

# Things to Consider when Preparing to Tell a Story Over the Internet

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## Story Telling Over the Internet

In order to tell a story over the internet there are added challenges to communicating clearly with the listener. Here are some tips to help you avoid having technology get in your way, and to help you tell the story through a screen more effectively.

### Technology

In order to successfully tell a story over the internet there are four things that are needed from a technical perspective:

- 1) Audio;
- 2) Video;
- 3) Internet; and,
- 4) Backups for each piece.

### Audio

Audio is the most important thing to keep your story moving. Audio is more important than video. Consider this, stories were told for years over the radio. Microphones hear everyone and everything. Even whispers!

### *Microphone*

#### Simple Microphone Setup

**Built in Microphone** – You can use the microphone that is built into your laptop or webcam. Using the built-in microphone is most convenient option. The main challenge you will face when using the microphone built into your laptop is the sound quality is not as good as an external microphone, and when you move around the microphone will have a hard time picking up your voice.

#### Medium Microphone Setup

**External Microphone** – External microphones generally offer better sound quality because they can be bigger and closer to your mouth. There are numerous types of external microphones. There are shotgun microphones, large diaphragm microphones, boundary microphones, lavalier microphones and many more. There are microphones that can plug into your computer using USB and there are microphones that plug into your computer using the 1/8' jack. Additionally, Bluetooth microphones can connect wirelessly giving you a straightforward way to walk around and still be heard clearly.

#### Complex Microphone Setup

**Audio Mixer or Audio Interface** - If you want to have multiple microphones available to enable multiple people to speak, or to act as backup microphones, you will likely need an audio mixer and/or an audio interface. Additionally, the microphones you will use will likely use XLR connectors to plug into the mixer or the audio interface. There are lots of choices on the types of microphones available for this setup, and using a wireless lavalier microphone is an excellent

choice because you can walk around and be heard clearly. Running some wired microphones is a great idea because you can switch to them seamlessly as a backup if needed.

### *Speakers*

#### *Simple Speaker Setup*

Built-in speakers/External Speakers – The speakers you are already using are the most convenient. However, they can cause echo and other problems with using video conferencing programs to conduct a hearing or a trial.

#### *Medium Speaker Setup*

Wired Headphones/Bluetooth - A very simple way to eliminate the possibility of echo from your speakers is to use either wired, or wireless headphones. I highly recommend using headphones.

#### *Complex Speaker Setup*

Wireless Headphones aka In Ear Monitors – Using in ear monitors that send a signal from your audio mixer allows more than one person to listen to the hearing or trial at the same time without having the lag or echo that can occur when they are in the same room as you.

### *Video*

#### *Simple Video Setup*

Built in Laptop Webcam – The easiest way to send video to your hearing or trial is to use the webcam built into your computer. However, this is often times the lowest quality.

#### *Medium Video Setup*

External HD webcam – For a fairly modest expense of around \$100 you can get a good webcam that can capture video in HD or even 4K, and will have better picture quality in low light.

#### *Complex Video Setup*

Mirrorless Interchangeable Lens Camera – Most manufacturers allow you to use your MILC as a webcam. Using an MILC will give you the best quality video, but it also is the most complicated system.

In order to get multiple camera angles and the best image quality, you can use multiple interchangeable lens cameras and an HDMI switcher that will plug into your computer. This option is the most expensive, but it is also the most flexible way to be able to tell stories unconstrained by your technology setup.

#### *Teleprompter/Interrotron*

One of the most important things you can do is to look at the camera and not your screen. In order to make this possible without thinking about it, place the camera inside a teleprompter/interrotron. An interrotron is what a teleprompter is called when you display a person's face on the screen rather than words. Doing this really makes it easy to look at the camera, and interact with the person you are talking to. This is one of my top recommendations to implement. It makes a huge difference for both the viewer and yourself.

### *Camera Placement*

Put your camera centered on your face and slightly above eye level.

### *Lighting*

The traditional portrait lighting setup is a very good solution. It requires 3 lights: 1) Key; 2) Fill; and, 3) Hair. Make sure the light is not behind you.

### *Size, Shape, Distance, Color Temperature*

Use soft boxes, placed close to you so they are soft quality light and can be dimmed so you can avoid eye strain. Make sure the color temperature is adjustable so you can adjust the lights color temperature to match the ambient light in your space.

### *Background*

Keep your background simple and pleasing. Small things can be distractions.

### *Internet*

Speed - In order to send HD video out your internet connection needs to be able to upload at 5mbps and 4K requires 25mbps.

### *Zoom*

Make sure you check the send video in HD option to send the best quality video you can.

Uncheck "Mirror my video."

### *Backup Plans*

Equipment - Have at least 3 backup plans for each piece of equipment you are using. When things go wrong, you'll be glad you are prepared.

Internet - Have Wired Ethernet, WiFi, at least 1 Cellular hotspot ready to go.

## The Story

### Directing The Show

When we're in a courtroom in person, we are directing a live play. When we're attending a hearing or trial over the internet, we are directing a movie or tv show. We have to consider the frame the viewer will be watching us through, and how to use that frame to tell the best story possible.

### Framing the Shot

When telling your story over the internet, it comes across to the view like a TV show. Rather than being in a courtroom and moving around that space, we have to plan and practice moving around the viewers screen. Our motions and gestures are magnified when on a screen. Small facial changes can be dramatic, small movement in space can look large when we are on a screen.

Additionally, if you chose to have a setup with multiple camera angles, each angle will need to be practiced and fine tuned in order to convey your story the best you can.

### How you look on the screen

Cameras don't see the same way as the human eye. Lighting, background, reflections, and clothing all can look different. Before going live, test and practice what you are planning on doing so that you can communicate as effectively as possible without distraction.

### Practice

Practice is important. Practice, practice, practice.

### Don't leave "Dead Air"

Display exhibits quickly. Don't leave "dead air" during your trial. Once you lose people's attention, it's very hard to get it back.

### Be Interesting

People are used to watching screens to gather information. However, they want what they are watching to be interesting. Present your story in the most interesting way you possibly can.

Create with your audience

Groups form when we create things together. Create exhibits live with the group. Have an easel with paper on it that you can use live during the hearing or trial. It is very powerful and helps to communicate to the viewers what is important in the story.

#### Practical Tips:

Make sure you have a quiet location with a clean background. Place up signs to prevent interruptions. Focus on the jury with no distractions.

Practice with your witnesses on zoom and make sure they have the right set up to get on and testify. Have them log in to the waiting room early. Have help to give them notice when the last witness is wrapping up their testimony.

Always be aware of live audio and video. Failing to mute yourself can cause a mistrial. The more complex the setup, the more risk of live mics.

If you will be walking around in a wide frame, mark the floor so you know when how far you can move before you are off screen.