

USING IVN MORE EFFECTIVELY IN CLASSES, CONFERENCES AND MEETINGS

Dialing in and switching between cameras are only the *first* steps in effectively communicating across the IVN system. Optimizing the IVN environment before and during classes and meetings will dramatically improve communication and understanding of your material.

BEFORE CLASS

WEAR LOW-CONTRAST CLOTHING

Solid pastels work best with the low-resolution IVN cameras and monitors. Avoid mixing dark- and light-colored clothing. Avoid narrow patterns, which cause annoying flickers (*moiré effect*).

COMPOSE YOURSELF

Adjust your camera so that you appear on screen as though you were talking to someone in person from a comfortable distance. That is, your audience should see you from just the top of your head to the bottom of your rib cage. Too close and movements will be exaggerated. Too far away and your audience will become disinterested. If you move around a lot, use the tracking option (you must wear the tracking remote and use the *tight* setting).

Such composition may seem uncomfortably close to you at first. But in addition to being more natural for the audience, it will allow the camera to optimize exposure for your face and eliminate clutter and bright objects (e.g., ELMO) from the shot. Together these things will aid in communication. After your initial adjustments, you won't look at a monitor of yourself again, so you can forget about how close the shot is.

CLUSTER AND ZOOM IN TO THE AUDIENCE

At your local and remote locations, cluster the audience (re-arrange tables and chairs if necessary) and compose the audience camera to include all members. Frame the shot loosely enough so that the audience doesn't seem squeezed but not so loose that they are unnecessarily small. Don't shoot the ceiling lights (tilt down), as this forces the camera to underexpose. Don't allow participants to sit in one long row (forcing you to use a wide shoot of the audience) or off-camera (creating a disembodied voice to distance audiences).

ADJUST THE LIGHTS

Monitors are best viewed in a dark setting, so dim any lights spilling onto them. Lights only creates glare on the monitors and reduce their visibility.

To simulate a flattering studio environment, overhead lights should be directed at you and your audience. Doing so will help separate participants from the background and allow the camera to take a sharper image. However, raising overhead-light levels too much may cause unnatural shadows or create glare from desktops and other surfaces, forcing the camera to underexpose. Try for an intermediate setting that seems the best compromise.

Note that the camera may not adjust immediately to light changes. To force the camera to respond, you can try changing the shot momentarily, then recomposing. This will wake up the camera's electronics.

USE HIGH-CONTRAST READABLE GRAPHICS

Use large crisp readable fonts (e.g., *Arial 24 bold*). Limit the detail in your visual information, and use high contrast graphics. Don't use graphics with closely spaced lines, as they exceed the resolution of the IVN cameras and monitors and produce unclear images and annoying flickers. Try using the *invert* option on ELMO to turn graphics into white on black (typically easier to read).

DURING CLASS

SWITCH CAMERAS FREQUENTLY

The camera shot should follow sound. If you refer to your graphics, switch to the ELMO. If a student comments, switch to the audience camera (at either the local or remote site). If you chat about a particular graphic for a while, switch the camera to you. Switching cameras regularly and avoiding long periods on ELMO will help maintain a dynamic atmosphere and keep students' focus on the transmitting site. Try using the pre-set camera options. They are simple to use and can be easily set up prior to the start of each class.

LOOK OFTEN AT THE MONITOR BY YOUR CAMERA

Most IVN rooms will have a monitor next to your camera (the one pointed at you) that shows a remote site. When the camera is on you, look at this monitor. This will help you keep an eye on your remote audience and will give the illusion that you are looking at them. Avoid looking at the large monitors behind you, as this turns your face away from your camera and from the microphones.

USE THE 5-SECOND RULE

Your remote audience will often hesitate to comment or answer questions. This problem is amplified by the slight audio delay inherent in the IVN system. Students often complain that instructors say, "*Any questions? OK, if not, then we'll move on . . .*" without pausing to allow students at remote sites to grab the remote, un-mute, and begin to speak. So, always allow an extra couple of beats (e.g., 5 seconds) for your local and remote sites to respond. Call on students at local and remote sites to maintain their participation.

CONTROL SOUND

If you regularly mute your site, keep the remote handy so you can un-mute rapidly and seamlessly. Urge all students to speak up. Don't hesitate to interrupt and cut off audience members as necessary. This is especially true for remote participants who can't pick up on subtle non-verbal cues.

FORCE STUDENT PARTICIPATION

Students gain a greater appreciation for what the instructor is trying to accomplish with IVN if they gain some experience using IVN themselves. But students initially show a strong inertia to speaking up or participating over IVN. Some elements of class time can be structured to force student participation over IVN. For example, students can be required to lead a brief discussion with an outline shown over ELMO or with a couple powerpoint slides. Many instructors require IVN presentations at the end of the course, but brief IVN forays throughout the semester can pay dividends in terms of student engagement. Often the students will also suggest improvements that are quite useful.

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