

VIDEO CONFERENCE PROFESSIONALLY

By: Danielle DavisRoe, Esq. and Jeffrey Schoenberger, Esq.

Looking and sounding professional while video conferencing with clients, opposing counsel, and the court requires quality hardware, a quiet location, and the right setup.

VIDEO

Both the video of yourself and any screensharing needs to be done well to appear professional in your next web meeting.

WEBCAM

Start with a quality webcam. Even if your laptop has a built-in webcam, you probably need to invest in a good external webcam. The webcam built into your laptop is rarely located in a flattering position - it's often below eye level. If the webcam is located near the keyboard, it may be looking up your nose - an angle that no one wants to be seen that way. Even if it's not by the keyboard, if it is below eye level it's not an ideal placement.

HIGH DEFINITION

Look for a high-definition webcam (1080p at 30 frames per second). When video conferencing with one other person, your face will fill their screen. The higher definition your webcam is, the sharper your face will appear on their screen.

CONTROLS

You'll get the best results with a webcam where you can control the zoom level and adjust the brightness, contrast, and white balance. The best webcams autofocus, adjusting if you lean toward or away from the camera. If you don't want to play with the image settings yourself, look for a camera that will automatically adjust the brightness, contrast, and white balance for you.

When adjusting the zoom, ensure that you can see your face and shoulders. Leave some of the background above your head. You do not want to be zoomed in so far that people can see your pores.

COVER

A lens cover is a must if you are concerned about privacy. Whenever the webcam is not on, flip the cover over your lens, ensuring that you don't accidentally turn on your video when you'd rather someone not see you. A lens cover is especially valuable when working from home.

INDICATOR LIGHT

Most webcams include an indicator light. The light turns on whenever the webcam is active. The size of the light varies from webcam to webcam. If you are concerned about accidentally turning on your webcam, look for one with a large indicator light.

VENDOR OPTIONS

The biggest player in the webcam market is [Logitech](#), who makes about a dozen models of webcams at any given point. Although they were hard to find in 2020 and early 2021, most models are now readily available. Logitech's website even includes a [quiz](#) to help you select the right webcam. The [C930e Business](#) webcam is a good general-purpose model with 1080p video and H.264 support. The H.264 support means that the camera itself handles much

of the video processing, reducing the overhead and burden on your computer, offering better video and less processing impact on your machine.

Logitech also offers two 4K models. As with TVs, the big difference between a 1080p webcam and a 4K webcam is the improved picture quality. The improved resolution is great if you record videos locally on your computer, but much less noticeable if you are using it on Zoom, Teams, or a similar web meeting application. Web meeting video is often compressed, so you reach a point where a better resolution camera doesn't really pay off. The meeting application limits you to a certain quality in the same way that you could own a 4K or 8K TV, but if the broadcaster or streamer only offers the program in 1080p, then those "extra Ks" don't add anything.

If you choose to go the 4K route, Logitech offers two nearly identical models: the [Brio Ultra HD Pro Business](#) webcam and the [Logitech 4K Pro](#) webcam. They look identical and the only obvious differences between the two are that the Ultra model costs ~\$40 more and has Windows Hello support (like [Face ID](#) or facial recognition on your smartphone, but for your Windows computer). If you use Logitech's comparison tool on the [two models](#), you'll see that the Ultra has checkmarks indicating support for Cisco WebEx, Microsoft Teams, and Zoom, while the Pro lacks those checkmarks.

Outside of a very specific product and use case, it's unlikely a modern webcam would not work with WebEx, Teams, or Zoom. What Logitech means by that checkmark is that, for the Brio, Logitech jumped through the extra hoops of getting the product "certified" to work with WebEx, Teams, and Zoom. That certification takes time and money. Such certification matters for tightly-controlled tech environments or circumstances where one is permitted to buy only "certified" hardware (*e.g.*, government procurement or larger firms). However, for attorneys and legal professionals buying a webcam for client meetings or court hearings, paying an additional \$40 for the "certified" version is unnecessary.

SCREENSHARE

Screensharing allows others to see what's on your screen or in a particular window. Selecting the right content is key to appearing professional.

WINDOW/APPLICATION/DOCUMENT

Sharing a particular window, application, or document is ideal when sharing a PowerPoint presentation or a single document. Only the contents of the selected window will be shown. Pop up notifications and other things open on your desktop will not be shared.

If you need to share a different document or window, you'll need to stop and restart sharing. This is only a problem when you forget that others can't see the new content and forget to change the sharing settings. If you think you'll need to share multiple windows, consider sharing an entire screen.

When sharing a document, reduce the number of distractions in the application. If sharing a Word document, use the Focus view or close the Navigation Pane and Styles Pane, collapse the Ribbon, and turn off your formatting marks (show/hide). If sharing a PDF, use Full Screen mode.

SCREEN/MONITOR/DESKTOP

Most video conferencing software allows you to share your monitor. Sharing what appears on a monitor is often referred to as sharing a screen, monitor, or desktop. When you share a screen, everything you see on the monitor (other than some meeting controls) will be shared with the other participants.

Pop up notifications, such as incoming emails, chat messages, and Outlook calendar reminders can be very distracting. If you have multiple monitors, share the monitor that is not your primary monitor (the one with the system tray icons next to the clock) and ensure that your pop-up notifications are set to appear on your primary monitor. Turn off the taskbar on your secondary monitor for a more professional look.

If you only need to share a single window, sharing that window instead of the entire screen will give you a more professional appear.

AUDIO

Crisp, clear audio is key sounding professional.

USE ONE DEVICE

To avoid echoes, connect to the web conferencing software once. If you need to dial in from your phone, look for an option in the web conferencing software to set your audio to phone rather than your computer speakers. Leaving the web conferencing software set to use your computer audio and then dialing is the most common source of echoing.

Echoing can be further reduced by using the same device for your microphone and speakers. Sometimes, using separate devices causes an echo.

QUALITY HARDWARE

To improve your audio quality, you need to invest in quality hardware. Wired headsets often provide the best audio quality, but they tether you to your computer. Quality wireless headsets will also provide quality audio, but they will be visible when sharing your webcam. Speaker phones can stay off camera, but generally don't have the same sound quality as a headset.

When using a speaker phone, make sure that the phone is close enough to you that people can hear you clearly, but not so close that it picks up on your breathing. If using a headset, position the microphone slightly below your mouth to minimize breathing noises.

SETUP

COMPUTER

Close everything you don't need prior to starting the video conference. This will minimize the number of distractions and reduce the number of applications competing for your system's resources. Closing any applications that use the internet will also improve the bandwidth allocated to your video conferencing software.

INTERNET QUALITY

When you share your webcam or screen, your internet upload speed affects the quality of the images. Internet service providers typically tout their download speeds, which are useful for streaming content from other sources (think YouTube and Netflix). Even if you upgrade your plan, you might only be improving your download speed. Further, a hardwired connection is preferable to WiFi.

LOCATION

Set up in a location where you can close the door and minimize distractions such as co-workers, spouses, children, and pets from interrupting your call. The less background noise, the better.

WEBCAM

Position your webcam slightly above eye level, ideally mounted on the top of the monitor you are going to share or the monitor that will have the webcams of the other participants. When you talk, look directly at the webcam as much as possible rather than the video of the other participants. Looking at the webcam gives you the appearance of making eye contact.

LIGHTING

Avoid backlighting, such as a large sun-filled window behind you. Backlighting makes your face appear to be in the shadows. Instead, set up with a window behind your webcam or soft lighting to the sides of the webcam. Turn off harsh overhead lights that can add shadows to your face.

BACKGROUND

Check what's behind you before you start your video. A messy workspace can be distracting and appears unprofessional. If your video conferencing platform includes virtual backgrounds, use them to hide anything behind you.

A green screen can help make virtual backgrounds appear crisp. Just be sure that your green screen is large enough to cover the entire background visible on your webcam.