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Demos to Mixed Local and Remote Audiences – Tips to Handle Combination Situations

What is the strategy for handling situations where you are face-to-face with one group of customers *and* other participants are connecting remotely? Treat the *entire* session as if it is a Remote Demo.

Yes, this will force you, as the presenter, to remain at your laptop computer – but it also means that you’ll remember to use the mouse for all of your movements (to point, annotate, highlight, etc.), as opposed to hand motions or using a stick or laser pointer. We have to bear in mind that anything done outside of the collaboration software won’t be seen by the remote audience.

Here are some additional tactics to consider in these “mixed” situations:

- ✓ During your introduction, be sure to have everyone at each location introduce themselves (if the total audience is less than ~20 participants) – ask:
 - What is your name?
 - What is your job title?
 - What one thing do you want to make sure we accomplish today?
- ✓ If possible, ask a remote participant to be an active “host” to serve as a conduit of information to you:
 - Are there delays – latency – with the collaboration tool displaying your software or presentation?
 - Can they hear your voice adequately (can you hear theirs, as well)?
 - Can they see the full screen?
 - Does anyone have a question or are confused, based on their expression?
- ✓ All “pointing” needs to be done via the collaboration software – so that both the face-to-face and remote audiences can see what you are pointing at...
- ✓ Don’t use physical props, unless you can use the *sound* the prop generates to communicate the idea effectively over the microphone/phone system.
- ✓ Repeat questions that are asked from audience members – for *both* groups. It will likely be difficult for every audience member to hear all of the other audience members...

- ✓ Remember to continually engage the remote audience, in addition to those who are face-to-face with you. Ask the remote folks specific questions, to keep their attention.
- ✓ If you choose to engage in a mock “role-play” scenario, choose a remote audience member as the first participant. Add a local participant to the role-play, in addition, if the scenario supports it.
- ✓ Similarly, invite a remote audience member to “drive”, if appropriate – this will serve to engage *both* local and remote participants.
- ✓ For *ad hoc* work, use the collaboration tool’s whiteboard capabilities – or use a blank PowerPoint slide, if the collaboration tool lacks whiteboard functionality.
- ✓ Capture “Good Questions” in a Microsoft Word document as a “Not Now List” or “Parking Lot”, so that both face-to-face and remote audiences can see and participate in the process.
- ✓ Put more verbal dynamics into your delivery than you might normally do when operating face-to-face – and especially include more pauses of longer duration. This gives the opportunity for the remote people to ask questions, particularly if they need to un-mute their phone system(s).
- ✓ Don’t be afraid to call a break, if the session is expected to last beyond 90 minutes. It is harder to remain engaged as a remote audience than when face-to-face. Consider making the break a non-standard length – such as “13 minutes” – to help people remember to all return at the appropriate time.
- ✓ Keep in mind that different time-zones may be involved for the various sets of audiences – and respect accordingly. It may be likely to have people in the session from California, Chicago, Frankfurt, and Sydney...
- ✓ Remember to summarize at the end of each demo segment – if you see your local audience nodding their heads, it is likely that the remote people are doing so as well!

In summary, treat situations with mixes of face-to-face and remote audiences as if the entire session is being run over the web. You’ll add clarity to the overall event and increase your demo success rates (and you may even be nodding your head now...!).

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The gently satirical article “[Stunningly Awful Remote Demos – Inflicting Pain at a Distance](#)” suggests practices to avoid and offers methods for improvement.

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