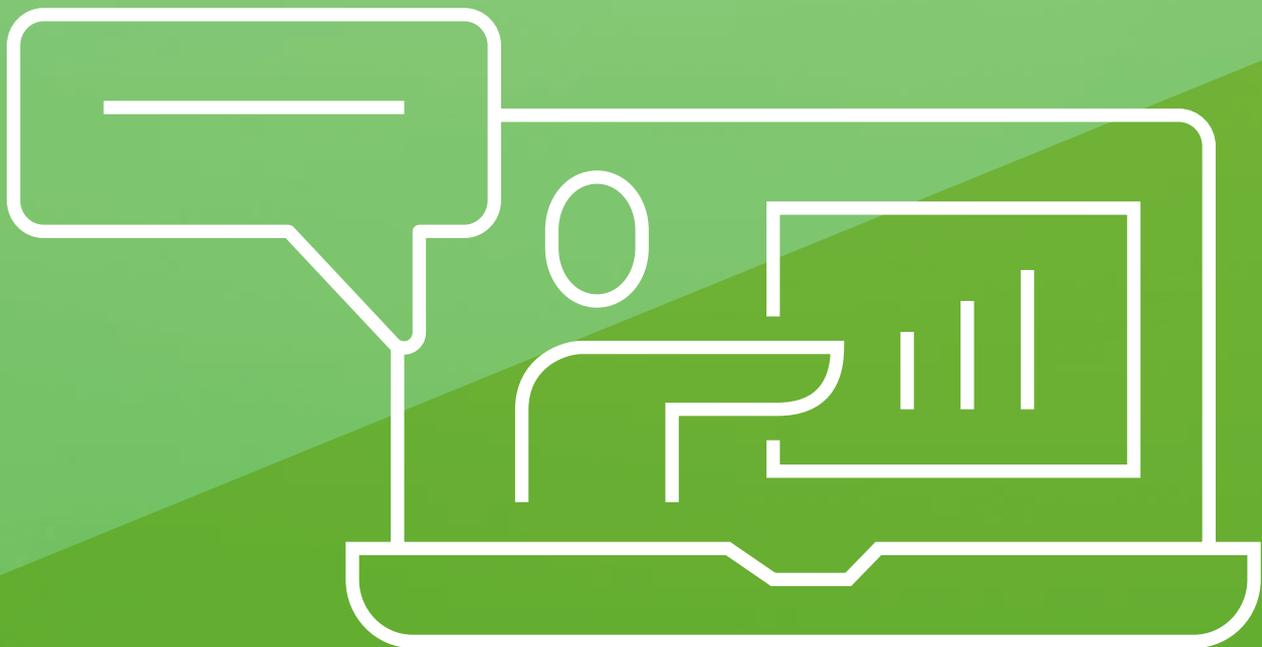


# Top Tips to Succeed in Virtual Buyer Meetings and Presentations



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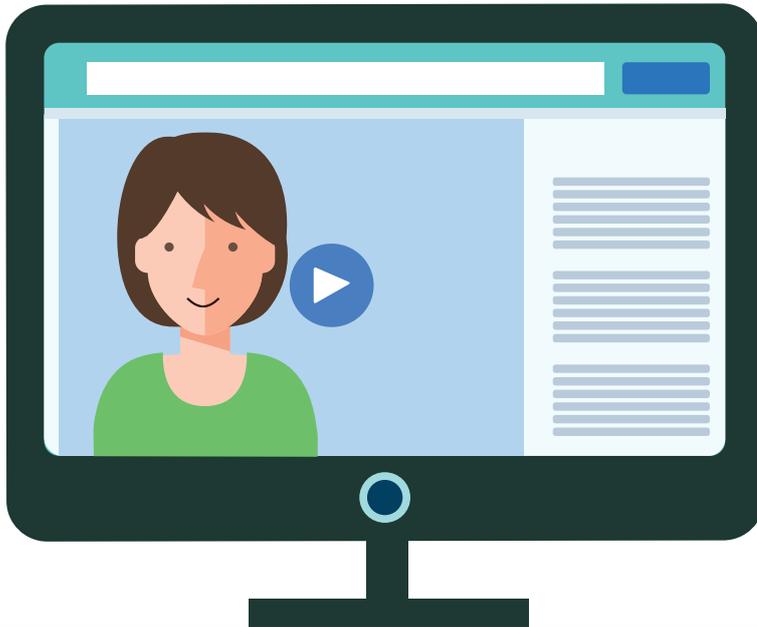
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Virtual meetings have become an integral and vital part of the sales process. In our 'Top Tips to Conducting Virtual Meetings and Presentations Online' we provide you with advice and techniques to master online selling so that you can compete effectively on the global stage.



In this resource, we provide you with the skills to:

1. Create online presentations that are different, memorable and convincing
2. Create a positive impression online that helps build trust and commitment
3. Engage with the buyer during online meetings and presentations
4. Follow up on opportunities generated in an online meeting.



## 1. Creating Online Presentations

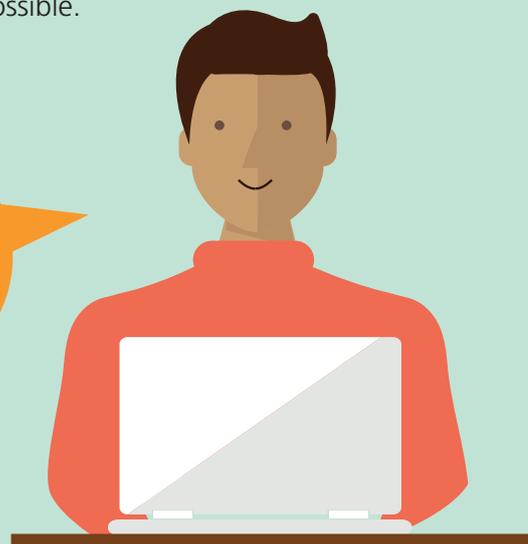
We need to adapt our communications skills for the online environment where zoom fatigue and general distraction are a challenge.

### Competing for Buyers' Attention:

In an online meeting you are faced with three challenges that undermine buyers' attention: distractions, complexity and tiredness.

- Buyers are often distracted by multiple devices kept open during the call. They may have other distractions, depending on their working environment.
- Complexity, such as overly complicated pitches, also give buyers reason to switch off.
- Virtual meetings are tiring. Buyers may be exhausted by the time your appointment arrives. In an ideal world, we would all like to be pitching on a Monday morning at 9 am when everyone is fresh and attentive, but that is not possible.

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### The 10% Message Retention Challenge:

Research indicates that buyers forget up to 90% of an online presentation within 48 hours. There is no guarantee what part of your presentation the buyer will remember. Memory is fallible.

Address this challenge by preparing a presentation that **is focused on your key message**. Make this crystal clear. You can also seek to control the attention of the buyer during your presentation.



### Four Levers to Control Focus:

Design your slide deck so that you control your buyer's attention and eye movement as you present your story. This is also good for the buyer, as it is less taxing on their brain. You are acting as the guide to your story. The four levers to control focus are:

1. **Reduce Content:** one key idea (your 10% Attention Goal), supported by 3 – 4 points
2. **Use Colour:** highlight a key point in colour, while presenting the rest of the slide in grey, thus guiding the buyer's eye movement towards your key point.
3. **Enlarge some elements:** vary the size of key elements, such as fonts and images, as you build your point.
4. **Use Animation:** PowerPoint animation provides a range of tools such as arrows, speech bubbles and a whole host of other animation tools to help pace the buyer's attention as you build your story and deliver your pitch.

The rules for first impressions are different in virtual meetings. So here are some of the elements to guide your creation of a first Impression.

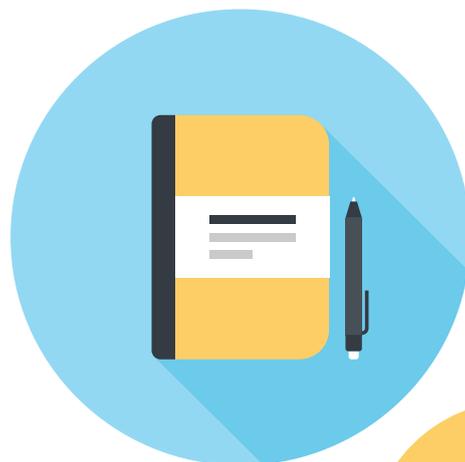


## 2. Creating a Positive Impression Online

First impressions are powerful, biased and lasting. We know that in face-to-face meetings, the way we dress and communicate, in verbal and non-verbal cues, shape that first impression. We want to communicate a strong presence. The rules for first impressions are different in virtual meetings. So here are some of the elements to guide your creation of a first Impression.

- **Sound Quality:** the quality and clarity of sound is the single most important element to get right. In advance of a meeting, download and test the audio link to ensure you are audible and clear. If you have broadband issues, consider re-locating for critical calls. Using a headset and mic will give you a great advantage. The quality of the sound is enhanced and you shut out distractions such as lawnmowers, barking dogs and other sounds.
- **Lighting and Framing:** Lighting is key. Soft direct light is best, ideally from a window. If your source of light is behind you, you will appear as a silhouette, quite literally, a shady character! Make sure you are evenly lit, without shadows. Frame yourself in the camera so that your full head and shoulders are well centered on the screen, allowing a little space above your head so that you're presenting a balanced image. Remember to check and re-check your positioning during the virtual meeting.
- **Background:** In research published by Harvard Business Review in June 2020, it was found that backgrounds to virtual meetings are very important in creating first impressions. Showing the actual room behind the speaker was the most popular choice for communicating authenticity, trustworthiness and expertise. However, it is essential to prepare the background to communicate a message that is aligned to your brand and values. For example, a farm experience might seek to include some interesting image or object from the farm in the background. A surf school might display surfboards. A fiddle hanging on the wall behind the owner of a bar could suggest Irish music sessions. These images can also be great conversation hooks and make your presentation more memorable. However, do not show a whole room, take one confined space that is attractive but not distracting. Ensure your background looks clean and professional.

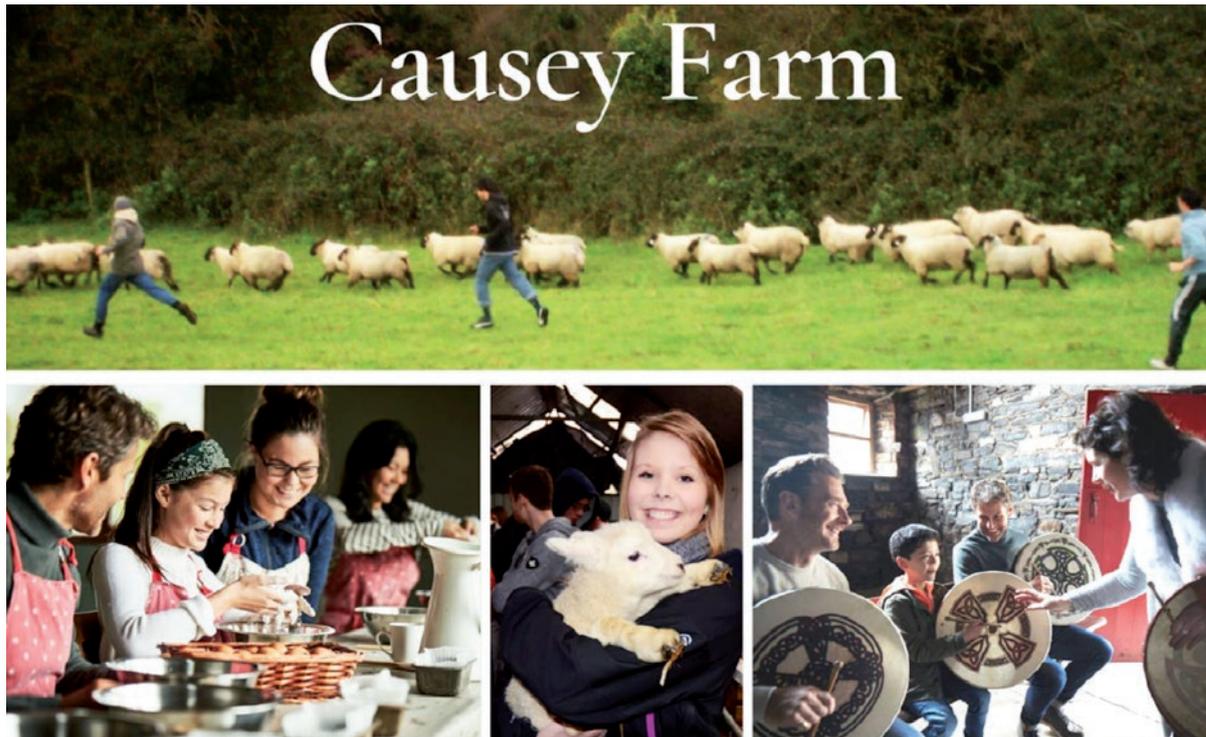
- **Eye-Contact:** place your laptop at eye level so that you are not looking down at the buyer. Do not place the laptop too close to your face but rather about three feet away. You may need to use a Bluetooth mouse to control your presentation.
- **Eliminate all Distractions:** put your phone out of reach, make sure you will not be disturbed during your call and give your full attention and presence to the buyer.
- **Pause:** Learn the art of the pause. Slow your pace by allowing short pauses. This is important to make up for time lags in sound transmission as well as giving the buyer the sense that they can ask questions and join in a dialogue rather than passively listen to a sales monologue.
- **Language and Diction:** keep your language simple. Use easy words, avoid acronyms and colloquialisms (yerman, yerwoman!) and use short sentences. Slow down your pace of speech so that it is easier for the buyer to understand your accent and your message.
- **Taking Notes:** do not use a keyboard to take notes as the sound is distracting. Capture key ideas on a note pad.
- **Mute and Video Settings:** check that you are unmuted when you are speaking so that you don't have to repeat your message. It is essential that your camera is on during the meeting to create a good connection with the buyer.



### 3. Engaging the Buyer During Online Meetings

- **Starting the Meeting:** At the beginning of your meeting, seek to create 'space' around you and the buyer by doing something different. If you do exactly as everyone else does at the start of the meeting, you will not achieve your goal of being memorable. Ask something, show something or do something that will capture the buyer's attention. The best and most professional approach is to connect to the buyer's priorities.
- **Ask Questions:** Connect to the buyer's goals by asking questions about their priorities. Use the 'Appreciative Enquiry' approach of framing questions positively, such as "What experiences worked well for you in the past?".
- **Use your Research and Knowledge:** to have a higher-level and more meaningful discussion with the buyer. With good advance research you can avoid taking up time finding out things that you should know already. Instead use the meeting to go deeper into the needs, priorities and emotions driving the buyer's decisions.
- **Build Trust by Showing Courtesy and Sensitivity:** Build a relationship by showing warmth and interest, signposting where you're going with your presentation and checking with the buyer that you are discussing points that are of interest to them. Ensure you follow up immediately on any issue raised, as the buyer is forming an opinion of you based on these interactions. As part of trust building, it is important to provide reassurance regarding health and safety. Communicate your full commitment to best practice to protect visitors post COVID-19.





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- **Your Goal is to FIT IN While STANDING OUT:** You fit in by being credible, reliable and genuinely interested in your buyer. But you also want to stand out from the crowd, so while you satisfy and assure the buyer that you are relevant to their needs, you also need to create a desire for them to do business with you, by having some unusual and unexpected dimension to your offering. **Causey Farm** is an example of an offering that achieves Fit In, Stand Out status: it presents as a very professionally run family farm experience. But it stands out by offering an unexpected array of fun experiences for the visitor, from farming to learning the bodhrán, from cuddling young lambs to 'Being Irish for a Day'! This range of options piques a buyer's curiosity so that they are eager to find out more.
- **Two Online Meeting Formats:** One to One and Few to Many.
  - a) In one-to-one meetings, focus your attention on generating dialogue by concentrating on buyers' interests and concerns. Signal the Destination Experience Brand of your region and reference the signature attractions and activities of your area in your meeting or presentation pitch.
  - b) In few-to-many format, you are likely to be part of a wider destination pitch. In this case you are part of a bigger picture that is being created for the buyer, so it's important to understand how you complement the others in the pitch and how to reference and leverage each other's attributes to demonstrate this. It also means that when presenting your offering you must firstly present your experience clearly. You can then widen your pitch to focus on the strengths of the destination and complementary attractions and experiences in your area and those you are presenting with, so the buyer feels you are part of a necklace of experiences that work well together.

## 4. Follow Up

- **Follow Up Promptly:** The buyer must be clear on leaving the meeting what you are doing to follow up and when to expect it. You must commit to delivering on that, if you are to remain trusted by the buyer and have a chance of winning that sale. A good way to achieve this clarity is to summarise the key actions at the end of your meeting with the buyer.
- **Customise Your Follow Up:** Based on buyers' interests, you need to create a customised follow up e-mail. Do not offer a one size fits all response. Buyers can see through that and this will not instil confidence that you are willing to take the time to personalise the experience for their needs and that of their customers. You need to ensure you have addressed all their questions and possible barriers to engaging in business, within your follow up
  - If you bring the conversation during the meeting to the point where you are able to send through specific offers, this is an excellent outcome.
  - If you don't get that far, keep the lead warm by asking permission to send updates to do with your destination.
  - Remember an important statistic from the German Organisation for International Trade Shows, AUMA - some 80% of businesses that have meetings at international trade shows fail to follow up properly.
- **Don't Give Up After the First Attempt:** Decide you will follow up and be resilient and remember you may have to follow up a number of times to receive a response. However, there is a fine line between being persistent and eager and being an annoyance for a buyer in bombarding them with communications. So in the case where a sale is not likely or imminent, seek permission from the buyer in your subsequent communication to keep in touch with the latest news from the destination that would be of possible interest to them. In this way, each communication offers them something that brings added value to continuing the conversation and keeping the lead warm.

