

Professional Communication in a Digital World

ANDREA JIMENEZ: Good evening, and welcome to Professional Communication in the Digital World. My name is Andrea Jimenez. I am the Global Connections Program coordinator. Our mission at Global Connections is to bring you engaging co and extracurricular events wherever you have an internet connection.

So presenting for us this evening is Christine Curtis. She is an assistant professor in the Edward Murrow College of Communication. When she concludes her presentation, we will have time for Q&A. So just feel free to leave your questions in the chat box. We will get to those at the end.

If you have any technical difficulties, please let me know as well, and I can help you out with those. So without further ado, Christine, I'm just going to turn it over to you.

CHRISTINE CURTIS: Well, thanks. So hi, everybody. As Andrea said, my name is Christie, and I am an assistant professor of teaching in the Murrow College of Communication.

I have been in the Murrow College as a full-time faculty member for the-- this is the beginning of my eighth year. And I absolutely love it, but I certainly never expected that the fall would turn out this way. So I hope everybody's doing well and staying safe and healthy during the pandemic.

Some of our objectives for today. We are going to talk about what professional is and how you accomplish that. We're also going to talk about appropriate email communication. Especially in today's day and age, professional email communication is even more important than it was before, as almost everything we do is digital.

And then we're also going to talk about professional conduct in online workspaces. I know a lot of us have had to transition to doing everything 100% online in the last few months. And the trend that we have been hearing is that it's going to continue for a little while. So what can you do to make your workplace and your atmosphere the most professional it can be to set yourself up for success?

OK, so before we get too deep into anything, I was going to define what professional is, what we're actually looking at. The definition that I'm going to go with is the Merriam Webster dictionary definition. So, "Of, relating to, or characteristic of a profession." "Engaged in one of these learned professions." So you've had technical training in a specific area.

"Characterized by or conforming to the technical or ethical standards of a profession," and I think ethics is a key word there. I think ethics is incredibly important in today's day and age, and especially establishing ethical codes of conduct for the workplace in terms of group communication, online communication. Sometimes we can get a little bit confused or there

may not be as clear of criteria there, so establishing that standard of ethics and expectations can be incredibly useful.

And then "Exhibiting a courteous, conscientious, and generally businesslike manner in the workplace." And what I like to tell my students both in person and online is if you wouldn't be comfortable saying it to your 90-year-old ultraconservative grandmother, you probably shouldn't say it to me or to somebody else in a professional space. If you think it would offend them, don't say it.

And when I say conservative, I don't necessarily mean political conservative. That can be a range of things. I'm thinking more of the church-going granny that drives her car to the service and expects community service and that sort of thing. At least that's what I envision in my mind. So if you wouldn't feel comfortable saying it to somebody you respect, and love, and adore, then you probably shouldn't be saying it in the workspace.

OK, some of the things that we're going to compare professional to are some of our synonyms here. So amateur, unskilled, unprepared, unqualified, incapable, and incompetent. I would say that most of us probably don't want to be labeled any of these things. So whatever we can do to strive to keep a professional conduct and atmosphere is incredibly important. So this is the list I like to show and say tried to do everything to avoid ending up on this list.

I'm working with a new graduate coordinator in the Murrow College. And he got an email from a student that said, "I understand that there's a learning curve." And he was so offended. And I said, ooh, I'm really sorry. That's never what you want to hear.

And he's doing an excellent job. He's very competent. But sometimes when we're angry or upset we send messages or put things right in messages-slash-emails that aren't necessarily professional and don't make us look good or sound good. So we want to do whatever we possibly can to ending up on this particular list. Oh, unable would be our other one there.

OK, so here are some fun statistics for you. And these aren't the super technical stats here. 87% of recent college graduates feel they are prepared to succeed in the workforce. And when I survey my classes and talk to my students and say, how many of you feel prepared to go into the workforce today, somebody came in and said, I'm looking for somebody in this area. And a lot of them raised their hand. They're like, yeah, I'm ready to go. That sounds great.

However, in comparison, only 50% of hiring managers agree, which is a pretty big disparity in the comparison there. So some of the things that hiring managers are consistently communicating back to myself and to other people who asked them these questions are what are some areas that you feel we could improve? What are areas we can work with students so they are more hireable? You are interested in bringing them on board.

And the messaging across all industries and areas of interest-- our graduates lack skills in communication, teamwork, critical thinking, and attention to detail. So when we break that

down, it essentially means that they don't clearly articulate what they mean, or their communication is sporadic. So it's inconsistent and they're not getting consistent messaging back from the grads.

So the example I like to use for that-- if you're in the hospital and the doctor says, how are you feeling? You say, I'm not feeling so great. Usually, they're like, Oh, OK. Well, why are you here?

If you say, I'm in a lot of pain, or if you touch, that hurts, that gives them very clear direction. OK, you have pain in your lower right quadrant. Now, that could be appendix. It could be kidney stones. I know what tests to run.

You say, oh, I'm not that great. My right side's kind of bugging me a little, but it's not so bad. They don't know how to proceed, right? It doesn't give them a clear direction. So you want to make sure your communication is timely, is professional, and is consistent.

Teamwork is another one. I always say the number one reason people aren't able to keep a job is because they're unable to work in a team and their inability to work with others. If you can figure out how to connect with people in your industry, outside of your industry, and across the board, and be willing to work with anybody and be flexible, you are going to be employable for your entire life. Those are skills that are incredibly useful. We don't always get to pick who we have to work with. But the ability to adapt and say, yes, I can do that. I can work with them. We can figure out how to make this happen, is something that employers are looking for.

Critical thinking is a term we've used in higher education for the last 15 years. And when we say critical thinking, we're looking at your ability to think outside of the box. Instead of having to provide you a checklist of what you have to complete for a specific exercise, you can just say, OK. I have to do this marketing report. These are the things that need to be included. I need to do this type of research.

Asking clarifying questions is never a problem. Like, did you want 2016 to 2020? Are you're looking specifically at 2020 all by itself or a specific month? Always acceptable. Those clarifying questions are great. But taking the initiative and being able to adapt and put something together independently is really important.

And of course, paying attention to detail. In industries like communication, we focus a lot on health communication and communication across different cultural boundaries. But I always like to use the example, if you are looking at a prescription and it tells you to take it 30 times a day instead of three times a day, that's going to have a very different outcome than if the correct instruction is given. So being able to catch those errors and mistakes, sending out documents that don't have typos and don't have spelling and grammatical errors, or don't have critical errors are inaccurate information is really important.

I am usually on a number of hiring committees throughout the year. And I'm always astounded at the people that say attention to detail is one of their skills, and then they're missing

something, or they've misspelled a number of things throughout their resume. There's errors. Well, you say you have good attention to detail, but I'm looking at examples, and I'm not seeing that same attention to detail. So those are things that are pretty important.

This came from a study by Dishman in 2016. And I can say with 100% certainty that this is still relevant, and our hiring managers are still giving us the same information for what they're looking for in [INAUDIBLE].

OK, so when we're using effective communication, a few things that are really important to pay attention to and to make sure you're aware of. You want to be aware of your situation and to your audience. So first, what is the purpose of your communication context? Is it social? Is it professional? Why are you there?

Certainly, if you're a stand-up comedian and you show up at a bar, it's going to be drastically different than working with a number of youth from a church group. I like to use bar and church examples because usually people can relate to one or the other, or some people to both, which is great.

But you're going to use a much different set of criteria and a different skit than you would in either one of those places, right? You're not going to use a ton of profanity. In one, you may be able to do that comfortably in another.

So what is your situation? Who is your audience? Are you familiar with your audience? Do you know anybody there? What is the climate? Is it tense? Is it friendly? Is it kind of in between? Is it awkward? Do people know each other? So taking in a lot of those details when you first step into that space can be really helpful.

Another thing to keep in mind is how you're perceived by others. So as my friends and co-workers will tell me, I think I'm big and ferocious and that I can take on the world, which isn't necessarily inaccurate. But to give you some perspective, I'm 5' 2" and weigh about 95 pounds on a good day.

So I like to say I have small dog syndrome like a little chihuahua. I think I can go run and play with the Great Danes, and not get hurt, and everything will be fine. When in reality, when I walk into a room, I'm rather unassuming. So making sure you know how you're perceived and what you can do to change that perception is really helpful.

If I were to walk into my classroom in jeans and a T-shirt, students would probably assume that I'm just another student. When I walk into the room and I'm in my business professional attire and I walk up to the front of the classroom, I start setting everything up, it starts to set the tone. Oh, this is my instructor. This isn't another student in the class. So my attire, how I carry myself, how I interact with students or other coworkers and faculty helps with that perception.

It's also helpful to adapt when necessary. If I'm teaching a public speaking class for 100-level students, it's going to be drastically different than how I'm going to run my classroom for a 400-level class with mostly graduating seniors, right? So it's important to be able to adapt and pick up on when it's relevant to switch gears.

Also, picking up on the mood in the room. If I come in and the energy is really high that day, that may change what type of activities we do and what's happening. If everyone's pretty quiet or everyone's kind of sad, if something major has just happened--

I think the hardest day to teach was when the Seahawks lost the Super Bowl. So I came into the classroom, and the students were so sad that day. And we'd had some pretty involved activities planned.

And I was like, aw, what's wrong, everyone? And they were like, this is the worst day of my life. It was Monday after the Super Bowl. This is worse than when my girlfriend broke up with me. It's like, oh, we have to adapt this. We have to make changes. So picking up on that climate in that environment and adapting is really important.

All of this falls under the category of increasing your self-awareness. So being aware of how you are perceived, and how your message is coming across, and being able to adjust accordingly can be a wonderful skill to have.

OK, so in terms of professional industry-- and especially, we see it even at WSU-- the primary method of communication is via email. So email is the designated professional pathway for most communication messages. We see in today's workforce a larger age range, right? Before our people retire in their late 50s, early 60s, and so people in the workforce could be between 18 to maybe 55 or 60.

But that gap has changed. But usually, it's between 18, but it can go all the way up to 70 or 80 now. It's pretty standard. So we have lots of generations.

One of the gals in the Murrow College who I absolutely adore-- her name is Sandy Johnson. And she is our fiscal specialist, but she sits at the front in Goertzen. So all the students know her. They all come to say hello.

For her, face-to-face communication is really critical. That's really important. She would rather pick up the phone, and call you, and talk to you instead of send an email because when she started out, that was the primary medium of communication. And that's transitioned substantially to email these days.

We all get assigned an email account, whether we're students, faculty, staff. And that's how we communicate with everybody on a very consistent basis. Especially with the pandemic, phone messages aren't nearly as popular. We're not talking to people on the phone hardly at all.

It's primarily your first contact with other people in a professional capacity. So the message that you send via your email is starting to establish your professional reputation before you even meet them. And to explain to somebody who's in a Running Start program or 18, hasn't done this before, it can be a steep learning curve to be like, oh, this is not a text message. It's not a casual conversation with friends. You are establishing your professional identity as soon as you start drafting that email and click Send. So what can you do to make you present the best version of yourself in all capacity?

Email is one of those things that has pros and cons. And it's a style that you have to learn. And the best way to do that is hands-on experience, sending as many emails as you can. I always tell students, look, if you include a signature line with the university and your department, that's great.

But remember, not only are you representing yourself now, but you're representing WSU, and you have attached your department name. So the Murrow College, Carson College of Business to that. And you're now a representative of them as well.

So everything you send through that email should be top notch, right? It should be polite, professional, free of grammatical errors. No slang terms. It should be more on the formal side of things.

So I have this example of this is a video clip that we're going to watch. I hope you find it entertaining and amusing because the first time I saw it, I couldn't stop laughing, primarily because I think we've all had some experiences with email like this. And if you are a WSU faculty or staff member, then you'll probably get an even bigger kick out of it.

Because I don't know about the faculty and staff on the call, but I know I am on a number of Listservs. And when people reply all to a Listserv with 500 people and they start going, and your inbox has 100 emails, and things like, stop replying all. You're cluttering my inbox, and they just start going back and forth, you can't help but laugh. But also, be a little annoyed. So we're going to take a look. This is called "Email in Real Life."

[VIDEO PLAYBACK]

- Hey, Tanner, you going to that all-day meeting tomorrow?
- I'll be on vacation from Tuesday, June 27 until two days ago.
- Your auto response is still on.
- I'll be on vacation from Tuesday, June 27 until two days ago.

[UPBEAT MUSIC]

[EMAIL DINGS]

- OK, everyone. I need you to send me your reports ASAP. Before lunch, if possible.

- Will do, Trip. Will do, Trip. Will do, Trip. Will do, Trip.

- Why are you including me in this?

[EMAIL DINGS]

- We'll be there around 7:00 tonight, if that's OK.

- Yeah, sounds good.

- Kind regards. Trip Crosby, regional sales manager. Work. 404-555-6112, extension 405. Mobile. 404-555-3767. Email. Trip@bizz. "Success is always an option." John Maxwell, author.

[EMAIL DINGS]

- Here's that report you needed.

- I don't see anything.

- Oh, dang it. I forgot to attach it.

[EMAIL DINGS]

- Hey, Beth, did you see all the submissions we got today?

- OMG. I know!

- Easy on the all caps.

- Sorry.

- It's OK. Semicolon, closed parentheses.

[EMAIL DINGS]

- Hey, son. You have to watch this video of this cat sleeping on a horse. It is so cute.

- Mom, I'm at work.

[EMAIL DINGS]

- Dear friend, I am Johnson Emmanuel. This might come to you as a surprise. I am the next heir to the throne in Nigeria, and I want to offer you a large sum of money.

- Please stop coming here.

[EMAIL DINGS]

- Hi, Trip. Are you satisfied with--

[EMAIL DINGS]

- Hi. I'm the administrator. I could not deliver this document. It was too big. On Monday at 10:37 AM, Paul wrote, hi, Trip. This is the latest version of the document you were looking for. Hope it's not too late. Paul.

- Yeah, I know what I wrote.

[EMAIL DINGS]

- Hey, really look forward to seeing you guys tonight. Oh yeah, circular disclosure? The information transmitted just now is intended only for the person or entity to which it is addressed, and it may contain confidential and/or privileged material. Any review, re-transmission--

- I don't know what that means.

[CHATTERING]

[EMAIL DINGS]

- Inbox full.

[CHATTERING]

- Oh, good. That's what he said. Hey, what's this poker game I hear about this weekend?

- Who's that guy?

- You want me to bring anything, or?

- I meant to invite a different David. Right, Chip?

[EMAIL DINGS]

- Email can be frustrating, that's probably because you're trying to use it for the wrong things, like status reporting, or--

[END PLAYBACK]

CHRISTINE CURTIS: OK. So that's my comedic relief. Hopefully all of you got a kick out of it and can relate.

OK, so then I thought for some more examples, I would share some of the student emails I've received over the years. Now, I've removed all of their private information. So we can't possibly trace it, and they won't be publicly embarrassed.

But this is a great example of the type of email that I receive as a professor from students when they're missing class or unavailable. And it has way too much personal information. I don't need to know all of the details.

But it says, "Good evening. You may have noticed I was not in class this week. On Monday, I came down with the stomach flu and had been experiencing constant vomiting, the spins, and severe nausea all week long. I really care about my grades and my education at WSU and want you to know I will be in attendance next week. Please let me know if there's anything I can do to make up for my absences. Thank you for your time." And then they signed it, Student.

So some positives. It's polite. It's well written. I don't see any spelling or grammatical errors, which is great. Downside? Way too much detail. They could have just said, I'm not feeling well. I won't be able to make it to class. Can we schedule a meeting to catch up?

I don't need to know all of the extra stuff that's going on. But they did have a very nice signature line, and then they did sign it, which is very helpful from a professor perspective.

So here is another example. So it says, "I caught a cold this weekend when I was out in the snow in central Washington, which is why I wasn't in class Tuesday. Tomorrow I have an exam at 3:00 PM, so I may not be in class then either, depending on how my studying goes. I just talked with my friend, and he said we're going over the proposal essay. I want to make sure that I won't be missing any components that I can't get information about on Blackboard."

So this email is well-written in the sense it doesn't have any spelling or grammatical errors. A couple of things to note. It doesn't have any sort of introduction at the top, and they didn't put anything in the subject line to let me know what they wanted to talk about.

And just as an FYI, I'm sure other staff and professors can relate. And for students, just so you know, it's never a good idea to tell your professor that another class is more important than their class. It doesn't make them feel very good.

So in this specific email, they're telling me, oh, well, I wasn't in class because I was playing over the weekend, so I wasn't there. But at the same time, I'm probably going to miss class again because I'm going to study for this other class that has a test. So let me know if I missed anything.

This would usually be the type of conversation I should have with a student via office hours. And again, telling a professor that your class isn't as important as my other class with an exam, probably not a good idea. If you just tell them that you're not going to be able to be there, you'd like to schedule a meeting to catch up, that would come across much better.

And we're also missing the signature at the end. So they didn't sign it. It just came through just as you see it there. So a nice subject line and a nice signature at the end is also really helpful.

OK, so for this last one, to provide some additional context for you, as this email came in through Blackboard. And this was when I was teaching a class that had about 1,200 students enrolled. And when the student sent the email, this is how we figured out that Blackboard had defaulted our settings. And so this one out to the entire class, so it went out to all 1,200 students.

It says, "Hey is there class today? I think she said something about it being canceled. Is it canceled, or am I tripping?" And as you can imagine, going out to 1,200 students predominantly between the ages of 18 and 22, I woke up and had about 500 emails in my inbox.

What happened? And then we were frantically trying to figure out how to mediate the damage. It happened to be a three-day weekend, and so class was, in fact, canceled that Monday.

But then we had lots of panicked students saying, did I miss something? Was I supposed to attend? Was I not supposed to attend? And all hell broke loose. It was absolute chaos.

So one, when you're sending your email, make sure you know who the recipients are. And it's probably a good idea just to email the relevant parties. So in this case, it should've gone to the professor, not to the entire class.

But if you happen to be on one of these, it's probably also a good idea not to hit Reply All so the responses don't go onto everybody in the class. It was a little bit of a free-for-all until we managed to get in contact with all of the graduate students and get everything calmed down and send out some mass emails. It was pretty, entertaining but it was also one of those, we will make sure that the settings for students being able to email the whole class are turned off from now on.

OK, so now that we've kind of covered email and professional communication in an email context, I wanted to talk a little bit about video communication, as we're all working through that right now. Classes are being held 100% online, and a lot of people are working from home.

And so the predominant method of communication at this point has been synchronous videos while we work through the pandemic.

So I did some digging to find some information. According to Forbes, over 50% of Fortune 500 companies were using Zoom in a major capacity. So they were doing a high amount of workflow using programs like Zoom. Zoom now has over 12.9 million users, which is substantial. That's a pretty big increase, and we expect that number to continue to rise as we work through the pandemic.

In a synchronous video, this is when we have individuals engaging in live conversations, so the Zoom-type calls. There's the asynchronous video, which we'll talk about in a minute, which is more of the recorded presentation time. So this is when everyone gets to be online at the same time. There's video and audio.

I also looked up to see how many people can be on a Zoom call, and they've increased the capacity to 100 people now, which is staggering. Even five years ago, doing a conference call a, video conference call, it was complicated getting two or three people on. To think now that the technology has advanced where we can have hundreds of people online at once is pretty staggering.

Also, when you think of an expense reduction model from a business side of things, it's a lot easier to do a Zoom meeting than have to fly people halfway across the planet to do certain meetings and things. That can now be accomplished via Zoom. So it's a huge budgetary incentive as well to make it successful. So Fortune 500 companies and large international companies have a pretty big incentive to try to make the Zoom work well for them.

Some of the benefits to using a Zoom-type meeting are you get that immediate verbal and nonverbal feedback. So I'm teaching all my classes via synchronous video this semester. So I can watch them and I can say, hey, you're not paying attention because you're watching a different screen over there, or so-and-so is sleeping. So you get a feel for how everyone's responding and how things are going.

I know for faculty, it's been a challenge to try to make sure that you have that student engagement side of things. So for me in my classes, I have found that the breakout rooms in Zoom have worked incredibly well for increasing student engagement.

Students aren't always comfortable talking or asking a question in the chat box in front of all of the other students. But if I put them into a small group of four or five students, they're much more likely to engage and interact. And they don't feel so isolated and wherever they are.

The breakout rooms from a faculty perspective are also incredibly easy to use. You can choose who you want to put in a group together, or you can have it randomly assigned. So students can work with different students every class period, and you can pop in and out of those conversations incredibly easy.

So I am a huge advocate for using those breakout rooms in classroom settings, even if you only have 20 students. Breaking them into smaller groups and giving them that flexibility to work on something and popping in and out has been incredibly useful for improving student participation, engagement, and also, a sense of community with the students.

We've also seen Zoom coming in and taking over for a lot of the Skype platforms. So Skype for Business was what we used at WSU for quite some time. And we've transitioned over to Zoom now. I'm sure, in the next couple of years, we'll transition to something else. We see platforms coming in and out. But the more flexible and the more adaptable you can be to those platforms, the better. Now, FaceTime is also a more casual one that we see used or other apps like Facebook Video Messenger or other things we see as well.

OK, so I have our friends again from the video ones. I think they're really funny, so I'm sorry if you don't like them. But this is a conference call in real life. So let's take a look. I'm sure we can all relate.

[VIDEO PLAYBACK]

[DINGING]

- Trip Crosby.

- Has joined the meeting.

[UPBEAT MUSIC]

[SCHMALTZY MUSIC]

Beth has joined the meeting.

- Hello?

- Tyler?

- No. This is Beth from ICS.

- Oh, hey, Beth. How are you doing?

- Oh, good. Yeah. Just making it. You know.

[DINGING]

- Tyler.

- Has joined the meeting.

- All right. Well, this is Trip. Who's here?

- Tyler's here.

- Beth's here.

- OK, the purpose of today's meeting is to discuss the--

- Yeah, I'll be able to do it in like, 30 minutes. John.

- Has joined the meeting.

- Hi.

- Hi.

- I was just trying to go over the purpose of today's meeting, which is to discuss the deliver--

[DINGING]

- Tyler.

- Has joined the meeting.

- Sorry, guys. I got cut off. Is Paul here? Send him an invite.

[KNOCKING]

- Put in your access code.

- No, no, no. That's your PIN number.

- It should be a 9-digit number.

- Try pressing the Pound key.

[DINGING]

- Paul.

- Has joined the meeting.

- Any questions before we move on?

- Yes. This is Beth. What's our base plan of attack for the second quarter?

- The question actually--

- Maybe we should do-- Oh, go ahead.

- Oh, go ahead.

- Oh, what I think what--

- Well--

- --we should do is actually--

- It actually depends on how you look at because really--

- --come.

- Go ahead.

- Go ahead.

- Given the sales were at a--

- Let me just say that--

- OK.

- That was a great graph, John. Tyler?

- Well, my main turn with the [AUDIO OUT] objections from [AUDIO OUT] year was that-- they are just insufficient. I mean, they're not even taking into account--

- Did we lose Tyler again?

- Hello?

- John, are you guys taking distributions? John?

- Oh, my bad. I was on mute. Let me start over. So I've prepared a presentation. I'm sharing it with all of you. You should be able to see it on your screen right now.

- Got it.

- I don't see a link anywhere.

- It says I need to download a plug-in.

- We are all using Macs, I'm assuming?

- Yeah.

- Yeah, yeah.

- Yeah.

- How can you--

- Of course.

- Financials are looking great. Paul, do you have any comments on staffing?

- I was thinking about that because we get a few more contractor--

[DOG BARKING]

--types in. Oh, I'm sorry. Rex, get down.

[DOG BARKING]

[FAINT SPEAKING]

[COFFEE MACHINE WHIRRING]

- So if you could really tie that up, then--

- I will.

- To me, the staffing is a huge impact.

- What is that?

- Is that me?

- That's not me, I don't think. I don't think.

- I just want to go over a couple of details as we move into our next section here. We got three new departments coming on--

- Breaking up a little bit, guys.

--by the end of Q3.

- Driving into a dead spot.

- So I need everyone to give me detailed evaluations, each one--

- Later, guys.

--so that we know. That's it, guys. Beth, you'll send out a recap email.

[END PLAYBACK]

CHRISTINE CURTIS: OK. So I think we can all relate. For me in particular, it's the dogs. So this summer, I ended up getting three dogs. And one of them is a giant rough-coated Collie. And she has that big, booming bark, just like in the video.

And on Monday during class time, the dogs are all happily settled with their bones outside. And the neighbor decided to mow his lawn, and you would have thought were World War III broke out. So I had to stop class because they had knocked the fence over to try to attack the lawn mower and come running back in.

So some of those distractions and interruptions, totally get it. I think we can all relate to some extent. The other two are Shelties, in case anyone's wondering.

Now, another component that we see being used pretty consistently in the business world right now is the asynchronous video. And this is predominantly used during the hiring process or in some component of a workplace meeting where you can record things and other people can review them later. So in a classroom setting, if we're doing a global campus class that doesn't have designated lecture times, an asynchronous video would be the platform that we're using. But this is where the individual is going to record a response and then submit them, and they get reviewed at a later time.

So the benefit to this style of video is you can do it pretty much 24/7. People aren't required to be online at a specific time. And you're not going to have to have a whole committee or group of people come online and try to manage time zones and everything else.

The downside is you don't get immediate feedback. So you don't get to read your audience or gauge what's going on, and that can be challenging. Also, many of the asynchronous platforms don't give you the opportunity to review your submission before it's uploaded. So if there's any errors or mistakes, it can be hard to correct them at times.

And this can be used for initial screening. I know Alaska Airlines is using an asynchronous video component. A lot of graduate programs and other large companies are using this for initial

screening for the job interview process or for different review processes, annual reviews and things, or basic issues that don't require an immediate response.

Sometimes with the asynchronous video, a synchronous video may follow. They may want to follow up and schedule something to review in more detail after they've looked at all the components from the team. But that may not be the case. In many instances, the asynchronous video may be comprehensive enough that they don't need to follow up. So for right now, we're seeing a lot more use of synchronous video, but the asynchronous video is gaining in popularity.

So just some basic video logistics, things we are all working on and still trying to perfect at this point in time. Check your technology ahead of time and make sure the video and audio are working. If you don't have a good computer microphone, investing in one is probably a good idea.

I know some of my colleagues have really nice microphones and really cool setups in the office or at their home office, but you don't need that to be able to do a successful video presentation if you don't have the money or the space to set up a really fancy camera and reflector-type scenario. You can do a very effective presentation and participate well with just a microphone, headphones, your webcam. Do the best you can, but make sure it's working ahead of time.

Test out the location with the lighting in the background. Make sure to close out all apps and programs on your computer, especially if you're doing something like a screen share where other people can see what comes through. It's probably a good idea to close out programs so sensitive information isn't shared with the class. And then of course, if it's recorded and posted, they can always find it later, and you'll never live it down.

Silence your cell phone so it's not buzzing by the computer as you're presenting. It's always distracting when you hear the buzz because we all know what that is at this point. And I always say be ready prior to the scheduled time and try to get there early. That way, if you have any technical issues, you can work through them ahead of time.

And finally, ask your roommates, friends, partners, and pets to leave you alone. I imagine working with children can be as difficult as working with pets, in that you tell them to leave you alone, and that means they want to follow you around and do whatever you're doing in that moment. But as best you can, try to minimize those distractions.

So there's another video clip included for you here. This is a "Interview Tips." And he has some pretty cool suggestions. So we're going to go ahead and take a look at that. It's not the same group. So if you hated that group of before, this is a different group that does it. I think he has some pretty good suggestions for making a basic space work well for any type of video recording that you're doing.

[VIDEO PLAYBACK]

- So you're going to be interviewed over Skype and you want to look better than this. Well, here are four easy keys you can apply to look good in Skype interviews.

[UPBEAT MUSIC]

Key one, sound. Having good sound is just as important as having good video. An empty room like this might sound fine to you in normal conversation, but it creates an annoying echo for anyone listening on video, especially if the floor isn't carpet.

Basically, the more stuff that's in the room to deflect the sound the less echo and make sure there's no loud noises, in the background. Loud office conversations, construction, and air conditioner, these will make your interview painful to listen to.

Key two, location. Create a good background. This one is not good. It makes me look like a total slob. This one is too distracting. What's the guy doing back there? And this one? Just make sure you don't have anything embarrassing in the background.

Keep it neat and simple. A white wall is usually too plain, so I set up a bookshelf like this. You could also use a house plant, a lampshade, a piece of art, et cetera. If you're at the office, you can set up a clean desk with a computer in the background.

Now, you're probably using a laptop with a built-in camera or a webcam like this. Notice how the camera is actually several inches below my eyes. So when you're looking through the camera if you angle it at your face, it shows the ceiling. So you want to stack it up on a box like this.

Basically, you want the camera at eye level because this is the way people are used to seeing you. And you want to be a little more than arm's length from the camera so you're about this size in the frame. And you want your eyes to be about 2/3 of the way to the top.

Key three, lighting. Good lighting makes a huge difference. Professional lighting uses four light sources, but you really only need one. If it's daytime, you can just use a window. If it's too bright, pull the shades. You need the window to be pretty much in front of you, not to the side or behind.

Wow, I think I've found the worst interview setup ever.

If it's nighttime and there's no window nearby, grab a lamp. Don't use overhead lighting like this. It makes you look terrible. And definitely don't light yourself from below, unless you're telling scary campfire stories.

What you want is a lamp in front of you, like this one with the lights slightly above the height of your eyes while you're sitting down. Of course, this one is great because I can adjust the levels,

but pretty much any lamp will do. If it's too bright, try moving it back. If it's too dim, just move it a little closer.

Key four, you. Now that everything else is set up, make sure you look good. Dress appropriately, at least on top. You might want to wear makeup. Yeah, even some men do it.

And don't look down at the computer screen while being interviewed. Looked directly at the camera. Now, this might feel a little weird to you at first. But to the people watching, it looks like you're looking directly at them, which is good. And try not to move too much. Even just a few inches back and forth can be really distracting. So to recap, find a quiet place without--

[END PLAYBACK]

CHRISTINE CURTIS: OK, so there are some suggestions that are fairly straightforward and easy enough for us to try to improve the quality of our video recordings or our video interactions as much as possible.

For the atmosphere-- and I have to say, most of these come from personal experiences that I've had working in a public speaking class with 1,200 students a semester-- you can imagine when we have video presentations, the type of things we see. So try to record in a quiet, private room.

I can't tell you how many students have decided to record in bathroom stalls because it's private and they think it's quiet. But the sound quality is bad, and it's always awkward. And so pick a nice, quiet place that would be appropriate to do a recording.

Again, limit the background noise. So fans, TV, other people, phones, radios, pets. Whatever could potentially be a distractor, I try to minimize that as much as possible.

Be conscientious of what is a view of the camera. And specifically for students, sometimes they don't think about what's behind them. Or if they're recording in a new space, they don't think to check the background. But you always want to make sure that it's a professional space for you.

So things that you should not include whether in an academic or professional context. Pictures or posters or partially clothed people. For the guys, it's usually a Playboy picture or a Sports Illustrated photo of some sort. For the girls, those Cosmo magazine foldouts were the ones that we saw for a long time. Those should not be in there at all.

Posters or pictures of drug or alcohol paraphernalia. I always have a couple of students say, well, marijuana is legal now. I guess, but only for people over the age of 21. And if you're federally employed, it's still not legal. And it's not legal in all 50 states. So it's just a better idea not to have it there. Just don't include it.

Actual people that are partially clothed should not be in your video. That's awkward for everyone involved. Actual alcohol or drug paraphernalia, also a very bad idea. It is not appropriate to take a drink out of your beer in a business meeting or in a class recording. That never goes well.

The lighting. Make sure you're in a well-lit room so you're not getting too bright or too dark. And then we always tell our students especially, try to be sitting or standing. If you're reclining in your bed or on a sofa, it's a little awkward. It's not very professional, so try to pick a space where you can be sitting or standing and you're not laying down or reclining.

Now, the other thing I always like to mention for students and for faculty and staff participating. In my classes, I try to establish a dress code as much as possible and give them recommendations, especially in some of my upper division classes where we're working on professional development.

So I like to say, hey, this is what business professional attire is. It'd be a good idea if you can wear it. Every day, not a big deal. But especially if we have guest speakers coming in or something of that nature, I try to build that in.

So appropriate attire would be things like button-up shirts, collared shirts, nice sweaters, things that don't have rips and holes in them. Things that would be appropriate. Slacks, khakis, dresses, skirts, all appropriate. And mini skirts, not so much.

Inappropriate attire. So things you probably shouldn't wear would be sweat pants or gym attire. I also encourage my students not to wear things with big fancy logos in case people have one perspective or another. That first impression can be important. And even if you love that brand, maybe the person you're during an interview that doesn't like it. So I try to tell them to avoid obnoxious brands or logos or things. Try to keep it as straightforward as possible.

Hats and baseball caps, snap backs, and beanies obstruct your face. It's hard to see you. Not a great idea. Yoga pants, jeans, tank tops, t-shirts, bathrobes, bathing suits are all things that are probably not appropriate for a business professional context and for a professional meeting.

On Zoom, I say costumes, unless it's Halloween. If it's Halloween and you guys have an understanding, that's great. But try to keep it as straightforward and professional as possible. I also tell students to avoid big, clanky jewelry that makes noise when you move, only because it can be distracting because they can pick up on that noise as well.

OK, so in summary. So to wrap everything up. So it's important that you begin to establish your professional identity as soon as possible, and that starts the first time you send an email. So think about the way you want to be perceived and how others will perceive you.

And also, be aware of the context that you're sending that email in. Is it appropriate? Is it something you would send a boss or a supervisor? That sort of thing.

So for my students, I tell them to treat every assignment in this class, which, for us, it would be the presentation. But for any class that they're in, to practice their professional communication. So things like email etiquette, appropriate dress and conduct during presentations is all really important, and it's great practice.

In a college environment, in a college classroom, it's a great chance to get a lot of practice with these things and get feedback that you may not get in the workplace. So take advantage of that and use it as an opportunity to get comfortable with either your business professional attire, sending professional emails, professional interactions with professors, advisors, anybody you may come in contact with.

And I also tell students, if they're going to their first interview, always be nice to the people at the front desk. You would be shocked at how many times the committee will come out and say, hey, when they came in, were they polite? Were they rude? Were they disrespectful? And that will feed into that interview.

OK, so that's all that I had prepared. So at this point, I'd be happy to open it up for questions. I think we have a little bit of time left. So I am ready for whatever you've got.

ANDREA JIMENEZ: Awesome. So yeah, like she said, please feel free to leave them in the chat box, or if you want to unmute your mic and ask. I will say, Christine, thank you for the presentation.

But backtracking a little bit, we got a couple of questions regarding email.

CHRISTINE CURTIS: Yeah.

ANDREA JIMENEZ: So one person asks-- so it's two kind of related things. One person asks if emojis are professional. He says, "I used to think they're unprofessional. But lately, I found that emojis provide great context." And similarly, someone asks about inspirational quotes in signatures. So are those two things professional?

CHRISTINE CURTIS: So it depends on the context, but I always think that email can be a little bit cold when it comes across. The way I would say, hi. So "hi, Andrea," in an email always seems a little bit colder via email than it does if you were able to do it face to face.

So in my emails, especially to students, I don't use emojis, per se. But I do use facial expressions with punctuation. So smiley faces and things to kind of break it up and make it less cold or terse. So I don't think it's necessarily unprofessional. I would be hesitant to do it in your first interaction.

So I would get a feel for the climate. If I'm emailing the dean for something and I'm just meeting him for the first time via email, I may or may not include a smiley face. But certainly, I use them

pretty regularly in my correspondence with students and in my course announcements because I do think it breaks it up and makes it feel a little more personal and not so standoffish and cold.

I think you are more approachable. The friendlier the tone of your email comes across, the more likely people are to ask you questions and approach you. But I probably would not use really exuberant, giant emojis that are bigger than the text or the fonts, or bring in GIFs, or Google images until you know the person and you know that that would be appropriate. So I say, yes but put it in a nice [INAUDIBLE] and make sure it still looks nice within the format of the email.

What was the second part of that question? I think I--

ANDREA JIMENEZ: So the second part was inspirational quotes as a signature.

CHRISTINE CURTIS: So I don't think there's a problem with inspirational quotes. But I will say if you are working in a place or you're sending email correspondence and someone needs to find your contact information quickly, some people have signature lines that are paragraphs long, right? They have tons of stuff. And it can be really hard to filter through and find the relevant information.

So if you are going to use an inspirational quote, I would make sure it's a little short. It shouldn't be paragraphs long. But I would make sure it's easy to find your contact information. So phone number, additional email addresses, and that's highlighted the organization you worked for, at times. If you're emailing externally, it would be pretty important.

And if you're going to have it, put it at the bottom at the very end so people can find your contact information first, and then you can have it included. I try to limit it to a couple of lines. So in my signature or my title at the front, it has my position, my department, the university, and then my phone number right there.

I probably wouldn't do too many additional lines other than that. If I'm emailing internally, it may not be relevant to have my department and university included in there. But if you can fit it in, it's not distracting and people can still find your contact information easily, I think it's fine.

ANDREA JIMENEZ: Perfect. Thank you. We also have a couple of questions on how to end an email. So what are some of the best ways? Like, "best wishes" or "thank you?" And what are some of the worst ways?

CHRISTINE CURTIS: So some of the worst ways would be not having any signature at all or casual terms. Like, my students will sign it off and be like, "out." I'm like, wait. What? Is that the end of the email? I don't know what that means.

So my recommendation for signature lines. I don't have a standard one. I tend to personalize it. If I'm interacting with students, it's usually a question like, does that answer all of your questions? Or let me know if you need to follow up.

I think sincerely always goes over well. I have a lot of family members who are attorneys, and it seems like they have things like "cheers" and "best wishes." So it really depends on the area you're in.

I think "sincerely" is always great. I think if somebody has asked you something, just saying, "let me know if you have any more questions" and signing off that way is more than appropriate.

Anything that could be considered slang or unclear like "out," not good. Not great. But something that clearly indicates that it's the end of the message. "Thank you," "sincerely," "let me know if you have any more questions," "let me know if I can help in any way" are great ways to sign off on any of those emails.

ANDREA JIMENEZ: We also had a question. Oh, someone says they received one that said, "later gator." That's interesting.

CHRISTINE CURTIS: So I mean, maybe if you work at Florida, at the university whose mascot is the gator it would be OK. But otherwise, that would be OK. But I can see some of my older friends in their 70s saying that in an email.

ANDREA JIMENEZ: Someone was also asking, when is it appropriate to leave your video on in the same call, or in the class, or in a meeting? When do you think it we should leave it on? Or when do you think we should turn it off?

CHRISTINE CURTIS: So I think it really depends on the faculty member who is setting the expectation for that space. So I know in Murrow, we've been talking a lot about how to improve classroom interaction and engagement. I include in my syllabus a thing that says, in order to get class attendance and participation, you need to have your webcam on during class time.

Now, that doesn't mean they can't get up to go to the bathroom or turn it off to mute it if there's a distraction or something. But at the same time, if we were face to face in a classroom setting, I would be looking at you and making eye contact. So teaching to the void, where I just see black screens, can be really awkward.

So usually, if the expectation is it's a video call, everyone knows there's going to be video. So I would just plan on having your video on. If it's something where it's privacy based or people are uncomfortable, nobody has their video on, then you can probably leave it off. But I would say if it's a classroom setting, it's really helpful for students and faculty members to be able to see who they're interacting with and who they're talking to. So the expectation would be you have your camera on.

Otherwise, if you're unsure, there's never a problem asking, saying, hey, I know this is a Zoom call. Are we going to be doing video or just using it as a bridge or a phone-type scenario? And they'll always let you know. I would say resume stuff that 90% of the time, the expectation will be to have the camera on so you can engage, interact with other people.

ANDREA JIMENEZ: Sounds good. So someone asked if you could please go back to the screenshot of the things that we don't want to be perceived as. I think that was at the beginning of the presentation.

CHRISTINE CURTIS: That I can. Here we go.

ANDREA JIMENEZ: Thank you. And then I also had another question about level of formality in forums. So I'm guessing Blackboard forums, class forums. What do you think the level of formality should be there?

CHRISTINE CURTIS: So usually a discussion forum is going to be a little bit more casual. I use discussion forums for students to interact with each other or provide peer feedback. So it's a little less formal than, say, a class meeting. But it should still be a step above a casual conversation with friends, so somewhere in that medium.

I always think it's better to err on the side of caution and be perceived as more professional instead of too casual. I don't think you'd ever get marked down for being too professional or too polite. So I always try to express to my students if you're giving feedback, especially if you're giving feedback then the other person may not want to hear, as polite as you can possibly do it is the best way to go. And they're going to be a lot more receptive.

I still would not use lowercase. I graded a discussion forum today, and I can't tell you how many people-- it was really casual. When I'm reading it, it looks like a text message. So lowercase Is, lots of slang terms and things in there, improper use of contractions.

I'm like, wait. What is happening? This is a classroom discussion. You're getting graded on it. You're getting points. So I would keep it as polite and professional as possible.

But I will say usually, especially if it's a discussion forum where you're discussing or asked-- I have one class where I ask my students to give us feedback on how the class period went, what they liked, what they didn't like. I would expect that that will be a little more conversational in tone than, say, a written essay. But certainly, a step above a casual conversation with your friends would be a good plan.

ANDREA JIMENEZ: OK. Someone asks if you're in an email but under the CCed line, is it proper to answer that email? So if it's not directed to you, but you are copied on?

CHRISTINE CURTIS: If you have relevant information to add to that conversation, then yes. If you can chime in and provide something that they're looking for, absolutely. If you're just being included as a peripheral or an FYI, you don't need to respond.

But as I was transitioning out of the graduate coordinator role, I'm CCed on a lot of messages. Sometimes I can say, oh, yes. This is where you can find that. We have that. We don't. So replying there is really helpful for the group.

Other times, if it's an email or a notification from the graduate school about something, I'm CCed on it. There's no point in me replying I can't add any useful information. So if you're CCed, and it's a question, and you have the answer, or if they're asking for input, absolutely. If you don't have anything to add for the conversation and there's not an expectation for you to respond, you don't have the answer to their question, then a response wouldn't be necessary.