetings of executive boards or supervisory boards then you must first check if the articles of incorporation expressly include and permit this meeting form. If not then the number of participants who are physically present decides whether there is a quorum. Hence, pay attention to this because you otherwise run the risk of adopting resolutions that are not legally valid due to the absence of a quorum.

Videoconferencing moreover requires a number of special skills. This applies to both the chairman of the meeting and the participants. If nobody is physically present then it is basically the easiest: after all, everyone is in the same boat. The group dynamics are in equilibrium. With proper arrangements (protocols) for whom is to speak when you are already well on your way.

It becomes more difficult if only one or two participants participate in the meeting via videoconference. It is not easy for them to sense what is going on in the group. Sometimes the line is delayed. Then it is even more difficult to remotely participate in a discussion. Often your contribution is timed incorrectly. Moreover, it is, often unintentionally, experienced by the group as the contribution of an 'outsider'. If you are not careful, all sorts of undesirable mechanisms start playing a role. That is why it is better as a virtual participant to adopt a (previously communicated and stipulated) passive role during a meeting. You are participating in the meeting but you mostly listen. Only if it is absolutely necessary, you ask a question or make a comment. You always do this through the chairman. Ask to speak through a stipulated signal (raising your hand or something similar). This prevents you from being experienced as a jammer. Otherwise you will probably shout out your 'valuable' comment at exactly the wrong moment during the meeting.

The chairman should regularly and consciously involve those who are virtually present in the meeting.

This starts by particularly welcoming them in advance. He can briefly give them the floor. He should also regularly ask them questions in the interim.

Videoconferencing is by no means appropriate for negative feedback. Never make the mistake of expressing criticism as a virtual participant. Limit yourself to asking questions.

Also realize that you are permanently on screen. By way of reflex or boredom the participants who are physically present will continuously look at the screen that shows you in full regalia. Make sure that your clothing is in line with that of those present. Do not eat because everybody can see your chewing mouth. Do not talk with others in the room where you are. It is best to control extensive yawning. Do not use your telephone and do not send apps. It is not fair but your conduct is followed and noted by everyone whilst those who are physically present can do this in an uninterrupted and unnoticed manner. Crying children and barking dogs are also not good. Hence, always keep the 'mute' button activated, unless you expressly ask or say something. Videoconferencing: speech is silver, silence is golden.



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