SECOND EDITION

NON OBVIOUS GUIDE

"Like having coffee with an expert"

WORKING REMOTELY

Being Productive Without Getting Distracted, Lonely or Bored

"Read this book to learn the new skills you need for the future of work. Then share it with a co-worker!"

ERICA DHAWAN
Author, Digital Body Language

BY ROHIT BHARGAVA

#1 WALL STREET JOURNAL BESTSELLING AUTHOR

Copyright © 2021 by Rohit Bhargava

SECOND EDITION

All rights reserved.

Published in the United States by Ideapress Publishing.

All trademarks are the property of their respective companies.

Cover Design by Victoria Kim

Cataloging-in-Publication Data is on file with the Library of Congress.

ISBN: 978-1-64687-044-8

Special Sales

Ideapress Books are available at a special discount for bulk purchases for sales promotions and premiums, or for use in corporate training programs. Special editions, including personalized covers, a custom foreword, corporate imprints, and bonus content are also available.

Non-Obvious® is a registered trademark of the Influential Marketing Group.

Read this book to learn how to avoid distractions and be more productive when doing remote work. Whether you need to collaborate with people virtually, deliver a compelling virtual presentation, or lead a remote team, this book will give you step-by-step advice on how to do it.

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Is This Guide for You?

As the publisher of this series, I have the privilege of writing introductory notes for every one of these **Non-Obvious Guides.** Usually, I rave about our amazing authors and why they are so brilliantly qualified to write their respective guides.

For this guide, I happen to also be the author ... and I'm sure you wouldn't want to hear me rave about myself. So instead, I will tell you that this book was written in response to the COVID-19 pandemic - but it's meant to be used far beyond this moment of distanced work.

Learning to work remotely is not only a current necessity, but also a skill most of us will need in the years to come. The hybrid future of work will be in the office and remote. We all need to be ready for it.

ROHIT BHARGAVA

Founder, Non-Obvious Guides

CONTENTS

i **Introduction**

PART 1 – WORKING REMOTELY

Chapter 1

01 **Remote Work 101**

- ➜ Three Factors Leading to a Rise in Remote Work
- ➜ Why People Love Remote Work
- ➜ Why Companies Love Remote Workers
- ➜ The Difference Between Doing Remote Work and Working from Home
- ➜ Seven Challenges of Working Remotely

Chapter 2

13 **The Remote Working Lifestyle**

- ➜ The Five Habits of Remote Workers Who Get More Done
- ➜ How to Set an Efficient Schedule
- ➜ How to Stay Focused and Avoid Distractions
- ➜ How to Conquer Isolation and Loneliness
- ➜ Five Mindfulness Principles to Make Remote Work Better
- ➜ Three Ways to Create Remote Work-Life Balance

Chapter 3

35 **Creating Your Workspace**

- ➜ Deep Work vs. Shallow Work
- ➜ The Ten Elements to Consider When Picking a Workspace
- ➜ Creating Your Home Office
- ➜ Setting Up Your Infrastructure
- ➜ The Beauty of Analog

Chapter 4

43 **Building Your Reputation and Personal Brand Virtually**

- What Is a Personal Brand?
- Why Your Personal Brand Matters More When Working Virtually
- Three P's of a Powerful Personal Brand
- Demonstrate Your Personality
- Bring Your Perspective
- Have a Presence Online
- The Importance of Consistency

PART 2 – VIRTUAL MEETINGS

Chapter 5

55 **How to Prepare for Virtual Meetings**

- The First Questions to Ask ...
- Tips for Creating a Virtual Meeting Agenda and Purpose
- Seven Rules of Virtual Meetings
- Getting the Tech Right
- Develop Your Participation Strategy
- Four Models for Virtual Meetings
- Last-Minute Prep Tips

Chapter 6

67 **How to Foster Virtual Engagement**

- Five Reasons Virtual Meetings Suck
- How to Keep People Engaged
- How to Foster Creativity While Working Remotely
- How to Facilitate a Virtual Meeting Like a Pro

Chapter 7

79 **How to Deliver a Virtual Presentation**

- Getting the Setup Right
- Ten Tips for Effective Virtual Presenting
- How to Add Variety to Your Virtual Presentation
- Making Your Presentation Memorable Virtually
- How to Sell with a Virtual Presentation
- Why Apologies Kill Virtual Presentations

Chapter 8

97 **Virtual Events, Trainings, Webinars, and More**

- What Is a Virtual Event?
- Six Types of Virtual Experiences (and When to Use Them)
- How to Produce a Virtual Event
- How to Select a Virtual Speaker
- Three Tips for Crafting Virtual Experiences That Engage People
- Non-Obvious Ideas for Virtual Experiences

PART 3 – VIRTUAL COLLABORATION

Chapter 9

113 **The Art of Virtual Communication**

- Why Virtual Collaboration Is Hard
- Setting Expectations with Your Virtual Team
- How to Mind Your Digital Body Language
- The Secret to Better Virtual Communications
- Three Tips for Better Emails When Working Remotely
- Three Tips for Using Instant or Team Messaging
- How to Communicate in a Diverse Team

Chapter 10

127 **How to Build a Virtual Culture of Trust**

- ➜ Ten Rules for Building Trust in a Virtual Team
- ➜ The Virtual "Signs" That Destroy Trust
- ➜ Team-Building Exercises That Work
- ➜ How to Break Down Silos

Chapter 11

137 **How to Lead a Remote Team**

- ➜ Five Tips for Leading a Remote Team
- ➜ How to Fix Common Problems with Remote Teams
- ➜ How to Improve Accountability
- ➜ How to Manage Conflict in a Remote Team
- ➜ Emotional Intelligence in a Virtual Setting

Chapter 12

153 **Hiring and Building a Future-Proof Team**

- ➜ What Most Teams Forget About Real Diversity
- ➜ Three Secrets of Hiring Amazing Remote Workers
- ➜ How to Ace the Virtual Interview (Whether You're the Interviewer or the Interviewee)
- ➜ How to Conduct a Virtual Onboarding Program
- ➜ Five Trends Changing the Future of Work

165 **Conclusion: Surviving the Future of Work**

167 **Reading List**

169 **Glossary of Terms**

171 **Endnotes**

175 **About the Author**

How to Read This Book

Throughout this book, you will find links to helpful guides and resources online.

FOR ONLINE RESOURCES, VISIT:
www.nonobviousguides.com/remotework

Referenced in the book, you will also see these symbols which refer to content that will further your learning.

FOLLOW THE ICONS:

TEMPLATES
One-page templates to help explain concepts.

DOWNLOADS
Excerpts or useful further reading.

TUTORIALS
Detailed lessons on how to do a task.

VIDEOS
Videos to watch online.

CHAPTER SUMMARY
Key takeaways and important points.

In this book, you will learn how to . . .

- Avoid distractions and be more productive no matter what happens around you.
- Choose the right technology to get things done more quickly and easily.
- Assess your working style to divide your day between deep vs. shallow work.
- Effectively lead a virtual team and improve accountability.
- Conquer the loneliness and isolation that often comes with remote work.
- Deliver a compelling virtual presentation in a meeting, webinar, or online training session.
- Collaborate with people you've never met and colleagues working remotely.
- Manage and prevent conflicts in a virtual setting with increased emotional intelligence.

Introduction

It was the winter of 2004, and the large marketing agency where I worked had just moved into a new office in downtown Washington, D.C.

As part of the move, our seating chart was being completely changed. The day the assignments came out, we all rushed to read the list as if we were high schoolers checking the cast list for the winter musical.

It was a good day. I had been given an office with a window. In the new building, those were prized possessions, so earning one of my own was a big deal.

> It was the first time in my life that I ever had an office. It also would be the last.

For the next several years, that office became like a second home. Colleagues would come by to have impromptu brainstorming sessions, post-work drinks, and therapeutic venting sessions after a difficult client call.

> The office was where our team bonding happened.

A few years later, my wife and I were expecting our second baby, and I had just been offered a publishing deal to write my first book, *Personality Not Included*.

To manage the workload, I went to my boss and made the unusual request to have every Friday off for five months to write the book. He agreed.

During that time, I had been assigned to a team that worked nationally, so I was spending one day a week working from our Manhattan office, in addition to writing from home on Fridays. A few weeks before my book deadline, I received a brief email from the head of our D.C. office.

It was a short note informing me that since I was never in my office, it was being reassigned to someone who would use it more regularly. I was devastated and angry.

That was my office, the one I had worked hard to earn. This wasn't fair. I immediately felt the urge to fight to keep it until my wife logically explained that if I did that, I would probably have to go into the office more often to justify why I needed it.

That night, as I held my three-week-old son in one arm and typed with the other, I knew I didn't want to go into the office anymore.

I was lucky enough to have a job with so much flexibility that I didn't have to choose between bonding with my son and commuting to the office every day, and despite my one travel day to New York every week, I was still getting to be home much more.

So, I continued along my remote working journey, vowing never to look back.

Until I started feeling something was wrong.

> I started to *miss* going into the office.

See the glossary for definitions of highlighted terms.

It had been three years since I had chosen the life of a **digital nomad** working inside a large company. I had no office space, used **hot desks** when I went into any of our offices around the world, and had no office location printed on my business cards.

Over that time, business had gone well, and our agency had landed some huge new clients. The book had done well and my reputation as an engaging keynote speaker was also growing. I was starting to get paid invitations to deliver talks at conferences around the world.

But I no longer had the close connection with my colleagues I once enjoyed.

Every time I visited the office, I saw new team members I didn't recognize ... and they didn't know me either. What made it even harder to accept was the fact that I had chosen this working lifestyle.

In just a few years, I had gone from a remote working enthusiast to a lonely and disconnected virtual team member.

Wait, I hear you thinking ... isn't this supposed to be a book about how awesome it is to work remotely and how great virtual meetings can be? Actually, no, it isn't.

> Working remotely isn't better than being face to face. But sometimes you don't have a choice.

My aim with this book is not to persuade you that working remotely is better than any other arrangement.

As much as we want to tell ourselves that we can do virtual meetings and be more productive without the distractions of colleagues, the serendipity that happens when you are with co-workers is hard to recreate virtually.

In a great work environment, the people around you will challenge and inspire you to be better.

WHY YOU SHOULD READ THIS BOOK

The goal of this book isn't to pretend that working remotely is always better or that offices are irrelevant. Instead, you will read about how you can continue to make human connections, collaborate effectively, present virtually, and do business without being in the same room.

It's a book for a world forever changed by a global pandemic, where more employers might ask you to stay home, avoid the office, skip the commute, and be productive from afar.

The future of business is going to require this sort of flexibility. In this book, you'll find a collection of the skills, habits, and techniques to help you get ready for the new reality of modern work.

CHAPTER 1

Remote Work 101

The founders of Basecamp, a popular project management platform, described the modern office as an "interruption factory," observing that "a busy office is like a food processor – it chops your day into tiny bits."[1]

In the popular television show *The Office*, the "modern workplace" is portrayed as an outdated ritual, filled with time-wasting colleagues and meaningless meetings.

The traditional office, once seen as a standard part of our working life, is becoming increasingly optional. Instead, more people are opting to work from places other than the office. And since the pandemic, they have had no other choice.

The option and opportunity to work remotely has gone from an indulgence and hallmark of the freelance lifestyle to a daily necessity for the majority of office workers.

1.1 Three Factors Leading to a Rise in Remote Work

According to one survey, more than half of the world's employees work from home at least once per week, and 18 percent of people work remotely full-time.[2]

Given these numbers, it would be easy to think that remote work is a recent trend. After all, the types of jobs we often hear people doing remotely seem to be modern expertises, such as web designers or virtual assistants. For most of human history, though, working remotely was actually the norm.

> Remote work is hundreds of years old.

In medieval times, most artisans worked from home. The famous tenements of the early 1900s in New York were examples of people working from home. Even the term **telecommuting** is more than 50 years old, originally coined by NASA engineer Jack Nilles in 1972.[3]

Building on remote work's long history, three factors are accelerating the ability of people to work from anywhere:

1. **Ease of communication:** Thanks to our advanced communications tools and the Internet, it has become easier to communicate in real time and collaborate without being there in person.

2. **Rise of information work:** As we live in a time where information has become a commodity, the nature of our work has shifted. More people work with information and content today than ever before.

3. **Disruption of work:** The COVID-19 pandemic has clearly forced a change in the number of people working remotely. Even before coronavirus, developments in globalization and dispersal of teams have contributed to the rise of remote work.

The bottom line is that more work is getting done outside the traditional confines of the office, and this trend shows no signs of slowing.

1.2 Why People Love Remote Work

If you do a quick search for online advice about working remotely or browse any bookstore for written advice on the topic, you'll generally find a single point of view: Remote work is better.

Most of the time, it is because of three reasons:

1. MORE FLEXIBILITY

This is a huge factor, particularly among the younger generation. One study found that 69 percent of millennials would give up other work benefits for a more flexible working space, and another found that companies that allowed remote work had 25 percent lower employee turnover.[4] The bottom line is, the more control people have over where they do their work, the happier and more loyal they will be.

2. FEWER DISTRACTIONS

Anyone who has worked in offices knows that they indeed can be distraction factories, laden with unexpected drop-ins, unnecessary meetings, and time-filling tedium that doesn't accomplish anything. When you're working remotely, many of these distractions disappear. Unfortunately, as you'll read in later sections of this book, they are often replaced by other types of distractions.

3. BETTER LIFESTYLE

One disturbing Swedish study found that couples with commutes of 45 minutes or longer had a 40 percent greater risk of divorce.[5] While this may seem like an extreme statistic, those who love remote work often talk about their ability to live in a beloved place, commute-free, as an important benefit of leaving the office life behind.

1.3 Why Companies Love Remote Workers

Though remote work is often described as a benefit offered to employees by reluctant companies, the truth is that there are several reasons why companies might prefer for employees to work remotely:

1. **Lower Cost:** Research published by Global Workforce Analytics found that the average real estate savings per remote worker was $10,000. It noted that allowing this type of work helped IBM to save more than $50 million in real estate costs.[6] When combined with the lower costs for office supplies, support staff, workplace perks, and other routine expenses, the numbers really add up.

2. **More Productivity:** In a fascinating two-year study profiled in his TEDx Talk, Stanford Professor Nicholas Bloom shared the results on the benefits of working from home at one large Shanghai-based company. His research showed that a group of employees working from home had a huge productivity boost compared with their counterparts in the office.[7] Many other companies found similar results.

3. **Higher Loyalty:** The numbers also show that the more control you give to people around how they work, the more loyal they are.[8] This translates into lower turnover and better results in the long run.

1.4 The Difference Between Working Remotely and Working from Home

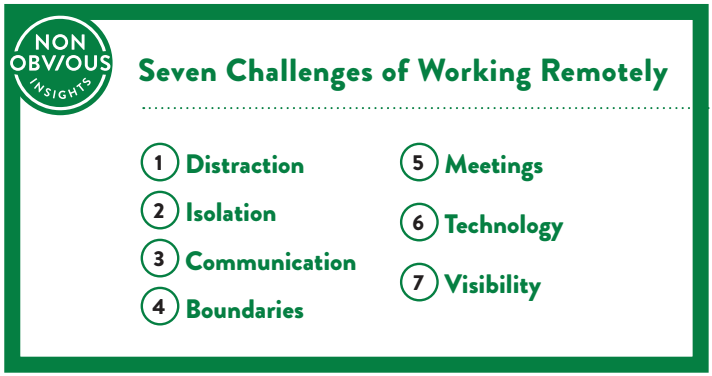
Working from home is usually a temporary choice, often made out of necessity or convenience. Remote work, on the other hand, is work done consistently and intentionally outside the traditional office.

When you're working from home, you might want to prioritize the tasks that are better done out of the office because you have precious uninterrupted time. If you work from home once per week, for example, you may want to avoid all meetings on that day since you can do those meetings in person anyway.

With remote work, it is more important to establish a more regular routine, particularly for a future that probably will include far more **hybrid work** than most of us do today. Hybrid work is the combination of working from an office and working remotely.

Either way, as Harvard Business School Professor Tsedal Neeley notes, "remote work is actually a learned skill. People don't just do it well organically. So it's important to help people, to coach people, to provide resources on how to do it well."[9]

1.5 Seven Challenges of Working Remotely



Fifty years ago, UCLA Professor Albert Mehrabian published a book called *Silent Messages,* in which he suggested that 93 percent of all communication is nonverbal.[10] If that's true, then working remotely poses some obvious challenges.

This isn't the only challenge of being a remote worker. The Internet is filled with discussion about the problems of working remotely. Let's take a candid look at some of the most common:

CHALLENGE 1 DISTRACTION

Whether you consider yourself someone who is easily distracted or not, the truth is that our homes or other places we might work from can be filled with distractions. Sometimes they are immediate (someone ringing the doorbell or a dog barking), and sometimes they are self-inflicted (the temptation to binge-watch another episode of your favorite show or to snack constantly).

> "The three great enemies of working from home are the fridge, the bed, and the TV."[11]

For more on how to conquer your distractions, turn to page 21.

CHALLENGE 2 ISOLATION AND LONELINESS

It is natural to crave human connection, and people new to working remotely often cite isolation and loneliness as their biggest struggle. The first thing to remember is that isolation and loneliness often can be two different problems.

Isolation is a feeling of disconnection that can come from processes or a workplace culture that removes them from colleagues or information. Loneliness, on the other hand, is an emotional state and can happen with those working remotely as well as those who go to an office.

Working without colleagues around can be lonely, and the sense of isolation can lead to depression or a feeling of disconnection from everyone else. Even if you have virtual meetings regularly or visit the office on occasion to meet with people, this is one of the most common and natural emotions you may feel.

For more on how to deal with the isolation, turn to page 26.

CHALLENGE 3 COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION

Most of us are not accustomed to collaborating with others effectively without doing so face to face, and unfortunately we never had much training on how to do it. Adding to the problem is the fact that there are so many ways to communicate today, from video conferencing to instant messaging to email. It's hard to know what to use and when to use it. The ironic truth is that we feel disconnected even though we have so many technologies to help us connect.

For tips to improve your communication, turn to page 119.

CHALLENGE 4 WORK-LIFE BOUNDARIES

One of the real dangers of working remotely is overworking. Since your day is no longer dictated by the traditional 9-to-5 schedule, you may find yourself working far more hours than if you were in the office. This is particularly true in the cases where you have a global team working across time zones, requiring you to work odd hours.

For more on how to set boundaries, turn to page 32.

PERSPECTIVE:
SHELLY PALMER ON OFFICE HOURS

If you are supposed to work from 9 to 5, then work 9 to 5. Take the same breaks you'd take if you were in the office, including – and this is important – lunch! Regular hours increase productivity. I promise.[12]

– *Shelly Palmer is an advertising, marketing, and technology consultant and business adviser.*

CHALLENGE 5 MEETINGS

A virtual meeting is very different than an in-person one. Virtual meetings actually make it harder to collaborate, and most people lack the training to run them well. When they don't work, virtual meetings become a source of frustration for everyone involved.

For tips on running or participating in virtual meetings, turn to Part II, which features four chapters on the topic.

CHALLENGE 6 TECHNOLOGY

The same thing that enables many of us to work from home can be a barrier to doing it effectively. Sometimes the technology just doesn't work, or we don't have it set up correctly to allow us to work.

For more on how to set up technology to help you work better, turn to page 39.

CHALLENGE 7 VISIBILITY

This final challenge is the one I shared in my book introduction about feeling invisible within an organization and suffering for it. When you aren't there in person, you'll need to work doubly hard to make sure you aren't neglected, dismissed, or forgotten.

To learn how to promote yourself and ensure you don't become invisible, turn to page 47.

CHAPTER SUMMARY
KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- Remote work is not a recent phenomenon. People have been working remotely for hundreds of years.
- Contrary to what many leaders believe, studies show people who work remotely can often be more productive than those who commute to an office every day.
- There are seven big challenges of working remotely that need to be overcome: distraction, isolation, communication, boundaries, meetings, technology, and visibility.

CHAPTER 7

How to Deliver a Virtual Presentation

For three years, I taught presentation skills and storytelling at Georgetown University. At the time, learning to present virtually was an afterthought. Since then, this skill has become much more important not only to teach my students, but also to employ when delivering virtual presentations myself.

In the past few years, I probably have presented virtually more than a hundred times. Thanks to several event cancellations, in the past 30 days alone I have done 15 virtual presentations, training sessions, or webinars. The hardest thing about them is delivering an engaging talk without having live audience feedback.

As a speaker, when you can't see your audience react, it can feel like an impossible task to try and create engagement.

In this chapter, you will learn some of the fundamentals for what does and doesn't work when presenting remotely. They will help you ace doing virtual presentations, no matter how often you need to do them.

7.1 Getting the Setup Right

There is no single way to set up your space to deliver a virtual presentation. However, knowing a few of your choices and the logistics involved can help ensure that your setup isn't a distraction for your audience, but rather helps you present in the best possible way.

Beyond the obvious basics, like testing the technology, here are a few simple tips to ensure you are set up to deliver a successful presentation:

1. **Get to eye level.** When your computer is on the desk in front of you with the camera angled up, you'll appear as if you're looking down. Instead, put your computer on a stack of books to bring your camera to eye level. It makes a big difference.

2. **Follow the seven rules.** The seven rules for virtual meetings shared in Section 5.3 are even more important when you're presenting. Get the audio right, make sure you're not accidentally sharing personal information, avoid backlighting, silence your devices, and follow all the other rules, too.

3. **Invest in professional tools.** Depending on how often you are presenting virtually, you may want to invest in some tools to make your setup more professional. This includes a better microphone, upgraded camera, appropriate lighting and an uncluttered background.

4. **Know your model and participation strategy.** In Chapter 5, we looked at the various models for virtual meetings and how to structure a participation strategy. When presenting, you need to ensure you have thought about both issues and have a clear approach on how you'll handle them.

7.2 Ten Tips for Effective Virtual Presenting

The biggest question I am asked is whether presenting virtually requires a different approach than presenting in real life. The short answer is yes.

VISIT ONLINE RESOURCES FOR:
An easy to share list of my Ten Tips for Effective Virtual Presenting.

Here are some of the most common tips I have recently shared with people to help them conquer the unique challenges of doing a presentation virtually.

TIP 1 MAKE IT SHORTER

At first, I used to try and translate my usual 45-minute keynote into a virtual session. It didn't work. Holding attention is harder in a virtual setting, so start with your most powerful points, share

only what you really need to, and keep your presentation as short as you can.

TIP 2 MIX IT UP

Can you use a mix of visuals, props, and video? What about incorporating a virtual poll? The nice thing about presenting virtually is that you have an opportunity to use the technology to add a variety of methods to engage your audience. Though many of them do add a bit of technical complexity, it is often worth the effort because it makes your presentation more memorable. As Idea Enthusiast founder Greg Roth notes, "the biggest thing we may be losing in an all-remote work world is the power of visual thinking. Team leaders should emphasize sketching, speaking visually (anecdotes, analogies, etc.), and sharing powerful visuals."[27]

TIP 3 DOUBLE THE ENERGY

Without an audience, you will have to work extra hard to bring energy to your presentation so it doesn't feel flat. It is much easier to bring energy if you allow yourself to move. If you can, consider presenting while standing up.* At least use your hands or arms in gesturing. Making sure your energy shows through in how you present. As a general rule, when you feel like you're overdoing it with your energy level, you probably have it just right.

**Note/Confession – This is a rule I strategically ignore. Watch a short video in the online resources to learn why.*

TIP 4 LOOK AT THE CAMERA, NOT THE PEOPLE

On a virtual call, you may be tempted to present to the room or people you can see. The problem is, when you do that, it will seem like you are looking sideways. Instead, look directly at your camera. It will seem unnatural not to look at your audience, but when you look at the camera it will appear as though you are looking at the people watching.

PERSPECTIVE: MARK BOWDEN ON EYE CONTACT

Look people in the eye. One way to do that is to draw a smiley face on a post-it note and then you post that on top of your camera and it just attracts your attention to the camera and gives you that smile which your instinct easily gravitates towards and repeats back that smile. It just means I pay more attention to the camera than I do my own image.[28]

– Mark Bowden is a human behavior and body language expert.

TIP 5 SKIP THE RHETORICAL QUESTIONS

Questions that don't require an answer or require people to raise their hand to answer don't work in a virtual environment. They just end up making people feel silly, and you look out of touch. Skip the questions, rhetorical or otherwise, unless you're actually integrating a poll to allow people to do a live vote.

TIP 6 BRING THE HUMANITY

How can you inject your personality into your talk and make it more human? Perhaps you incorporate a picture of yourself with your family. Or you let them see your home office behind you on screen. Or you integrate a prop as part of your talk. Any way you can, try to make your talk more personal so people can feel connected to you.

PERSPECTIVE: LAURA GASSNER OTTING ON GREEN SCREENS

Frankly, I hate green screens. Your efforts to hide who you are leave me lonelier than before. It's not that I realize I don't know you. It's that I realize you never wanted me to in the first place. That's not a recipe for trust.

Instead, I'd like to see your bookshelf. I'd like to see your 5K medals. I'd like to see your family pictures. I'd like to see your puppy. I'd like to see you. Show me your human side, and I'll show you mine.[29]

– *Laura Gassner Otting is the author of* Limitless: How to Ignore Everybody, Carve Your Own Path, & Live Your Best Life.

TIP 7 REPEAT MAIN POINTS

When listening to a virtual presentation, I have found that my attention tends to wander, and I anticipate this from my audience as well. To make sure they don't miss my most important points, I usually find a way to repeat them more often than I might when presenting in person, and I remind people they can always take a screen grab or email me to get my slides later.

TIP 8 USE MORE TEXT

When you are doing a virtual presentation, the chances are people are sitting right next to their screens. This gives you an opportunity to use slides with more text than you ordinarily would in a stage presentation. This doesn't mean you should fill your slides with 8-point font, but the general rule of 24-point font as a minimum for presentations can be lower for a virtual presentation. As long as the text you're sharing is valuable, having a bit more of it on screen can help reiterate your point without detracting from the flow.

TIP 9 TALK SLOWER (OR PAUSE MORE)

Everyone has a tendency to speak faster when presenting – sometimes even more so when presenting virtually. The immediate solution is just to slow down. An alternative is learning how to use pausing in your pace to make your presentations more effective.

PERSPECTIVE:
MICHAEL PORT ON PAUSING

Instead of slowing down, focus on pausing. Speakers who speak too slowly have a soporific effect. I speak quickly. But I pause at the right places. That creates rhythm. I slow down when it serves the speech to slow down. Audiences can easily absorb the important points if you give them pause time.[30]

– Michael Port is the founder of Heroic Public Speaking.

TIP 10 FOLLOW UP QUICKLY

When you promise something as a follow-up, you always want to share it. However, audience expectations when it comes to a virtual presentation are higher. Since your audience members are already sitting there on their computers or phones participating and listening, they often expect you will share any follow-up materials right away. To accommodate, I will often schedule an email to send right as my presentation concludes – or direct participants to a landing page online where they can download relevant materials right away. The longer I can provide value and keep their engagement, the more memorable my insights can be.

7.3 How to Add Variety to Your Virtual Presentation

A virtual presentation works best if you have some variety around the content that you are presenting. What does this variety look like? Here are a few things you might incorporate into your presentation to add more variety and interest for your audience:

- Move the camera (or yourself).
- Switch among external videos and visuals.
- Integrate polls, surveys, or other interactive features.
- Bring a guest to break up the flow and add interest. You can get creative here. For example, I recently read that you can hire a farm animal to join your next virtual meeting!
- Use a virtual background purposefully. Just remember that these can appear disjointed if you tend to move a lot, so use this with care.

More than in-person presentations, you need to mix it up in virtual sessions and offer more breaks and reminders.

7.4 Making Your Presentation Memorable Virtually

***Contributed by Dr. Carmen Simon, author of* Impossible to Ignore.**

After helping others create and deliver thousands of business presentations, I am noticing a trend toward substance abuse: we sometimes provide too little information, thinking we are doing audiences a favor; or we provide too much unfiltered information. Both extremes have a negative impact on influencing memory, which means a negative impact on influencing decisions. How do we fix this?

TIP 1 AVOID FORCED BREVITY

Brevity often breeds superficiality. Does it bother you when some people impose: "You have to present topic X and can only do it in three slides"? That's sheer nonsense, and it drives me crazy. Can you see the potential flaw in: "We are looking for some simple rules on topic Y"? Some fields are immensely complex and there are no simple rules. I recently heard a presentation on "three simple steps to overcome depression." If this was so simple, we would all skip around with daisies in our hands.

Many topics are complicated and situational. Don't oversimplify them and don't agree to take two minutes to address a topic that needs 30 minutes of explanation.

Here's a truth that many miss: to build memory traces in someone's brain, you need some complexity. Your brain won't appreciate simplicity unless it also sees the complexity from which it came. Plus, simplicity becomes a snoozer after a while, which leads to lack of attention, which leads to lack of memory.

TIP 2 ASSUME ACCOUNTABILITY

Often, we sacrifice complexity and stay on the surface "because the client/boss asked for it that way." These circumstances erode individual accountability. It is tempting to blame the environment ("Marketing told us to do it this way") because it absolves us of any personal responsibility. The problem with this victim mentality is that the more we believe we don't have control over our environment, the more undisciplined we become. I strongly urge you: Do not join the generation of "whatever" people. Find messages you believe in and don't compromise on the amount of depth you need to do them justice.

TIP 3 BALANCE ACTION WITH REFLECTION

We give our audiences too little or too much unfiltered information because we are often in a rush. The hurried lifestyle of customers and supervisors pushes us to deliver quickly, often sacrificing

balance and validity. Because of time constraints, we bypass discipline and look for shortcuts.

> Developing content too fast is like vacuuming too fast: you miss stuff.

Before you share content with others, reserve enough time to share your thoughts with those you consider your guardians for depth, validity, and reliability. When you share content from this position, and offer something meaningful – not superficial – you will earn one of the greatest gifts of all: a spot in someone's mind.[31]

Carmen Simon, PhD, is the founder of Memzy and author of several books on how to create memorable content for presentations.

PERSPECTIVE:
USING VISUALS TO MAKE IDEAS SHAREABLE

One of my favorite techniques for visuals is to repeat a few key ones and make them available as downloads to make the idea more shareable. I call these *stealable slides*.

– From the Author

7.5 How to Sell with a Virtual Presentation

The hardest kind of meeting for many people to do virtually is a sales presentation. The lack of audience feedback and inability to read the room seem like deal killers. They certainly make it harder.

When you have no alternative, though, there are some things you can do to make your virtual pitch as strong as possible.

1. **Set ground rules** – If everyone knows how to interact with the tools you're using, you can make interaction more likely. Show your prospect how to use the chat feature and make sure the technology isn't a barrier to engagement.

2. **Ask them what format they prefer** – It's tempting to go into a virtual sales presentation and launch straight into PowerPoint. Doing that robs your prospects of giving you important direction up front. Instead, start the meeting by confirming how they would like the meeting to go. Do they prefer that you present slides or just have a conversation? Letting them choose puts the decision in their hands and shows that you're not afraid to be flexible to work in the way that is best for them.

3. **Start with what's most important** – In a real-life presentation, you have more license to build up to a big reveal. In a virtual meeting, you risk distractions or losing their attention faster

– so bring your best insights and most compelling messages up front and share them earlier. That way if they do check out (mentally or physically), they won't miss the best part.

4. **Tell a better story** – The best sales presentations offer a vision for a potential future that is appealing. If you can get your prospect to imagine that future during your presentation by telling them a powerful story to paint that picture, you are much more likely to be successful.

5. **Don't blame the tech** – If things aren't going well, it's easy to blame the technology or make excuses. Instead of doing that, be proactive and handle issues that may arise in a positive and confident way.

PERSPECTIVE:
WEBEX TEAM ON SCREEN SHARING

Your team puts a lot of time into creating and personalizing sales presentations; screen sharing ensures that those efforts don't go to waste. Everyone in the screen sharing session can view documents together. Multimedia can help add dynamism to a sales presentation, and graphical elements presented through screen sharing can help illustrate numbers that lack life on a traditional sales call, as well as reinforce benefits.[32]

7.6 Why Apologies Kill Virtual Presentations

***Contributed by Dr. Carmen Simon, author of* Impossible to Ignore.**

I was just listening to a presenter at a conference who started this way, "I am so sorry this presentation is right before lunch."

When you apologize, you are asking your audience for leniency; you are asking them to expect a poorer presentation. You are also destroying your credibility before you have a chance to demonstrate you have it. And, given that the brain might remember firsts and lasts better than the middle of a sequence, an audience might remember you for the wrong reasons.

> Never apologize before you begin your presentation.

Avoid these phrases if you want to be memorable for the right reasons: "I'm sorry the meeting software is slow," "I apologize we started late," "I am sorry the text on the slides is so small ..."

But what if you did start a little late and the meeting software had problems and the slides are even worse? Simply address the problem, tie it to what you want people to remember, and move on.

For example, let's imagine someone gave you really complex and text-intensive slides to present. Say something like, "Even though the slide is convoluted, it reminds us that the product offers a lot of capabilities and substance." [Quickly click to the next slide.] If all slides are like that, black out the projector and have a conversation with your audience instead.

Avoid tentative phrases when you start a presentation too. Questions such as "Can you hear me OK?" or "Can you see these slides OK?" or "Let's see, where shall I start?" don't do justice to what you want people to remember.

> A bit of self-deprecating humor is OK when you keep it succinct and tie it to a topic instead of using it just for the sake of using humor.

Avoid demeaning yourself in a presentation. Never make comments like, "I'm not very good at ..." or "I suppose I should have known this slide was here." Demeaning yourself destroys your credibility, weakens your presentation, and is uncomfortable for your audience.

Picture a beginning like this: "I used to have the body of a football player. Now I have the body of a fantasy football player. And this is what I am noticing in our software development too: sometimes we

let fantasy cloud our judgment. Here's what I am recommending to trim down our fantasy feature list ..."

Avoid short, introductory expressions that ask participants to be tolerant or understanding about your topic. "I'm not an expert in this field but ..." or "I'm not a CEO but ..." Phrases like these prime the listener to devalue or question what you are about to say.

> Overall, look at your beginnings as ways to prime the brain for what's to come.

Priming means that we can use a stimulus to influence how the brain interprets the next stimulus. A weak beginning offers the wrong prime and you have to work a lot harder to recover from it as the presentation unfolds. A strong beginning offers a strong prime. And when you prime your audiences' brains the right way, you don't have to work so hard during every single minute of your presentation.

Create a strong association between your content and sub-sequent triggers and you will be consistently and effortlessly on people's minds.[33]

CHAPTER SUMMARY
KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- When presenting virtually follow these quick tips to improve how you look and sound: face a window, invest in a high-quality microphone, and adjust your camera to eye level.
- To keep your audience's attention when presenting virtually – keep it short, mix it up, make eye contact, and double your energy level.
- More effectively sell in a virtual presentation by setting ground rules, asking what format they prefer, and telling a better story.
- Maximize your credibility in virtual presentations by using self-deprecating humor, avoiding apologizing, and creating strong associations between your content and subsequent triggers.

Get new ideas to help you win the future!

JOIN MY FREE EMAIL NEWSLETTER:

www.rohitbhargava.com/subscribe

Every week you will get a curated email featuring the most interesting and underappreciated stories of the week – along with short insights on what they mean for you.

SMART ADVICE FOR SMART PEOPLE

WARNING: THIS IS NOT A GUIDE FOR DUMMIES OR IDIOTS.

With special downloads, templates & guides!

Work from anywhere. Collaborate more. Get ready for the future of work.

Most books on remote work repeat the same tired advice about being productive while wearing sweatpants, or try to convince you that the future of work means becoming a "digital nomad" and moving to a Caribbean island. Instead, this book combines original insights with advice from over 50 experts to help you improve the skills that matter most. Whether you work remotely by choice or circumstance, this guide will help you transform how you work and help you get ready for the new "future normal."

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN:

- **Look and sound amazing** on video, without spending a fortune.
- **Build** more trusted relationships with colleagues you've never met.
- Deliver a **virtual presentation** that is compelling and useful.

"Remote work is the future, and this guide is a must-have for every creative worker."

PAMELA SLIM
Author, Body of Work

"If you want to excel working from anywhere, read this insightful book!"

TIM SANDERS, *NYT bestselling author of Love is the Killer App: How to Win Business and Influence Friends*

ROHIT BHARGAVA is the #1 *Wall Street Journal* bestselling author of seven books and has spent the past five years building two successful businesses while working remotely. Rohit has managed virtual teams, facilitated remote sessions, and delivered virtual keynote talks to professionals across the world.

IDEAPRESS PUBLISHING

STAY NON-OBVIOUS. READ MORE GUIDES:
www.nonobvious.com/guides

ISBN 978-1-64687-044-8
US$17.95
51795
9 781646 870448