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Executive Visibility Through Video: Best Practices for Filming from Home

Whether your employees are working from home or are still on the job performing critical operations for your business and the community, it's important that your leadership team remain visible to them, even if from afar. Video can help your frontline workers feel connected to your senior management and vice versa, and with those workers making sacrifices to keep your business running – today and for the foreseeable future – hearing from (and seeing) your executive team is more important than ever. Video also maintains the integrity of important information you need to communicate, reducing the risk of anything being lost in translation as it cascades through your organization. The following tips can help you develop videos that make an impact with your people at a time when connectivity, information and engagement are tantamount to your success.

Consider your audience. Will your video be for internal use only, or is there potential to also share it externally on executive and/or corporate social media channels? Be mindful that anything you intend to communicate to employees can easily find its way to external audiences.

Keep videos short. Generally, 30 to 60 seconds is best, but videos can be longer if necessary. Many executives, including Marriott CEO Arne Sorenson, have received praise for longer-form videos intended to share important COVID-19 information to associates and other stakeholders. But keep in mind: many employees are being asked to do more than usual both at work and at home, so be respectful of their time. Keep your message straightforward, concise and record it under the premise that shorter is better.

Keep it simple. Like all of us, your employees are inundated with information right now. Make it easy for them to get the key point of your message. Instead of addressing every question on their minds, keep it high-level, sharing need-to-know information, gratitude and compassion. Whenever your executives communicate, it's a good practice to arm supervisors with supporting resources that help them provide local context. If you have supporting details to share, include them here and on other channels.

Breathe. A few brief pauses can make a big difference. After pressing record, take a deep breath before speaking at the start of the video and again after you've finished your message. Intro and exit pauses easily can be edited out on your smartphone, and they result in a cleaner finished product. Even if you have professional help, your video editors, who may be working from home without the technology they're accustomed to using in the office, will thank you for making it easier on them.

Maintain eye contact. While speaking, try to look directly at the camera to appear natural and unscripted. Whether you're filming yourself or someone is filming you, keep the phone close to eye level and stable as possible. To maintain stability, use a tripod or simply prop your phone on a level surface. If you prefer to reference a script or talk track, there are apps that run like a teleprompter, such as Teleprompter Lite and BigVue App. Consider downloading these apps to a separate device, such as an iPad, and position it just below the phone you're using to record.

Be mindful of your recording environment.
- Put your phone on Airplane Mode before recording to avoid interruptions.
- Film in a quiet space with no environmental noise.
- Be mindful of the background so it is not distracting for employees.
- Face a light source. If you can, film near (but not in front of) a window or lamp, or even outside.
- Maintain a distance where the frame includes your chest and up. A frame of only your face will seem too close, and a full standing shot will seem too far.

Follow a standard process. And practice.
- Go to Settings > Camera > Record. Select 1080 HD at 30 frames per second (fps) or 4K at 30 fps.
- Film horizontally and focus the camera by tapping on the subject. If filming yourself, use the forward-facing camera so you can see yourself on the screen.
- Do not use the zoom feature.
- Practice and film a test run. Remember to play the video back to check framing and sound quality.
- When you're satisfied with the finished product, send the video file in the highest resolution to your communications team for editing/clean up, adding subtitles/captions and optimizing for social publishing (if appropriate).