



"Production: How Do I Execute?"

Transcript

Host/Event: The Learning Guild ~ Virtual Classroom Online Conference

Date: 4.1.20

Recording: <https://www.learningguild.com/online-conferences/content/6191/>

Karen: ... (Participants) have already learned how to use the software tools. If they haven't, then the music can be a bit of a distraction while they scramble to figure out how to use the features of the software. So we like to use that typically after we've already acclimated people to the tools of the interface. Sue, I see your message there and I wouldn't have said that that was typical, but I've seen all kinds of squirrely things happen inexplicably. I also posted a couple of things there in chat, some articles that you might find useful. One of them is specifically about why you might need a producer. And maybe you don't need a producer. Maybe you're very comfortable working online on your own. I've also posted something about working behind the scenes of virtual online events. That was an event that Karyn and I did that went kind of horribly wrong.

And at the last minute we scrambled to put it back. Because it's very very easy to make mistakes. It's very easy to have the technology surprise us, even when we're really comfortable with the software, or thought we were comfortable with the software. So I want to take you through some things today, and I jokingly call this "the magic behind interactive webinars" because the reality is, it is not magic. Or it's magic in the same way that magic shows are magic, in that it's sleight of hand. So we make it look magic because we've done hours and years of preparation. We've got all kinds of backup plans in place so that we can substitute things out – with a moment's notice. But, it's not magic.

So I fear that maybe I have given people sort of the wrong impression about how easy this is. So even after 20 years of doing this, I'm kind of good at it, but I wouldn't say that it's easy. And I still get very nervous about it. I still plan based on the deep paranoia that drives me. So as you're looking at this screen, notice that I'm endeavoring to inform you about the software tools that are available inside Adobe Connect, and yes, indeed, we're using Adobe Connect a lot today, talking about it a lot, because this is the tool we use. So we've lived in this software product for many years, and when we run our online events here at the Guild, this is what we use. Plus, we're in it right now; it's much more challenging to talk about tools that you're not logged into. So we're using this tool and talking about this tool as a sample.

But as you saw in the second session today, there are many other products on the market. I'm a fan of this one because it has a good feature set and allows me to support the type of training that I want to do live and online. And you can see that my webcam is displaying, I'm joining you here from my home near Rochester, NY, but I'm going to take the pressure off of the video and just smile and pause there so that I can relax and not feel like I have to look into the camera. It also might be bogging down my audio for some folks. So if you're on a great

network connection, you maybe don't notice that the software can behave in a sluggish way. But sluggish means the slides don't update or audio is choppy or the chat text disappears.

I'm going to be talking in the context of production in Adobe Connect, but the lessons are relevant to any tool that you use. So if you're using the mobile app, your tools are not exactly the same as they look in the classroom version or in the built-in version of that, so take a look around your screen and make sure that you're comfortable with where the resources are so that you can click on things as you need to.

And as we get things underway here, I do want to invite you to respond to a poll, and this poll is just going to be a little bit different than the one I showed earlier, but this is one that I would recommend everyone use, whenever you teach online. And the reason I recommend you use this is because our participants have already been trained that when you log in to a webinar, it's a perfect time to multitask. I need to undo that. I need to un-teach them that that's what live online sessions are like.

So I want to point out that we're going to be using the software tools of this interface and it's my expectation that you'll participate, but I'm not going to make you participate. It's pretty hard to control you even when I'm there in person, it's a lot harder to control you from over here. So instead I'm going to ask you just to control yourself, and recognize that there is no such thing as multitasking. If you think you're multitasking, you're really slowly swapping tasks. And the brain doesn't work really well that way. So, better to stay focused and stay engaged, and I appreciate everybody's willingness to play in my reindeer games.

Yes, Rebecca, absolutely, people say no, and that's fine. You're grownups; you get to make whatever decisions you want about how much you're going to engage. But I'd just like to know where I stand. So if my expectation is that you're going to participate and then you don't, that's tough to get through the content. If you come to my classroom physically, my expectation is that you are going to participate, and I can use my little trainer techniques to make you participate in a face-to-face setting. But online, I'm really asking you to comply with my ground rules.

So this is what I have to cover – cover is kind of a weird word, I'm just going to talk really fast for an hour, because that's what webinars are like. I see some messages coming in there. Yes all of this content will be posted: recordings, handouts, everything.

And I don't have it to hand just now, so you'll have to wait for Karyn to paste something – thanks Karyn. So show agree – that is, use your Hand Raise menu to show agree or disagree if you've ever taught or learned in a classroom like this one – a face-to-face classroom where people are sitting there, facing forward.

I see a lot of people are clicking Hand Raise, which is not the same as agree. So dig a little deeper under that Hand Raise menu and notice there are other choices. Ali, yes, Adobe does have a tool that shows me who's participating and who's not, but it's a bit of a false positive. It can tell me that people are looking at my screen or not, but doesn't really tell me if they're engaged. So I don't tend to rely on that, but it is a feature.

So I have taught in a classroom just like this one, in fact that's me right there. I used to live in a face-to-face classroom when people were first learning to click and double-click. And in this public training center, I would work in a classroom with up to 16 students, and if there were more than 8, I would have a facilitator as well.

So if I look like I have things under control in this face-to-face classroom on the left, know that there was somebody helping out in the back. And if something really went wrong, like the network went down, or the projector bulb went out, I could call IT and someone would come running and solve that problem. So the idea of

having a helper in the room is definitely not new. It's something that we were doing over 30 years ago. But when we get online, people assume that somehow it's just easy.

Right? Because we're all used to working at our desks and we can manage our software, etc. And maybe that's true. Maybe you don't need any help. In fact, one of the links that I posted in chat is the "[Expert's Guide to Presenting Solo in a Virtual Classroom.](#)" There's a really good chance that you can present solo, but just know that it's difficult. So if somebody says to you "Well, why can't you just – ?" Well, because it's just not that easy.

So if you're familiar with teaching in a classroom like the one I'm showing you here on the right, where you've got multiple computers logged in, cameras, multiple keyboards, multiple mics, that's where I'm joining you from right now. So, it still is a classroom to me, I just don't see my students. And there's a ukulele. "So vintage" thanks – yeah great.

Actually, many of you might be working from something like my makeshift workspace. Working from home can be challenging. I've got the yearbooks and the encyclopedias stacked up there to provide my elevation of my machines. I've got a leaf from the dining table as my keyboard tray with some DVDs underneath there. So you might be dealing with sort of a makeshift situation, which makes it really even more difficult. In this particular scenario, you can see that I'm logged in on two different computers, which I would always recommend, especially if you're presenting alone, because you heard me in the last – in session 2, I just lost connectivity for just a second. And it was enough to hang up the software interface, so I needed to really reach over to the other machine to advance my slides.

So do log in on two separate machines, ideally with two different network connections. Make your main machine your wired connection, and let your backup machine be on a wireless, like your phone as a hotspot connection. On two different connections, you're covering your bases. Something goes wrong with the hardware, you're covered. Something goes wrong with the network, you're covered. Ideally you have two microphones, two headsets, two everything so that if something goes wrong, you'll be covered. And I operate from a deep and appropriate place of paranoia.

After 20 years online, I have seen disasters that would curl your hair. So usually it's me that everybody's looking to when those disasters happen, like "Oh, Karen will fix it." So the other day I was in a session and everybody was expecting Karen to fix it and I didn't know what to do – I couldn't fix it. So we started anyway, and it was fine, but it's nerve-wracking. And then when you add on to that the fact that the interface itself has lots of things – and depending on the software product you're looking at, the things float around freeform on the screens, and it can be hard to know which monitor to look at or what the participants are seeing.

Connie, we've moved through slides here, so if you're still seeing the same slide, you might want to jump out of the session room and jump back in again to refresh. So we've been playing in Adobe Connect all day, and again this is the tool that we primarily use here at the Guild. I'd like to take a minute just to have you type in chat the features that you've learned about related to Adobe Connect. Like, what are the tools or the menu items or the interactive elements that you've seen us using here in Adobe? Go ahead and type in the left side chat. I saw a logged-in-as-facilitator question there; we can log in as many times as we want in this software, and we can have as many hosts as care to be hosts.

We can also have a downgraded version of host – presenter – who can do almost anything, but can't move pods. Having multiple hosts means we have to get our stories straight and make sure that I know that I'm going to be moving the poll pod, or Mel knows that she's going to be moving the poll pod. Because if we are working, trying to

do the same thing together, the first click will open it and the second click will close it, so we need to be very cautious that the players know who's doing what, when.

And we're going to talk about that more as we go, so you've got lots of excellent answers in here, so multiple polls, multiple chats, annotation tools, yup Christopher we do have that, breakout groups, Kathy's mind is blown, yup you can have multiple hosts. You can have co-hosts in Zoom and alternate hosts or panelists in WebEx, but in WebEx, the person who holds the ball is the person who controls the world. Yeah, it's a dance and sometimes we're not very good dancers. We're like kindergarteners dancing back here, but it looks smooth to you.

So thanks for filling in those things. I've got my pre-baked souffle here, because I always wonder if I'm going to get all the answers I wanted, but I wanted to show you what my list looked like. So of course, there's all these different things that you could be doing in Adobe or whatever other software product you're using, and if you're really confident and you've got plenty of time and your head is screwed on straight and the software is working well and there's no troubleshooting to deal with, teaching online could be easy. Especially if none of those pesky students log in – because once the students are there, they complicate things a lot. So the idea of teaching online is easy until you actually get there, and then, somehow, it's less easy.

So if your manager or your team leader or your client is saying to you “Can't ya just – ?” or “Why don't ya just do a webinar?” You know “What's the big deal?” And I think the thinking is you're going to just rock up to the microphone and go for it, and it's going to be good.

And I fear that students have learned that face-to-face training was good, and online training is bad, just by nature. But I spent a lot of years in a classroom, I promise you there was loads of face-to-face training that was bad. There was just nobody there to call it out.

So when we get online and we do kind of what was done before, it doesn't translate, it doesn't convert well. Because we need more instructions. And we need to micro-script our instructions to the participants so that they can be clear on what's supposed to happen. And most facilitators don't just roll out of bed one day and figure out how to do this. So, be gentle with your facilitators and recognize that, no, you can't just because there's like two thousand steps.

This is a picture of me skydiving. So on this day, I was annoyed that even though I was tandem jumping – right, there's a professional who I was going to be clicked to or attached to – I was annoyed that I had to go through two hours of training before I jumped out of a plane. That seems excessive. But the reality is, would you want to jump out of a plane without any preparation? I don't recommend it. You would have no idea what to do if anything went wrong. I would say the same about teaching online. You *could* jump out of that plane. But what's the cost?

So, I want you to type in chat for me anything you can think of that are obstacles to using tools like this one to meet your outcomes – not just “show up,” not just “chalk and talk,” but really achieve learning outcomes. That's a whole different ballgame. I'm not talking about a webinar here: I'm talking about real training with tangible outcomes. What are the obstacles?

Right, people are multitasking, it's hard to keep engagement, the speed is an issue, people can't practice, I can't walk around behind people like I did in the physical classroom. I've had people say to me “my students won't do any pre-work. If I send them the email ahead of time that's prework, they refuse to do it.” It's like, how can you log in here if you don't know how to set up your equipment? If you don't know you need a headset? If you don't know to install the app? If you don't know to plug into a wired connection? So you're just going to rock up and

hope that it works? Unfortunately, that doesn't work. People have terrible experiences with live online, and we're giving them more bad examples.

So when you start to think about how the tools work inside the software itself – no matter what tool you're using, whether you're using some kind of web browser sharing – you want to show them a website, or you want to show them audio clips or have them indicating with green check mark and red x or yes or no. Or you want to have them use notes, or read your notes, or use breakout groups where they can go out and work in teams.

All of those things require setup and planning and instructional design considerations that I highly, highly doubt your facilitators know how to even begin to do. They think they're going to take their slides from their classroom version and they're just going to share them, and then they're just going to read the slides to the audience. What do you think about that?

Probably not ideal, and if you're going to do that, you know what, just make a recording and let the recording be available to people. If you really want people to engage in a live online at an awkward time of day or night, it ought to be engaging, to make it really worth them being there. To make it worth them going through all the hoops that they had to go through in order to get logged in live.

So I have to say I resent it kind of a lot when people will say, "Oh yeah, can you log in at this time?" and then the whole thing is just chalk and talk. Or show up and throw up. Or spray and pray. Like, I didn't need to be here live in order to hear you do this lecture. So let's make it so it's purposeful and so that we have engagement that is relevant, and that the setup of that engagement is going to facilitate the outcomes that we're going for.

So when you think, "Well, why don't you just – ?" Because the design for virtual requires that you consider all of these five areas, including who is doing what when. And where are all these files going? Michelle, you like that? So, it's not just that easy to say you're going to show up and talk through it. And it wasn't that easy face to face either. But for some reason, we put a lot more resources there, we had helpers, we had equipment, we had courseware, and somehow now we think logging in and showing slides is enough. It isn't.

And the tools require setup. The participants need to know what tools they're expected to use. Or if they're expected to use them. We need to know that the facilitator has confidence in managing this.

My friend Beth Walker Wooten ramped up to deliver online. And she said initially she was really disappointed that the training was going to change so much. That she could not rely on what she was used to relying on, which was reading people's facial expressions, even their sighing and laughing and grunting and whatever other sounds students make we rely so much on that. And Beth said, "First, I had a little pout. And then I got on with it. Because I realized I had to adapt."

A lot of facilitators, they don't want to adapt. They liked it how it was before. So, getting them sold on this might mean you need to put some help in the room with them, so they're not actively managing or juggling multiple things at a time. I'm juggling right now because my slides won't advance so I had to reach over to my other computer.

Even something as simple as how people are going to respond is open for question. For instance, in this software interface, we have selected to not give you microphones. We know we don't have time to take questions and field questions and take specific participants' stories. And with six or seven *hundred* people logged in, it's just not possible. But in a regular class with 15 people, sure you'd want to turn on microphones, that makes great sense.

Especially if you're doing role plays or you want people to be able to tell their own anecdotes. Or talk about what it is that they're seeing on their screens as they're keying along with the facilitator.

So it's important to determine how people are going to communicate and what are the resources that are going to be set up. I find that, by default, participants and facilitators assume that cameras and mics are the number one thing for success. And I'm going to tell you – they're not. You haven't had your camera or mic on all day. And I suspect you're actually following along and keeping up, for the most part. So if you're told that cameras and mics are crucial to success, push back on that. Because just getting people's microphones connected and working is a *thing*. Just getting people's cameras working and stable and not making their audio choppy is a *thing*. So, let's not prioritize those things as our primary ways of communication. There's all these other ways of communicating; we just have to use them effectively.

But again, facilitators don't really do it themselves. In fact, my facilitators are afraid of polls. They find that just what you're seeing on screen right now, bringing up this poll, then stopping the poll or ending the poll and then showing the results is enough to spike their anxiety. So if I say, OK, I'll be your producer, I'll help out behind the scenes, you just have to talk about the stuff. Or call me, and say, "Hey Karen, can you bring up that poll?" or "Hey Karen, can you broadcast the results?" or "Hey Karen, can you make that poll pod go away now?" My usual reminder to them is, I'm the youngest of six children, I'm used to just being ordered around, I don't care – you can tell me anything, I'm just standing by with my mouse finger hovering, waiting to do whatever it is you need me to do.

And that's reassuring because there's so many technical considerations. There's hardware, there's software, there's video, there's audio, there's the question of whether I'm uploading or application sharing. Like, do I upload a PowerPoint, or do I just share my whole desktop and show you PowerPoint? For me, my preference would be to upload, because then the file already lives in the cloud. So when you're going to get the file, you're accessing it from the cloud. When I'm application sharing, I'm broadcasting up to the cloud first, and then you're pulling that down, so inherently slower. Rather than try to talk over all the things on screen, I'm just going to build this whole slide and have you just read these.

If you have comments, please type in chat. It's excellent to see that someone in our list is serving as producer to somebody else – that's a great way to do it. You might even just borrow somebody from the help desk. Or borrow somebody from the team to just get you up and running. Because sometimes it's just getting over that first hurdle of getting participants logged in and getting things started that facilitators are intimidated by. But there's all these other factors.

And Mel and I love to say "It's not about the tool, it's about the instructional design." If you think back, teachers when I was a kid used chalk. So it wasn't about the tool, right? You could do a lot with chalk. Or with markers or with paper. But in our case, it is about the tool. Because the tool is the modality. The tool is the classroom. So if you came to my public training center back in 1993, the rooms were air conditioned, there was electricity, there were lights, there were tables and chairs, right? All of that had to be established. And here, you're looking at it. This is my room. Here are my tables and chairs.

So I'm counting on other people, participants themselves and facilitators to manage the resources here. And if you can't manage the resources, then you can't get any further. So, it isn't really about the instructional design here, it starts with the functionality of the tool. And if the tool doesn't do what you want it to do, or you don't know how to make it do what you want to do, it's a showstopper. If the instructional designer has designed it for some other tool, and now you're trying to run it in a different tool, which happens a lot, it was designed for

WebEx, now we're using Skype for business. Well, you know WebEx was a state-of-the-art virtual classroom tool for like 20 years. Skype for business is a glorified conference calling tool. So sure, you can make it work, you just won't be able to do all the things that you thought you could do.

So I want you to keep in mind that it takes multiple steps to pull something together. So when your stakeholders or your managers or your clients say "Can't the facilitator just – ?" meaning "Wouldn't it be easy for them to just throw up their PowerPoints and talk?" Maybe. But is that what you're going for? Is that all you need?

But what's at risk, really? What happens if you get into a room like this and the facilitator can't manage? What would you do then? Go ahead and type in chat and I'm going to breathe for a minute. Hot mess. And ugh. And chaos. And reputation, and nothing good. And these days, you know today in the climate that we're in right now, we are really setting the precedent for what we do online. So if a whole bunch of unprepared people have a hot mess online, learners start to think "This is like a poor man's version of real training. How am I ever going to get through this?" So it doesn't *have* to be. Mel and I teach online all the time. With legitimate content and facilitators and students from around the world.

Years ago I did a program with American Management Association called "Fundamentals of Finance and Accounting" – 12 hours of content spread out over 4 weeks, three hours a week. You might be thinking, "Wow, that sounds excruciating" It was FANTASTIC. It was EXCELLENT. We used Adobe Connect, we used breakout groups, the breakout activities were incredibly challenging. It can work equally well. It's not about the tool. It's about the instructional design. (Except when it's about the tool.)

So without support, facilitators do this "here's my pre-baked souffle" in case nobody answers. So a lot can go wrong. And for their sake, it's really challenging to do this alone. There's a lot to look at, there's a lot to manage, there's technical issues that can go wrong that need to be addressed. And with hundreds of people logged in in this case, there's no way I could have troubleshoot anybody's issues here. I'm trying to present.

So – I love this graphic – so we really want to help the facilitator stay focused. So here's some things that might be easy for the facilitator to do, right? Upload the slides and present and advance the slides and maybe set up some activities, bring in polls and things like that and talk over the instructions. Ideally, they're scripted so they know what words to use. And they should be able to facilitate the discussions based on what participants are saying verbally or typing in chat or responding in the polls. But all these other things need to happen too. Maybe your presenter or facilitator can handle those things on their own, and maybe they can't.

So my advice to you is look at this checklist. And think about "Can the presenter do it? Can the presenter do it quickly?" They might be able to do it, their skill level might be at that level that they can handle it, it's not a difficult thing to do, but to be able to do it in the context of real time troubleshooting is challenging. It's challenging for me too.

So I want to ask you to make some checklists for me. So I'm going to pop over here to this view where I've got some chat pods. And you can see that the layout has completely changed to now include 5 chat pods. If you're on a mobile device, I apologize, this looks a little weird to you, you will need to go to the chat menu on the left side and toggle from one to the other of these 5 chat pods. So my questions are around checklist items. If you're creating a checklist around the technology, what things might you have to do beforehand? What about during? So use the pods on the left. What about the presenter or trainer or facilitator, whatever name you call them by – what do they have to prepare in advance? What about the participants, or the learners? What are they going to

need to know or do in advance. And at the bottom – the content and materials – what needs to change? Or, where does that stuff need to go?

I see loads of answers coming in right now, and it warms my heart because to me this is what participation looks like. So I'm not hearing you sigh, I'm not hearing private conversations being whispered in the back, I'm not hearing people comment, I have to stop and read what you're writing. So all those cues, those that things I'm used to in the physical classroom, that validate or help me validate, don't exist here. So I'm counting on you to give me feedback by typing in chat.

If you're not typing in chat it's hard for me to notice that you're absent, but remember at the beginning I asked you to participate and part of it is because I can't make you. You need to choose to. If what we're doing here would be important for some kind of course completion – CEUs or otherwise, I'd want to include more poll or quiz style questions so I could run reports on that and see who had been participating. All of these things can be saved. You can do a CTRL+a to select all inside each of these pods. Or, if you're logged in as yourself, you can send chat text messages to yourself. So just to summarize what we're seeing here as far as technology goes, ahead of time, we need to of course set up the room, set up the pods, create a URL, invite people.

Inside the session, we're opening pods, we're using our microphones, we're changing layouts here in Adobe Connect, we're changing from one view to the next to see pre-configured pods. If you were using WebEx, you might be toggling from one uploaded file to another uploaded file. If you were using GoTo or Zoom, you might stop application sharing one file or one application and start application sharing something else. As far as the participants go, we need to really teach them what to expect. What it is that we think they should be doing online and how they can prepare their setup, their local network connection, their local hardware and software, their headset and mic if necessary. I know people who are using their phones – they're on a smartphone and they're trying to attend the training while they're commuting, I've had students who were on an airplane and logging into the session from 30,000 feet.

So, I can't know what your connection is – maybe you tell me in advance – but it's really up to you to make those things workable on your end. But I need to frontload that. I need to communicate that days and weeks in advance, not minutes in advance. In fact, for participants, I like to buffer the start time. So "log in at 3:45 for an on-time start of 4:00" Everybody knows what's going to happen in those 15 minutes, we're going to hassle around with audio, we're going to wait for people to get connected, we're going to troubleshoot things and then finally we can start at the top of the hour. If you don't buffer that start time, you will burn 10-15 minutes doing those things anyway. So people often express frustration, we can never start on time because everybody's hassling around with the audio and the connection. Yup. So start early. You're not going to overcome those things just with the wave of a magic wand.

And as far as content and materials, much of your content should be adapted in some way for online. If you thought you were going to ask an open-ended question, put it right on the slide. If you thought you were going to ask quiz or poll style questions, you've got to create those ahead of time. If you thought you were going to show videos, you might want to compress the files ahead of time – or post them elsewhere in the world so that people can access them from a public facing website instead of through the bottleneck that is our software tool right here. And I tend to add 50% more slides to my PowerPoint deck because I add a slide for absolutely everything. If I'm going to ask a question or give instructions, I want some redundancy. If participants didn't hear what I said, maybe at least they can see what I said.

OK, I'm going to change screens and I was not able to acknowledge each question and everybody's comments there but I do appreciate your willingness to fill in there, and I'm going to work to get those lists posted later, because those checklists are going to become crucial to success. Not only having a checklist, but making sure everybody involved is checking off the items on that checklist each and every time. So it doesn't really matter how successful we were last time, that has nothing to do with next time. The only thing that impacts next time is our setup, our preparation, and our plan b strategies. So you might say "Hey my internet was great yesterday!" Doesn't mean anything. "Hey, I was able to upload the file yesterday!" Doesn't mean anything. So, we really need to be in tune – tuned in with the fact that everything will go wrong all the time. And if you're prepared for that, then you're good. If you think things won't go wrong, you will be surprised.

So here's my precooked checklists. And this text is very tiny, so you might choose to use that little full screen button in the top right corner of your share pod. Up and to the right of the PowerPoint slides, but really I just have what you had cooked up earlier. And I have it pre-populated here with animations so that I could reveal this a little at a time. But really we're just talking about looking at each and every area to confirm that all the checklist items are checked off. All the t's are crossed and all the i's dotted, because when they're not, you end up in a situation like "Huh, I thought I was going to show a poll here, but pfft I forgot to make the poll." Or "Ooh, I forgot to turn on the poll functionality in the Zoom backend settings." So there's all kinds of things that can surprise you if you haven't gone meticulously through your checklist.

So herein lies the Ros to your Frasier or the Mel Chambers to your presentation, and that is, the producer. The person there in the center of things making sure the technology and the content and the presenter and the participants are all doing what they need to be doing. And when the presenter needs help, they're the go to person. And when the participant needs troubleshooting assistance, they're the go to person. You could operate without a producer, I do so kind of a lot, but again, the risk is what you want to worry about here. What would it mean if the facilitator couldn't handle it? Would they not be able to achieve the learning objectives? Would they not be able to end on time? Would they waste everybody's time? Would the presenter or facilitator want to give up on this style of training and say it can't be done? So there's a lot at risk here if things go wrong and the presenter feels like it's their fault and there was no support for them.

I didn't mention this in session 2, and I meant to, I'm sorry I didn't mention it there earlier, but one of the things we have working for us here in this software is something called the "presenter only area" I'm going to show that again. So you folks see this display area but we who are logged in as hosts and presenters also see this space over here, believe it or not, called the Presenter Only Area and this is one of the reasons that I like Adobe Connect better than other tools. I'm not being paid by them, but I have used this tool every day for 15 years and I've used many other tools too. And this is one of the reasons I like it.

The presenter only area lets us have a private conversation off to the side that you don't have. So I can communicate with my team members, and I'm just going to pull this over here and embarrass us for a second. Here's our presenter chat, this is what we've been talking about without you. I'll move that back over to the side. We have our notes, so if I need to quickly paste something into chat, I can grab it from my notes over here. And we use these tools called "paste-ables" which are not really a tool at all, it's just pre-written text so if I'm wanting to give troubleshooting instructions to somebody, I can't type that and talk clearly. I can just copy and paste it into chat though. So we use this right side chat and right side note area constantly. We stage our polls. We bring up video pods. We have everything sitting off to the side. Yep it is good for one person too. It's kind of like being off stage in a theater. You don't know that I have a giant dragon off stage over here. But in just a minute it's going to come on stage and you're going to see that.

So the presenter only area helps us to communicate with each other and within that presenter only area, I also have this thing called a layout bar. And layouts are like what you've seen me use here where I pop from one configuration of pods to another configuration of pods with just a single click. Remember in session 2 I talked about "bit-twiddling" and there comes a time that I have to log into the session interface and put all these boxes in their places. And give them each a name in the title bar. Well, somebody's got to take care of that and somebody's got to set that up, but I would rather do it days in advance than do it while I have a live audience watching. So I can pop from one layout to another layout and show you information very quickly and easily without having to stop to drag or open pods. I'm just clicking on the layouts that show me the different pre-populated pages.

And this kind of works like your smartphone or your tablet, where you have maybe all of your certain kind of apps in one place and then you move to another layout and you have all your other kind of apps there. So here are some things that I have pre-populated. This is a layout that's really just my inventory of stuff here in Adobe Connect. So I've got these pods that I can come back to session after session and clear out the data and reuse these if I need to. We talked in session 2 about the idea of having a closed captioning person or someone asked about live translation. I can have a separate pod set for the captioner to be typing in. Up here in the top right, you see that I have a timer that lets me really keep track of where we are in the break time or in the overall meeting time. And this video you saw earlier in session 2.

So, I could organize this all ahead of time and make it very easy to pop back and forth from one session to the next. And if I were presenting alone, that would certainly make it easier. But the learning curve on this is kind of steep. New facilitators are intimidated by having all these moving objects on the screen. Once they get used to it, they learn to like it, but in the meantime, they are overwhelmed by the idea that things are going to move around on the screen, and they're afraid to do something wrong, which you know, with good reason. So the producer can be the person who flattens that learning curve and says "Listen, you don't need to know how all this stuff works, we're going to set it all up together and I'll bring it to you or I'll bring the group to the location when needed. Or I'll bring up the poll pod when needed.

But we don't need to teach you everything about the software first." Hey Mel, could you do me a favor and click on S4 there on the right side, my mouse is sluggish. Nope still not moving back to S4, Mel can you click on that button on the right, are you able to? Ah, here we go.

So again what we just experienced there was a little throughput problem. Exactly the kind (*audio drops*) That's exactly the kind of thing that I need help from a producer for. If I did not have somebody to call out to, there might be a couple hundred people waiting for me to move the slides and I can't. So unless one of them was upgraded to presenter or host, they wouldn't be able to help me. So in order to create these layouts, I'm really just using this menu item within Adobe Connect to tell it that I want to create a new page like this and then once I go to that page, I can create all the pods I need.

And one of the things that you might consider doing – OK I'm getting some (*audio drops*) One of the things you might consider pre-creating are breakout room layouts. If you're used to using breakout rooms in WebEx or in Zoom or GoTo Training, you can send people to subgroups, but you can't actually set those rooms up. Here in Adobe Connect, I can create breakout groups that have content in them already. So that allows me to have a little bit more flexibility in how things are set up. Yeah it looks like my connection is just a little sluggish here, I'm now driving with my secondary machine.

So when you think about the producer's role, I just want to go through this kind of quickly and show you that there are several things that the producer maybe would be responsible for. Somebody who provides that framework to be a coach and to help people understand what it is that can be done or should be done. Then to streamline and help them to not worry about all the extra things that they don't need to be worried about. So I'll move the pods. I'll move the layouts. Here's some tips and shortcuts.

But I leave it to the facilitator to just master the basic functions and avoid those rookie mistakes. Like, you don't need to have everybody's mics on. You don't need to have your webcam on all the time. Then, simplify. I might offer some tutorials at the beginning. I might troubleshoot behind the scenes for the facilitator. They don't need to be doing that. I can make sure that the facilitator looks and sounds good by doing practice sessions early and address any technical issues before we get to the live session. And this is days or weeks in advance. Not minutes in advance.

And then of course to have that person standing by, even if there's just a helper there for the first 15 or 20 minutes of a live session, that's when the bulk of the trouble happens as participants are trying to join. And then to solve problems as they come up. So if I'm struggling just to make the video play or just to make application sharing play, it's nice to have a partner that I can say "you know, what? Why don't you advance the slides?" or "Why don't you bring up the video?" because I'm not able to.

So consider the role of the producer is really to make the facilitator look good. To make the facilitator feel more confident. To take the pressure off the facilitator to be everything to everybody. I find it's very difficult to read chat and give a clear verbal message. I can't operate my menus at the same time as delivering a clear verbal message. I can't manage time and troubleshoot everybody's technical issues. So in order for me to be successful, I need to be able to offload or delegate a bunch of those things.

Now, Mel and I have both mentioned the idea of having a plan "b" and even a plan "c" in place. I've gone as far as plan "d" a couple of times. But if you assume everything will go right every time, you will be surprised because there will be many things that go wrong. So you might think "Oh, we can use voice over IP audio, right? No big deal. If the audio doesn't work, we'll just... we'll go to the conference call, right? We'll just use a conference call number." Great! Is that connected to the room? Or is that a separate number? What's- What's the phone number? What's- What's the PIN code there? Are you an owner of that? Do you have the owner pin?

If you don't have all those things at your fingertips and ready to paste in chat, you do not have a plan b. You just have a good idea. Follow that all the way through to the end so that you have a document, like those paste-ables. You've got something ready and in place so that if you did need to punt and go to plan b, you're in a position to actually do that in a few seconds. You might want to print out your slides ahead of time. For me, I have a second monitor, so my PowerPoint lives on the second monitor and I can see my speaker notes there. If you don't have a second monitor, paper is going to be a good way to work.

Or even if your tablet or your other device could be your visual aid to let you see your speaker notes. And you might want to share that PowerPoint out, send it in advance, put it on a public facing intranet or internet so that participants can go and get the PowerPoint if they run into trouble. Then, do login on a second computer or even a tablet or a smartphone. It's better to have something else logged in. Because if I lost connectivity completely, at least I could say "be right back." But if I'm completely disconnected then what am I doing? Looking up people's phone numbers and trying to call them to tell them I'll be right back? That doesn't work.

And Deb, I think if you need to convince somebody, just let the facilitator crash and burn in front of a live audience and that will convince them. That's how most of us got convinced. Do recruit a co-presenter. If there's two people presenting and one person's audio goes out, and the other people can pick up? Terrific. And do share that contact information as a team, we tend to use WhatsApp or another tool so that if the software itself, if the network, if the internet fails, we can at least be typing to each other "be right back!"

So assume everything will go wrong all the time and plan accordingly. With video, it is possible to show video within the construct of your virtual classroom in most cases. But, if participants are having a hard time connecting to that session room, to that virtual classroom, can they get at YouTube? Can they get at the intranet? Might you have posted it someplace like Wistia so anybody can get it any time? That can be helpful.

Of course, it's really important to have people's connections working well. Without a headset, a microphone, a strong network connection, without muting your ringers and

other things in the background, you're just sort of inviting common, typical problems. So we do encourage presenters to use a wired headset, and wired network connection. Because wireless is inconsistent. Period. That's it.

Do set up redundancies. Which means, your computer and your network connection and your audio should all have a backup. Ilana, yeah I've had people put the call on hold. If I can mute their mics, that's terrific. If not, we all have to hang up and dial back in again.

So I'm a huge fan of plan b and I do think a lot about how we would handle things if the main reason, or main thing we were going to do wasn't going to work. So if we thought "OK, we're going to use breakout groups." But the breakout groups are going to take 20 or 25 minutes. In the absence of 20 or 25 minutes to spare, I might come up with some secondary solutions for breakouts. For instance, I could have paired chats, where participants pick a partner and use private chat to type to each other. That's kind of like breakouts and it only takes a few seconds to set it up. But there are a few other plan b items on here that I just want you to take a look at. So I'm going to build this animation and let you read that while I reboot.

Mel: And while we're waiting for Karen to reboot, I'm just going to jump in here too and see what on the Plan B checklist really may be jumping out at you that sort of like "I never thought of that before as a Plan B" If you see anything on the list, maybe type it in chat. Yeah private chats for paired breakouts, absolutely. Having alternate activities, so I'll share real quick – oh Karen's back on so I don't want to take up her time, I know she's down to the minute, so I was going to share a story on that, but I'll give it back to Karen.

So Karen, I was asking them what they saw on this Plan B checklist that was maybe an "Aha!" for them or something maybe they hadn't thought of before.

Karen: Excellent job, it's almost as if we planned that.

Mel: Indeed. If only.

Karen: It's just one of the hard cold facts. So when people are complaining about virtual sessions not going well, that's what they're complaining about. Somebody lost connectivity. Yup. It's really, really common.

So we're not teaching our instructional design workshop multi-day program here, but if you were to attend that program, know that we talk a lot about planning and one of the tools we use for planning is a storyboard. And in this case the storyboard is really just an excel spreadsheet, but you can see that the things I'm obsessive compulsive about are things like "Did people do the prerequisite thing? How are we having them interact with things? What is the facilitator saying? What needs to be set up in advance? What questions are being asked? How are they responding to those questions?" That's response method. And intended responses lets me sort of check my question to make sure it's going to give me the right answer. But I've already also included Plan B as part of the storyboard. So if Plan A fails, what will we design and set up so that it is there – not that we have to invent it in the moment – because when the moment comes you won't be able to do it. Too much pressure, not enough gray matter functioning.

So when you're struggling, you're not going to come up with great solutions to this. Mel showed you earlier an example of a facilitator guide and the facilitator guide should include the producer tasks as well. Remember when Mel showed you this earlier? She pointed out that without a producer, the facilitator has to do this stuff and this stuff. Which, maybe they're capable of doing, but you might need to allow a little bit more time. Time for them to stop and get their bearings and do the software setup stuff as well as catch their breath and take a sip of water. So again it's a lot to ask people to juggle all that's going on on screen at one time.

There's a tool that I use a lot called Speedtest and I was using one called Bandwidth Place which kept a history of the network tests that you had done. But this is very informative. When you look at this – and in fact, you should be able to click – yeah if you click on the http part of this link you can see your mouse pointer change to a hand, and this is an external self-test that allows you to see what your throughput really is. If you're looking at anything less than 2.0 Mbps, you are in trouble. You are not going to be able to talk. So something that slow, you wouldn't be hearing somebody's audio. Their audio would be choppy. If their download is less than 2.0, they're not hearing you. So it's important to check this. You have a similar thing here in Adobe Connect, in the top right corner, to the right of the word "help" – you might be seeing a green bar chart – if you see that, you can click it and it'll give you some information about your latency and you up and down speed. That can be useful too, but only if you're logged into Connect.

So I like to run the speed test a few times the day of and the day before the session, and if I know that my connection is iffy, maybe there's some network status outage problems, I might need to physically go someplace else to get to a better network connection. It is not helpful to say "It was fine yesterday." Yesterday has nothing to do with today.

Remember we talked about pasteables. Whether this is a Word document or whether it's living in a note pod off to the side in the presenter only area, having those micro-instructions ready to paste for your participants at any moment is kind of handy. Because I can't easily type clear messages while I'm also teaching. So if you can, you're way better at this than I am. But I'm not even that great a typist to begin with. So trying to type with the pressure on isn't helpful. Do what in Zoom, guest? See what your bandwidth speed is? I'm not sure. No, well you could use Word. Just use any text document and write down all the micro-instructions you might have to give to the participants throughout the live session. There is no presenter only area in WebEx. So I realize we're short on time here so there's a couple things I want to wrap up with.

One is I'd like to know what techniques you're able to take away from this session and use or share with someone?

We use this one a lot. It's crucial that you plan and practice and know the tools.

We tend to go through a whole series of steps here at the Guild in order to prepare people. An event is not a hit-and-run kind of experience. It requires staff, a facilitator, a producer, there's a lot going on there. So I'm going to leave you with this graphic. Know that these slides will be made available to you after the fact. So anything that you missed is in that slide deck.

And, as we sign off, I'd like to encourage you to contact me. Here's my contact information in the lower left corner of this slide. I'm here. I've been here for 20 years, I've been online doing this for 20 years, I've seen a lot, I've experienced a lot, I've talked a lot of people out of doing what they were thinking about doing and tried to talk them into do it a different way. And that comes from my deep paranoia that everything will go wrong all the time. There's plenty of times that it goes right. But it doesn't happen accidentally. It happens with great purpose and great preparation and, hopefully, a good producer. Good luck to you all! Thanks!

Karyn: Thank you Karen, thank you Mel, as we have stated over, and over, the recordings and the handouts will be on that event resource page, which we have posted in chat a number of times, and I also want to encourage you to fill out our overall event survey for this particular session. And if you are interested in learning more about our online conferences, go ahead and go to the Guild site and look under "online events and online conferences" and it is something that you will see that we are – have ramped up. This survey is above here, I've just posted it again in chat. All right everyone. Thank you so much, I'm going to end this session right now and we will see you next time, online.

