

Webinar and Facebook Live Etiquette

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Joan Burge explains why it's important to be courteous and patient

In a world where people learn through all types of platforms, it is time to expand business and classroom etiquette into the digital world of online learning; in events that take place through webinars and live video broadcasts. I am compelled to write this article after hosting more than 18 free monthly webinars for administrative professionals around the world. In 2015, as Office Dynamics International ventured into its' 25th year of business, we decided to provide free training to assistants worldwide through webinars. We wanted to reach assistants and provide free education to those who would never have access to us in an onsite training event or attend one of our conferences. Our Vice President, Jasmine Freeman, is at the helm of the webinars as my host and manages all the logistics pertaining to each event.

We just finished our 18th free webinar on June 22, 2016 and after watching another chat with over 1,000 comments—most of which were outstanding - I decided it was time to approach webinar etiquette. Over the past 18 months, Jasmine and I have read thousands of chat comments. As I said, the majority are positive, complimentary, polite and valuable. Many of our attendees have great insight to the topic we are discussing and several offered their best practices.

Unfortunately, we also have webinar attendees who are not so kind in the chat. They display a negative attitude or they complain that the ideas I share will never work. Some participants are impatient as we try to manage technical problems that aren't even our fault, and over which we have no control. These technical difficulties have to do with the webinar attendees' firewalls. It is really up to that attendee to speak to their IT Department. I have had assistants yell comments in the chat box by typing in all CAPS.

What these webinar participants don't realize is that it is image that is being displayed to thousands of people through the chat. I am certain none of these Nancy Negatives or Ned Naysayers would make these comments if they were in a live room with us.



We are learning to work with new tools and platforms. Jasmine and I recently started using Facebook Live to present short learning sessions or share words of wisdom. We, as an organization, are doing our very best to accommodate tens of thousands of administrative professionals. Any organization who hosts webinars is doing the very best they can. But things do happen; technology does not always cooperate no matter how much you test it ahead of time.

Purpose of the Chat

The purpose of the chat is to be able to communicate with the webinar presenter. But it is also the place to share best practices related to the webinar topic. The chat should be used to gain clarification on something the speaker said or to glean information you missed because

the webinar facilitator was moving quickly. If you are aware of some good resources related to the webinar topic, share them in the chat with fellow attendees.

Unnecessary Chatter

Do not clutter up a chat box with dialogue that is not necessary or does not add value to the conversation. This is not the place to air your frustrations or disappointments because you can't take advantage of something the webinar host is speaking about.

People are taking time out of their busy work day to attend an educational event (the live webinar). Their time is valuable. They don't want to read negative comments in the chat box or have it cluttered with comments that are irrelevant.

Rudeness is Never Okay

I will never forget the time we were hosting one of our free webinars and there was technical difficulty but it was a Google issue; not an Office Dynamics problem, or our webinar platform. We were having a terrible time trying to troubleshoot but people became quite boisterous in the chat. One assistant typed, to my staff, in all capital letters GET IT TOGETHER. I was dismayed that someone would be so discourteous. On the other side of that, we had numerous assistants who sympathized with the situation and cheered us on. They were patient, understanding, and supportive.

It's Your Brand

You are always on stage, even in a chat. Don't think because people don't see your face they aren't forming impressions of you and your organization. A perfect example, we had a webinar attendee who kept typing that the ideas mentioned in the webinar would never work for her. Later in the webinar when we mentioned we were looking for an entry level administrative assistant, the webinar attendee wrote in the chat, "I'm packing my bags." Do you really think we would interview someone who had such a negative attitude?

Please protect your professional brand by displaying proper protocol and etiquette when attending:

- A live training event
- An administrative conference
- A live webinar
- A Facebook Live event
- A live video virtual training program

11 Surefire Tips to Webinar Etiquette:

1 As you enter the webinar, introduce yourself. We love to see people say, "Hi, this Marguerite from New York." Or "Hello, this is Sue from wintry Michigan." Just as you would introduce yourself when entering a conference room, meeting room or training room, you should introduce yourself within the chat.

2 Communicate in a positive fashion. It is fine to express your view or opinion, just do it in an uplifting way. If you disagree with another webinar attendee, do so politely.

3 Contribute good ideas. Just as you would want people to share information that is valuable and useful to you, they expect the same.

4 Compliment your host. He or she has spent hours preparing for the event. They have put their hearts and souls into it and desire to do a good job. It's also important to let your host know that you like the topic or the event they are hosting so they will be encouraged to offer that again in the future.

5 Please don't be rude. If you are having technical difficulty, don't take it out on your host. Follow troubleshooting tips when they are provided.

6 Share your best practices and ideas.

7 Monitor the chat in case you can answer a question from a participant. They may have missed an important point from the webinar presenter or need clarification.

8 Try to build rapport with others in the chat. You may see someone from your city. Say hello to them.

9 Do not type in all CAPS. That is the same as yelling. Even if you are trying to make a point or show your passion about something, it could be construed as yelling. An exception might be when the webinar host made an exciting announcement and you want to show your enthusiasm about it.

10 Ask good questions. Make sure you are listening carefully to the webinar presenter so you can ask good questions. Time is limited. For example, our monthly free webinars are one hour. That is not long when there are announcements and then closing comments. We allow 15 minutes to respond to questions

that appeared in the chat. I want to answer as many questions as possible in that time.

11 As the webinar is ending, be sure to thank your webinar hosts. Again, they have spent a great deal of time and energy preparing and delivering the webinar. Plus, they will spend time with post-webinar administrative duties.

Facebook Live Etiquette

Simply put, Facebook Live is a live broadcast on Facebook. Jasmine and I just started using Facebook Live a few months ago. It is a great way for us to deliver quick solutions and ideas to executive and administrative assistants worldwide.

We also like Facebook Live because the broadcast never goes away. Just like anything we post on Facebook. We try to give our followers advanced notice as to when we are going live but sometimes we go live on the spot.

A person can participate during the Facebook Live event. We have had several assistants on a session and it is great fun to interact with them. Actually, we have read very good ideas and valuable information from people watching us.

The etiquette rules are basically the same as they are for classroom learning and live webinar events.

Many of our live events are brief—maybe 20 – 30 minutes; sometimes only 10 minutes. If you participate, you'll want to keep your comments brief and to the point as the speaker is having to respond quickly and comments scroll fast.

Patience Is a Virtue

We are very fortunate to have a variety of platforms where we can share, network, and learn. Let's remember to be courteous and patient. It goes a long way and you would expect the same of others.

about the author



Joan Burge is known as the red-lipstick-wearing "Rock Star" of administrative and executive Assistant training and a successful entrepreneur who created a unique niche in 1990 by founding a training company that would provide sophisticated, robust educational programs and information to administrative professionals. Joan is an accomplished author (8 books), professional speaker, consultant and corporate trainer. She is the creator of: *Annual Conference for Administrative Excellence™*; *World Class Assistant™* Certification course; *Star Achievement Series®* Certification and Designation course; 30+ customized workshops, 200+ educational videos, 150+ articles and 900+ blogs for executive and administrative Assistants. Her company, Office Dynamics International, is a global industry leader which offers a broad range of solutions and provides high-performance, sophisticated executive and administrative Assistant training and coaching. For more information visit www.officedynamics.com. Receive Your Free "Clarification of Tasks" assessment. Download at www.bit.ly/clarificationoftasks.

