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To Succeed Long Term, Continue Investing in Digital Communications

Effective lines of communication between the public, policymakers, and the business sector are an essential component of creating policy solutions to improve the workforce and other challenges facing America. Here at the Public Affairs Council, our research is pointing toward an undeniable trend: our professional lives will largely remain online even after the COVID-19 crisis has passed.

Virtual Communication Is Here to Stay

The Public Affairs Council is the membership association of over 700 corporations, associations, and nonprofits representing over 10,000 individual public affairs professionals worldwide. Recently, two surveys¹ were conducted among Public Affairs Council top-level government relations executives. The results clearly indicated that the ability for in-person meetings and budgets for travel will remain restricted. For example, in one survey 82% of respondents believe that their travel budgets and in-person meetings will be negatively impacted in the coming year². In another survey³, over 70% believe that even after the pandemic is over, it will remain difficult for policymakers and advocates to meet in person. Over 60% thought that the pandemic would bring about a decline in traditional lobbying and an increase in digital advocacy.

To remain successful, organizations and policymakers should continue investing in digital communication tools and procedures. Here are a few recommendations for making virtual meetings with your internal and external stakeholders stand out.

Virtual Meetings Tips

Common tools that Public Affairs Council members are using to build relationships and communicate their messages to internal and external stakeholders include virtual site visits, legislative days, town halls, meet and greets, and Facebook or LinkedIn Lives. Key tips for succeeding with these digital advocacy tools include:

1. **Lighting, framing, and sound is everything.** To make your message stand out, create a more polished and professional display. Be sure to have clear, direct light on your face.

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¹ [Senior Government Executives Expect Long-Term Decline in Face to Face Lobbying; State of Corporate Public Affairs 2020-2021](#)

² <https://pac.org/publications>

³ https://pac.org/wp-content/uploads/Senior_Executives_COVID_Impacts.pdf

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Have your camera raised to eye level, with space between the video edges and the top of your head and the bottom of your chin. Use headphones with a mic to avoid background noise. Headsets often work better than earbuds. For more tips, visit our [remote speaking help](#) page.

2. **Practice.** Assume the tech won't work perfectly - practice ahead of time and sign on early. Assign clear spokespeople for each portion of the meeting so attendees aren't talking over one another.
3. **Make your message clear, concise, and use visuals.** Pare your message down to its most essential and compelling components. Virtual attention spans are shorter than in-person. Whether you're engaging in a simple virtual meeting or a virtual tour of a facility, be sure to pair your message with compelling visuals. Usually, this includes creating some kind of graph, one-pager, website, or toolkit to send to stakeholders.

Although access to broadband is a pressing concern for many communities, overall the paradigm shift from in-person meetings to virtual brings an increase in accessibility to the "room where it happens" for constituents, customers and advocates across the country. Continuing to invest in digital communication capabilities will help policymakers and companies find the solutions America needs to move forward.

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