

PRESENTATION GUILD WHITEPAPER

THE FUTURE OF PRESENTATIONS

IN A VIRTUAL WORLD



PRESENTATION
GUILD



INTRODUCTION

For the last two decades, there has been a steady increase in remote presentations, as video and online collaboration platforms have facilitated new ways of working and connecting with one another.

The worldwide COVID-19 pandemic dramatically accelerated this trend toward remote work and virtual presentations across organizations of all sizes, industries, and regions. Nearly everyone—business professionals, teachers, medical workers, newscasters, actors, government officials, and many others—have had to adapt and make virtual presentations and collaboration the norm.

While the pendulum will eventually swing back to more in-person interactions, a large percentage of virtual presentations are here to stay, as remote work is normalized.

In response, software developers significantly enhanced video-conferencing and remote collaboration platforms. Traditional vendors raced to expand their software's current features. New

platforms for virtual worlds and virtual reality spaces sprung up to create more immersive environments.

With the challenges of a remote-work culture, the bar is set high for virtual presentations to be engaging, compelling, and inspiring—all while leveraging the latest technology in a way that supports and enhances messaging.

Whether for sales, education, inspiration, or internal communications, virtual presentations will continue to play a vital role in how people communicate.

Presenters must understand the current and leading practices of virtual presentations to cut through the noise and engage audiences.

In May of 2020, the Presentation Guild invited a panel of diverse industry experts to explore these emerging capabilities and how presenters can succeed in this increasingly digitized world. Their in-depth discussion about the latest trends and best practices informed this overview.



EXPERTS



SANDY JOHNSON
President of
Presentation Guild

Sandy helps presenters PowerPoint responsibly. A certified Woman Owned Business Enterprise, Sandy has been creating presentations for corporations and individuals around the globe since 2001 and has been a Microsoft PowerPoint MVP since 2008. For the Presentation Guild, she served as Vice President and as President; she remains an active member.

“Communication is a vital skill and hopefully colleges and universities start to focus more, help people become better at communicating, and teach them the tools to facilitate improved communication.”



NANCY DUARTE
Founder and CEO
of Duarte, Inc.

Nancy is a communication expert who has been featured in *Fortune*, *Time Magazine*, *Forbes*, *Fast Company*, *Wired*, *Wall Street Journal*, *New York Times*, *Cosmopolitan*, *LA Times*, and *CNN*. Her firm, Duarte, Inc., is the global leader behind some of the most influential visual messages in business and culture.

“The more complex our data gets, the more people try to make it look fancy instead of understandable. Instead, you need to find the problem or opportunity in the data, communicate those challenges and opportunities, and then shape the communication to guide people towards the right direction.”



PATTI SANCHEZ
CSO of Duarte, Inc.

Patti writes books, creates frameworks, and helps clients connect with audiences through persuasive presentations and story-based communications. She is the co-author of the award-winning book, *Illuminate: Ignite Change Through Speeches, Stories, Ceremonies, and Symbols*.

“While I value the highest quality of storytelling, I don't want anyone to feel so intimidated that they don't think they could tell a story well. We have to break it down to simple processes, simple techniques, so that anyone can start and get better over time. As experts, it's our responsibility to make that expertise accessible.”



DR. NICK MORGAN
Communication Expert,
Keynote Speaker,
and Author

Since establishing his business, Public Words, in 1997, Nick has become a communications coach and theorist, acclaimed author, keynote speaker, and popular blogger. He focuses on body language, storytelling, and communication techniques.

“I've been working with clients to incorporate holograms in presentations and that still looks like magic. I think it's a way to up our game in the speaking world and bring back the awe, spectacle, and wonder to presentations.”



PETER ARVAI
Co-Founder and CEO
of Prezi

Peter's mission is to combine storytelling with technology to help people make better-informed decisions. Through Prezi, he empowers over 100 million users to create and share ideas with the world's largest library of digital presentations.

“Polished content isn't necessarily meaningful. If we want to take our business away from the polish—or the even more extreme form of that manipulation—we have to become servants of people's processes to help them understand and learn.”



CLIFF ATKINSON
Communications
expert, keynote
speaker, and author

Cliff is a communications consultant to leading attorneys and Fortune 500 companies. His bestselling book *Beyond Bullet Points*, expands on approaches and techniques he has taught internationally at top law firms, government agencies, business schools, and corporations around the country.

“Our job is to teach someone to how distill; how to take complexity and make it understandable. Lawyers deal with complex ideas, so I tried at a conference to have them write a haiku of their case and within four minutes, they got right to the emotional heart of it.”

EXPERTS



KEN MOLAY
President, Webinar
Success

Ken has been producing and delivering business webinars since 1999. His background in public speaking, radio, stage acting, and training has given him a unique perspective on what it takes to create a compelling and effective presentation.

“ Look at the different pieces that are involved in presentation—you’ve got the materials, the training for designing a presentation as an entire concept, the transport mechanism, then you’ve got the network side of things, and finally the speaking skills.



JOHN RAHMLOW
Webinar Expert and
Presentation Guild
Director

John Rahmlow is a presentation designer and presenter with decades of experience across a variety of industries. He recently retired from one of the leading financial services companies in the world where he was responsible for delivering hundreds of webinars each year. John is currently the Events Director for the Presentation Guild.

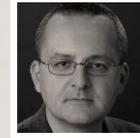
“ You always have to keep in mind that your audiences are working with different tools—so using things like video and transitions, people will get them at different times and potentially get different lags. We’ve still got some ways (to go) before virtual presentations have the same impact as in-person, so (connection speeds) need to get faster and improve the tools to ensure a more seamless message for the end user.



YULIA BARNAKOVA
Digital and Innovation
Consultant, Visual
Communication
Futurist

Yulia helps clients across industries stay ahead of technology disruption, bridging the digital divide for leaders and organizations. She regularly experiments with new technology to see what’s next in visual communication, sharing insights in her blogs and video tutorials, which have been viewed over 7 million times. She is a Principal in the Digital & Innovation Practice at Heidrick & Struggles and a recipient of the Microsoft MVP award.

“ It’s critical to envision how technology is disrupting the future of communication, then get creative and experiment with digital tools to engage audiences in more powerful and immersive ways.



ALBERTO CAIRO
Professor and Knight
Chair of Visual Journalism,
Data Visualization, and
Infographics at the
University of Miami (UM)

As the director of the visualization program at UM’s Institute for Data Science and Computing, Alberto has also authored several textbooks, consults businesses and institutions, and provides visualization training to major firms around the globe.

“ We shouldn’t care so much about new techniques or tools; they are important, but secondary to caring about democratizing what we already have. Closing the gap of people who can create and read data visualization, especially in the business world—focus more on education rather than development.

CONTENTS

6 The Rising Bar for Presentations

7 Emerging Trends Reshaping Presentations

Authenticity Becoming Increasingly Valued

“Presentations” Being Redefined

Interactivity Increasingly Critical

Media Seamlessly Blending Together

Accessibility and Inclusivity

AI-Based Democratization of Design

Storytelling with data

Presentation Delivery Coaching with AI

On the Horizon: Virtual Worlds and Holographic Telepresence

12 Building Presentation Capabilities for the Future

Develop a Professional Setup for Virtual Presentations

Be Concise in Your Messaging

Amp Up Your Storytelling

Engage and Interact with the Audience

Experiment with New Tools and Techniques

Staying on the Cutting Edge of Virtual Presentations

14 The Presentation Guild

THE RISING BAR FOR PRESENTATIONS

Over the decades, presentations evolved from slide carousels and overhead transparencies, to PowerPoint slides and beyond. However, more so than any of these dynamic platform changes, TED talks have raised the presentation bar and dramatically influenced our communication culture.

Dry lectures filled with bullet-points had become the norm for many training sessions, conferences, and corporate meetings. Then TED talks elevated the standard of presentations by showcasing the benefits of powerful storytelling, impactful imagery, and concise messaging (enforced by strict time limits).

Social media and mobile devices raised the bar even higher, driving an era of information overload, as

people are flooded with updates, alerts, and 24-hour content cycles all vying for attention.

“Meme culture” boosted expectations for highly visual, entertaining, and creative self-expression. Social media posts get more views when they include a memorable image, video, or GIF—and many presentations now include visual components to keep the audience stimulated.

With this rising tide of expectations, presenters must draw in and deeply engage their audiences. They must be designers, directors, animators, writers, public speakers, marketers, communicators, and engagement experts—all at the same time.

So how does one do this most effectively—especially in a virtual setting?

“ [These days], people don't want polished/slick, it feels insincere. So our coaching practice is now helping people come across as transparent and sincere instead of polished.

Nancy Duarte

EMERGING TRENDS RESHAPING PRESENTATIONS

With the accelerating trend toward virtual, it is critical to explore emerging trends around designing and delivering more immersive, engaging, and interactive experiences.

Authenticity Becoming Increasingly Valued

Virtual presentations have become a ubiquitous element of our daily lives. With people forced indoors during the lockdowns, the digital world has been brought into everyone's homes—Zoom, which saw daily active users jump from 10 million to 200 million in three months¹, has offered a glimpse into colleagues' living spaces through video calls. This acceptance of imperfect but personal circumstances has added a sense of authenticity and realness to online content. By presenting a look into people's personal lives, backstories are formed as the fourth wall and formality are broken to create a deeper connection with audiences.

The more people can actually make a personal connection through genuine personal stories, the more relatable—and engaging—their presentation will be. Speakers are letting go of the façades of formality and polish; the occasional cameo from a pet or child actually makes the speaker more relatable. Vulnerability and authenticity, already fueled by Brené Brown's [viral TED Talk](#), is becoming more important than ever for making that critical connection with the audience.

Yet, authenticity does not mean avoiding preparation in the interests of eliminating “polish.” As webinar expert Ken Molay [writes](#), “One of the aspects of authenticity is showing that you authentically care enough about the value of your message to make it worth the effort to create something that your audience will want to watch and listen to.”

“Presentations” Being Redefined

The definition of what constitutes a presentation and a presentation platform have been redefined, thanks to our new boundaries of authenticity and virtual engagement. Presenters can now use streaming sites in an unprecedented way: to broadcast authentic, unedited content.

Platforms like Facebook Live, Twitch, and LinkedIn Live are increasing in popularity—not only for gamers or social media influencers, but also educators and businesspeople.

On the other hand, many event planners who would normally live stream are choosing to forego the potential logistics tangle. Instead, they are asking presenters to pre-record their presentations and play these videos during the conference. Two examples are Click, a prominent presentation conference, as well as LiveWorks, an augmented reality-themed conference by PTC.

A third style is on the rise. Similar to webinars, but with more focus on the presenter, “podcast on camera” style presentations often incorporate a host and include introduction slides for each speaker.



Interactivity Increasingly Critical

Given the rising expectations for entertaining and involving audiences during presentations, interactivity is becoming critically important; a must to maintain attention and engagement. Gone are the days where lecture-style, one-way communication was the standard. With so much stimuli vying for audiences' attention, presenters must develop highly interactive, engaging experiences.

Several types of tools and features can help replace the live, spontaneous, and meaningful interactivity, which has been forsaken by virtual connection:

- **Breakout rooms** in Zoom, WebEx, and other platforms provide a change in experience and allow people to work together in small groups before coming back to the plenary.
- **Live annotations and sketching** on screen (e.g., Zoom's annotation feature, PowerPoint's Inking tools, etc.) offer a "live flipcharting" experience for co-creation and collaboration.
- **Collaboration tools / sticky noting** in platforms like Mural provide a virtual experience of collaborative real-time work with sticky notes, similar to a live brainstorming session.
- **Audience polling** (Poll Everywhere, Menti, Slide-o, etc.) and other audience input tools offer interactive, real-time audience input—this can be used to supplement open discussion and chat inputs to create a variety of interactive elements.

- **PowerPoint-based games** offer endless possibilities for gamifying presentations, such as creating mini-quizzes and classic games like Wheel of Fortune and Jeopardy, strengthening interactivity and engagement with the audience.
- **Audience synchronization** is a non-technical approach to creating interactivity, which entails having the audience do something similar all at once—such as eating, pouring drinks, passing objects from "one screen to another" etc., creating a sense of "togetherness" among the audience. Microsoft Teams has already embraced this trend with its [Together mode](#), which provides a shared background for everyone, such as a stage or an auditorium.
- **Blending physical and virtual** by having participants draw something or find an object for "show and tell" often creates a sense of interactivity that connects everyone.

Media Seamlessly Blending Together

In the endless sea of video calls (often dubbed "Zoom fatigue"), presenters must also consider getting creative with their video feeds to add graphics and break up the monotony. While these techniques will get stale if used as part of every presentation, inserting them occasionally into presentations could add a delightful surprise to break up content. These emerging tools and platforms enable this type of work:

- **Zoom** added several new features (in August 2020), including the ability to use slides as a virtual background.

- **Prezi AR** allows you to set up graphics on top of your video feed, so your face and graphics are integrated.
- **Snapchat / Instagram** camera integration uses virtual cameras to implement an avatar or face filter in your video feed. This feature works best to spice up informal presentations.
- **Loom AI** has a semi-realistic avatar that appears while you are speaking. It allows you to still appear semi-professional and looking at the screen but with the freedom to move around while presenting.
- **Mmhmm app** helps you design a creative, dynamic presentation that seamlessly blends video and slides in a streaming or recorded format.

“ We shouldn't care so much about new techniques or tools; they are important, but secondary to caring about democratizing what we already have. Closing the gap of people who can create and read data visualization, especially in the business world—focus more on education rather than development.

Alberto Cairo

¹ Patnaik, Subrat (2020) 'Zoom's daily active users jumped from 10 million to over 200 million in 3 months' <https://venturebeat.com/2020/04/02/zooms-daily-active-users-jumped-from-10-million-to-over-200-million-in-3-months/>

Accessibility and Inclusivity

Virtual presentations can reach anyone anywhere in the world, accelerating the need for accessibility and inclusion.

The ability to configure presentations for different audiences based on demographics like age group, region, and technical requirements, ensures the universality of communication, demonstrating more diverse and dynamic ways of connecting.

Zoom partnered with speech-to-text company **Otter.ai** to add automatic scripting and translation to its feature set and offer simultaneous translation. For example, the United Nations conferences are streamed in nine languages on Zoom.²

Microsoft leads the way in accessibility by regularly adding a host of inclusivity features to **PowerPoint** and other **Office** products. Their engineers designed ever-improving simultaneous translation/captioning for presentations, alt-text on its images, and voice controls (including integration via its Surface Buds), as well as automatic dictation options for building presentations and documents.



It is getting much easier to do holographic presentations now. You simply get shipped a kit, and it's self-serve and looks great at the destination...

Nancy Duarte

Another focus of accessibility is designing with multiple platforms in mind. John Rahmlow, a Presentation Guild Director who has delivered hundreds of webinars, notes that differences in aspects like an audience's screen resolution, viewing devices, and bandwidth need to be considered when setting up the presentation:

“You always have to keep in mind that your audiences are working with different tools—so using things like video and transitions, people will get them at different times and potentially get different lags. We've still got some ways before virtual presentations have the same impact as in-person, so we need to get faster and improve the tools to ensure a more seamless message for the end user.”

If these differences are vast, some presentation professionals design for the “lowest common denominator” in mind, creating only basic or no animations, minimizing videos, and uploading slides in advance (vs. screen sharing) to create a smoother audience experience.

Additionally, presenters should use inclusive language and imagery to better reflect the wide spectrum of audiences around the world. Stock image sites like **CreateHER**, **Nappy**, **DisabilityIN**, and **PhotoAbility** offer increased diversity of subjects and their settings.

Presenters must think broadly about their audience and ensure their work is accessible, reflecting the diversity in their audience, which is often broader with virtual presentations.

AI-Based Democratization of Design

Visually appealing design has always been important, but it is particularly critical for virtual presentations, where the slides are often primarily (or solely) what the audience sees.

Luckily, tools using artificial intelligence are making basic visual design easier than ever. **Beautiful.ai** and **PowerPoint's Designer** have streamlined and democratized the creative process, ensuring consumers can easily access professional slide design.

With these tools, users can open a blank presentation and start typing and get a series of recommended layouts and imagery that reflect the text, as well as theme styles and complementary color palettes. Presenters can opt for a basic “clean up” of pre-made slides automatically—elevating the design quality for last-minute presentations.

Presenters delivering dry, bullet pointed presentations will fail, especially in this virtual culture. Too many stimuli (e.g., social media, family disruptions, work emails) are competing for an audience's attention. Visually pleasing, regularly changing visuals (including Pecha Kucha style) are more critical to reaching and maintaining audiences. Before and throughout our global health crisis, presentation professionals writing about the migration to virtual presenting all agree that more slides, better slides, and greater variety ensure a presenter's success.

² Zoom (2020) 'Language Interpretation in Meetings and Webinars' <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/360034919791-Language-interpretation-in-meetings-and-webinars>

Storytelling with data

Amid the growing availability of data and tools to analyse it (like Microsoft's Power BI), presenters need to show data in an effective and compelling way.

The virtual setting offers more possibilities than ever to present data in 3D and view it from different angles and perspectives. Companies like **Virtualitics** and **Flow**, already used by large organizations like Deloitte, allow data to be viewed in virtual reality and have the audience “walk around” and zoom in on data points during presentations.

However, according to experts, the most important aspect of presenting data is robust analysis and a powerful, graphic-supported storyline. Alberto Cairo, professor of Knight Chair in Visual Journalism at the School of Communication of the University of Miami (UM), finds that audiences often give a disproportionate amount of attention to numbers and charts—further exacerbated in a virtual setting where attention is especially taxed. He advocates for presenting data in a very carefully analysed, clearly showcased way.

In her landmark book *Data Story*, Nancy Duarte states that data does not “speak for itself” but needs a “hero” and story arc. Then the audience will follow along with the data's story and be vested in the outcome.

Therefore, presenters must leverage data with a careful consideration of both visuals and narrative, continuing to explore and consider emerging tools for more creative, immersive presentations.

Presentation Delivery Coaching with AI

In a virtual setting, the importance of inflection and powerful delivery grows exponentially. With limited visual input and plentiful distractions, the burden is much more on the presenter to create an engaging audience experience. Ken Molay has written extensively on the importance of setting up lighting, camera, and video backgrounds to “set the stage” for a powerful delivery. Given that virtual settings often play down voice inflection, he also advocates for the use of “stage voices” and playing “to the back row” when presenting virtually, as diction and inflection become particularly important to maintaining engagement.

To help make presentation delivery easier, there is a growing set of AI-based presentation coaches that allow for practice and immediate feedback. With **PowerPoint's Presenter Coach**, users enter rehearsal mode and, while speaking, receive on-screen guidance regarding pacing, inclusive language, use of filler words, and potential culturally sensitive phrases.

Presenter Coach also lets users know when they are simply reading off the slide, helping presenters understand the value of communicating confidently and clearly. At the end of each rehearsal session, presenters are provided a detailed report with metrics for additional practice. Mobile-based apps like **Speako** and **Orai** (used by Duarte to supplement one-on-one coaching) allow for similar speech coaching as well.

Moreover, virtual reality-based AI speaking coaches like **Virtual Speech** allow presenters to practice in a

variety of settings like TED stages or boardrooms while wearing a VR headset. The potential for head and eventually eye tracking, as well as body position and gesture tracking, provides a significant opportunity for highly specialized delivery feedback, available 24/7.

Given the critical importance of delivery skills for virtual presentations, presenters should explore AI coaching platforms to keep their skills sharp and understand the current state of the technology.

On the Horizon: Virtual Worlds and Holographic Telepresence

Virtual presenting uses a spectrum of capabilities. On one end are presenters who are new to this medium, actively building a solid hardware setup and foundational skills for presenting virtually, such as screen sharing and audience management. On the other end, experienced online presenters are pushing boundaries with holographic effects in large-scale “virtual world” gatherings and presentations. The latter is still on the edge of “mainstream” but quickly gaining popularity.

Toronto-based ARHT Media does holographic effects for in-person events, making it seem like a hologram of the presenter is on the stage (it is technically not a “real” hologram but a lighting trick). ARHT works with entertainers and progressive business leaders looking to create an innovative sense of presence on stage without physically being there.

In response to an explosion of virtual presentations, ARHT has recently developed a virtual presentation stage, which allows presenters to beam into video conferences and do live presentations as if from a stage. This software uses a proprietary technology similar to a green screen to bring video conferencing to life.

Beyond videoconferencing, “virtual world” presentations with avatars are also on the rise. These types of presentations became popular several years ago in Second Life, as major universities and corporate learning departments rushed to build out campuses within the platform. Yet, these did not gain significant traction for a variety of reasons, including a resource-heavy platform.

However, in today’s dynamic environment, these virtual worlds are steadily increasing in prominence. The Educators in VR International Summit in early 2020 pioneered the way (even pre-COVID) to an all-VR global conference in AltspaceVR, an avatar-based social platform bought by Microsoft in 2017, which features frequent appearances by Alex Kipman, inventor of the HoloLens mixed-reality headset.

With in-person conferences cancelled for 2020, many event planners turned to online conferencing and virtual world platforms. Conference organizers around the world are realizing that they can hold large-scale online events successfully—and the technology for these events only continues improving.

Although the logistics can be more complex and the technical glitches more frequent, audiences feel a greater sense of immersion and presence when they can see and interact with other avatars in the space with them.

Various virtual world platforms (some exclusively for VR headsets, some available via 2D PC or Mac) have exploded onto the marketplace. Charlie Fink, a prominent author writing about these spaces, has recently published a [book](#) with a summary of current platforms, which are regularly updated in his [XR Directory](#) site.

The advent of virtual world platforms raises the question of how we will present across these varied spaces to different audiences. Yulia Barnakova, digital and innovation consultant and visual communication futurist, envisions a changing norm of increasing expectations where 3D presentations use the entire space to

create an immersive experience: “When every point in space is your canvas, changeable at the snap of a finger, how will you design a radically new, exponentially more engaging audience experience?”

This next presentation frontier is emerging but likely a few years from becoming mainstream. However, industry experts recommend presenters keep an eye on and start experimenting with newer platforms to stay on the leading edge.

“ I’ve been working with folks to incorporate holograms in presentations and that still looks like magic. I think it’s a way to up our game in the speaking world and bring back the awe, spectacle, and wonder to presentations.

Nick Morgan

BUILDING PRESENTATION CAPABILITIES FOR THE FUTURE

Given the trends and changing dynamics in the presentation space, there are several “no regret” capabilities that presenters need to develop in order to stay ahead of the curve and continue engaging and delighting audiences.

1 Develop a Professional Setup for Virtual Presentations

Presenters must have a quality virtual setup, including a home studio. This foundation will give presenters the versatility to go from informal live streaming to highly professional presentations.

Below are must-haves for a quality setup:

- **External camera and microphone** – While some built-in computer/monitor cameras can work well, to really lean into virtual presenting, a standalone camera positioned at eye level is critical for

any professional presenter. The audio aspect is also important for a successful virtual presentation. Check out Ken Molay’s [side-by-side comparison](#) for a wide range of microphones, complete with audio samples, to make the best choice for your needs.

- **Good lighting** – Lights should illuminate your face with no glare and no backlighting. (Windows can provide the best light source.)
- **Thoughtful background** – While there are many digital options for virtual and blurred backgrounds, unless there is a green screen, the quality tends to suffer, as hair and limbs can fade in and out with movement. An eye-pleasing, real-life background (e.g., a printed backdrop like a bookshelf) is preferred.
- **Solid connection** – If possible, use a hardwired internet connection to improve the speed, quality, and reliability of your presentation.

2 Be Concise in Your Messaging

Given shortened attention spans, a presenter needs to make complex concepts comprehensible. They should distill ideas down to simple points using a few words or icons—or even poetry.

Cliff Atkinson, renowned communication expert and author, trains presenters to become more concise by writing haikus. This practice forces the presenters to strip out everything but the essence of their messaging. They drill down to the heart of a concept, allowing them to explain ideas in a way that an audience will understand and appreciate.

While haikus themselves would not likely be useful in presentations—the idea of going through the content and stripping out non-essentials is a key technique that is critical in a virtual setting.

“ Our job is to teach someone to how distill; how to take complexity and make it understandable. Lawyers a deal with complex ideas, so I tried at a conference to have them write a haiku of their case, and within four minutes, they got right to the emotional heart of it.

Cliff Atkinson

3 Amp Up Your Storytelling

In addition to concise messaging, a presenter must connect with the audience to create an engaging experience. This audience connection often stems from storytelling abilities, which is why industry experts recommend that presenters use a simple narrative to capture and maintain their audiences. Only afterwards can animation, online engagement, and other production features be included to reinforce the overarching story.

The team at Duarte looks for designers who can be presentation coaches as well, since merely knowing good design principles is an insufficient differentiator in today's labor market. Designers must be able to listen to the client and shape the story with them, drawing out key insights. Patti Sanchez, CSO of Duarte, wants presentation designers to be able to say to speakers, "This is the storyline I am seeing emerge as you're explaining the design concept."

Peter Arvai, CEO of Prezi agrees, noting that "the best part of presenting is to help people expand their minds and empower them to make better decisions. Storytelling can lead to better decision making and create value for people."

4 Engage and Interact with the Audience

Given the potential for distraction, it is critical to engage the audience more regularly in a virtual setting than when presenting in person. As outlined in this paper, presenters can now use more online tools such as polls, surveys, and quizzes to interact with audiences during presentations.

Presenters can also engage with audiences in many non-technical ways, including pausing the presentation for questions, deliberately calling on people to invite them into the discussion, and using audience members' names regularly to keep everyone alert and engaged.

Lastly, a solid delivery style is important. Honing delivery skills (via AI coaching apps or otherwise) will also help elevate engagement.

5 Experiment with New Tools and Techniques

With the recent acceleration of virtual presentations, current virtual platforms are constantly increasing their feature set as more newcomers emerge in the market. At the same time, new creative techniques for engagement are being tested across various presentation settings.

The key for presenters is not to try everything new at once. Find a personal style and solid core set of tools that works, then regularly experiment with one or two new tools or techniques to constantly evolve and see what's ahead.

Staying on the Cutting Edge of Virtual Presentations

In many ways, virtual presentations have the same underlying principles as in-person presentations, though with a much higher need to engage and entertain the audience, as well as more digital tools available to do so.

Presenters should continually learn from their peers, experiment with new tools and techniques, and leverage the increasingly plentiful tutorials and

trainings available online, including from the Presentation Guild.

Delivering successful virtual presentations does not need to be challenging. It's about breaking the design and delivery down to simple processes and techniques, which all presenters can—and must—master to not only engage but delight audiences and keep up with the ever-rising bar of the digital age.

“ While I value the highest quality of storytelling, I don't want anyone to feel so intimidated that they don't think they could tell a story well. We have to break it down to simple processes, simple techniques, so that anyone can start and get better over time...

Patti Sanchez

THE PRESENTATION GUILD

The mission of the Presentation Guild is to uncover opportunities to identify, define, and develop presentation skills. Working around the globe, we are dedicated to simplifying information, providing everyone with clarity and the ability to express themselves clearly too.

The Presentation Guild promotes the presentation design and production industry as a profession, recognizes the skills and expertise of presentation creation specialists, and provides opportunities for members to expand their knowledge and abilities.

The *Future of Presentations in a Virtual World* whitepaper is part of the Presentation Guild's effort to bring

presentation skills and industry challenges to the forefront. As a key partner for helping presentation professionals stay on top of emerging trends and accelerate their capabilities into the future, the Presentation Guild is composed of experts from across the wide presentation industry spectrum.

This nonprofit trade association of professionals continues working around the globe to elevate the quality and understanding around presentation design and delivery. To learn more about the Presentation Guild's mission and services, [visit the website](#) or email our [Board of Directors](#).

