



“Virtual Training Tips and Tricks with Karen Hyder”

Transcript

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Chris Van Wingerden: Good morning everybody. We’ve already been sharing some weather reports in the chat – that’s pretty awesome. And it seems like – oh Nebraska is rainy. I was going to say it seems like everybody’s weather was really good today. So far. Oh well. As I mentioned in my post this is absolutely the nicest day so far we’ve had in 2020 here in eastern Ontario – it’s got ya in that summer mood. I feel like gardening. Well no, not really, but a little bit of me does.

Brent Schlenker: Oh, Canada.

Chris: Hey if you don’t have change, you don’t notice the difference. That’s a phrase I just made up, look at that. I completely spontaneously came up with a new slogan for the whole country and our appreciation of weather. Cool. Brent, how are things in Phoenix this morning?

Brent: You know what, things are looking – let me check because it changes an awful lot – sunny and hot.

Chris: Oh yeah, you just have a calendar on the wall with that picture, right? You don’t actually have a window there? He just looks at a postcard.

Brent: Yeah.

Chris: Very good. And we have joining us today, we have Karen Hyder joining us here today, Karen is joining us from Rochester. Karen, tell us about your weather first. Let’s get that out of the way.

Karen Hyder: Gorgeous. Spectacular. It is the optimal time to be in this part of the country – everything is blossoming and the temperatures are y’know right up to 70 degrees some days – oh there goes my husband, he’s just checking out the window there.

Chris: Yeah and Rochester, NY, shares a typical – typically shares a weather pattern with us here in eastern Ontario, we’re just a little bit north of that same area. So it’s yep, same here, all the stuff is blooming. Everything is good.

Brent: You have to get a second opinion on the weather every time somebody asks to be sure you didn’t get it wrong.

Chris: That's right. Well, I look out the window and then I check to see what my knee is feeling. That's what I – y'know that's the backup. Oh storm's coming though, it's beautiful today, but it's going to be awful tomorrow. Very cool. So Karen, it's the first time you've joined us here on IDIODC so let's let you introduce yourself to the gang in case folks haven't bumped into you in various places before.

Karen: Well, some of you know me from the eLearning Guild. I spent a lot of time working with the Guild running online events and helping presenters get up to speed on delivering their content for our online events and so I've spoken at many Guild conferences. I was actually involved with the Guild before there was a Guild. I worked with Heidi Fisk and David Holcombe back when Influential was a thing and we did a lot of conferences then. And there's even history before that with Ziff Davis, etc., but I won't go into that. Suffice it to say, I spent a lot of years as a trainer and then many years as an online event producer and speaker coach. So I've been in the virtual classroom for, dare I say it, 20 years. Since the turn of the century really!

Chris: Wow! I've had the benefit of doing a couple of online Guild events where Karen was the guiding hand in the background on those and does absolutely great work that – and we're absolutely glad to have you here to share some of that experience and some of that background knowledge because an awful lot of folks of course had to switch away from standing in front of people to sitting in front of cameras as part of this pandemic time that we're all trying to hassle or wrangle with and deal with etc. I'm wondering, Karen, the first time you had to do something like on live – what went through your mind? Maybe it's all faded for you now, but I'm thinking like what was the biggest change you remember experiencing or the biggest difference between being in person and being in front of a camera?

Karen: Well, I think the typical things that everybody complains about – not being able to read body language, not being able to make eye contact, you can't hear anybody sigh, or grunt, or laugh, or sound exasperated. So, reading those cues is something that a classroom trainer prides themselves on. "I get it because I heard you snort over there – that that must mean that you're not learning or you are learning." So when I moved online and those things didn't exist – and remember in those days the throughput on our connection speeds was shite. So when we've got multiple participants coming in from different parts of the country, the idea of turning on webcams and having people see each other face to face – it just didn't work, it would crash the system, or it would be so choppy you couldn't hear audio. So we literally had to determine how to communicate and get feedback using methods that were not body language. And guess what, methods that are not body language are really kind of effective, as opposed to just reading body language. Because a snort doesn't really mean the same thing from one user to the next. But if I do something like ask them a question, and then show a poll and they respond to the question, then I can actually get some validation. Like they actually do know what I'm talking about, and they're able to answer the questions, and they're out there, I'm not just talking to a blank wall, there's this computer screen, so we had to redesign everything for interaction in a sort of an asynchronous or backchannel method.

Chris: The Zoom ... Sorry, completely escaping words here. But the idea of seeing multiple people and multiple faces is actually kind of a relatively new thing for those of us who have been using these web conference tools for a long time. They've always been kind of a, more of a broadcast single voice or pair of voices or whatever going out to the world so...

Karen: "Chalk and talk" we call that. Or "spray and pray." Or "show up and throw up." Y'know pick whichever one works for you.

Chris: Whichever rhyming couplet.

Karen: Yeah, but it doesn't, it isn't actually training. Y'know it isn't actually learner engagement – it's broadcast. And the face to face thing – I appreciate that Zoom and this software interface allows us to have enough throughput and it manages the video in such a way that we can see each other. But I fear that people now are thinking now that “oh but because I can see head nodding now, and I can hear people sighing deeply, that I can now judge their learning progress based on those things.” So I think we're not using polling and open ended questioning enough because we think we can see people and therefore they must be catching what we're talking about.

Chris: Yeah and meanwhile they're staring off the window looking at the squirrels going across the powerlines or whatever.

Karen: No, they have another window open and they're on Amazon and they're ordering their groceries. And their eyes are in the right place because they're looking at the screen.

Chris: Yeah totally, and they're nodding going “yeah that's a good price, I like that, free shipping, yeah I agree.” So Dan threw a question into the question section here: “What specific learning design opportunities are in live online delivery that simply aren't available in person?” Can we focus on what the format offers that is powerful, rather than what is a duplicate of face to face?

Karen: Yep, absolutely. One is that everybody can respond at one time. If I say to you in the face-to-face classroom, “Let's all go around the room and introduce ourselves” – how many minutes does that take? You've got 20 people in the room, a minute each, that's 20 minutes, we haven't even got to content yet, and we've already burned 20 minutes. And I don't mean to be rude but frankly, I'm not all that interested in your background, I'm more interested in the objectives of this one hour or six hour training course. So I'm not being antisocial, I just don't want to spend that kind of time getting to know individual learners because it doesn't actually impact the outcomes that I'm looking for.

What if I say to people “Hey! Type in chat” I could put up a slide “Type in chat – where are you joining from, what's your background, what's your role in the organization” or “what is your affiliation with this topic and what are your goals for learning today?” Everybody can type at one time. 20 people type in one minute. Then I read through that and say “oh OK great, now I can pick things out I can discern if I've got the right audience for the right objectives” and that stuff is documented, so I can scroll back later and say “now which person said that they were specifically interested in bullet 3?” So that stuff is documented away and the introductions went by like that. Think about that in terms of the moments that you say “how would you apply that?”

I'd love to have everybody turn on their microphones and give me an example of how they would apply that. But you know what's going to happen. They turn on their mic, they go “oh can you hear me *crackle crackle* oh you sound like you're a mile away oh you sound like you're in a tin can oh you sound like you're at the bottom of the ocean.” Great, now we spent 5 minutes and the guy's answer is “47” – Why did we go through all that? Couldn't you just type in chat and you all typed at the same time?

Brent: I think it's 42 though, not 47. Isn't 42 the answer for everything?

Chris: I was thinking even as you expressed the y'know everybody types in something – the chat then becomes basically a checklist too for you, you can as you mentioned, scroll back, use it for reference. I mean you're not going “oh crumb did somebody else say something?” You've always got it there and as you say documented,

which is – I mean we use that regularly here we see something go by but you can't get there but you scroll back and it just it makes such a difference rather than having to try and remember something later on from that perspective, yeah.

Brent: I like that approach, Karen, of looking at the positives, like what are all of the cool things that we get doing it like this as opposed to the classrooms. Instead of a lot of the conversations and a lot of the blog posts and the chatting about it that I've seen over the years are – is always, what can't we do anymore and what can't we do and how do we do things a little better instead of focusing on all of the positive things and all of the things that are really great about having both a nonverbal way to communicate and the audio and the video all at the same time mixed together.

Karen: It's awesome. And in the beginning when we started this my client hired me to help their trainers who were sick of flying to China to teach employees on the other end of the planet and I was sick of travelling at that point too. So we were commiserating together about not wanting to get on a plane and wanting to continue to work as a trainer. I still want to be a trainer, I just don't want to spend all my time in airports, classrooms, hotel rooms, wearing high heel shoes and pantyhose. Definitely not. So in 1999 when I moved back here from jetting around the world, I just didn't want to go anywhere anymore. And I thought "How can we do this; how can we still work in this way and be effective?"

So my first time online was with very motivated trainers who really wanted to make this work and we were inspired by what we saw in a tool called PlaceWare. Which was really quite a dog, but it worked. I mean, it allowed us to avoid that travelling experience, but we didn't want the sort of the downside to keep us from achieving learning objectives. We wanted to make sure learners were engaged and part of that was getting commitment up front.

Y'know what I started to do 20 years ago? I outlined ground rules and asked people to agree to participate with my ground rules. And the answers are always "Yes, I agree, I'm ready to participate. No, I can't agree to this because I'm multitasking." Which is reasonable for most people who are sitting at their computer. If a phone call comes in and I gotta take it. I'm sorry you're not my priority. And then the third thing is "We'll see how it goes." So I'm allowing people to commit to this session. Commit to learning in this model. I can't make you do it. I can't compel you to do it, you have to do it. I'm going to make it as engaging as I can. I'm going to design it to be engaging. But I need you to not treat me as like the secondary thing in your focus right now. So shut down your other applications, agree to type in chat, agree to respond to the polls, agree to unmute your mic and speak up when the time comes. And then when those moments come and I say "Remember earlier when I asked you to agree to participate? I meant like now. Like type in chat now." And if there were people who said "Y'know I can't because I'm multitasking." – Great you get to choose that. But at least I know where we stand.

Chris: Yeah you're not, it's not, you're not sitting there going "Bueller? Bueller? Bueller?" in your mind right? Yeah. So I mean Laura was asking in the chat, "What kind of ground rules did you set?" So the first one you're saying is basically asking people to set their own expectation or commit to the level of their participation. Like "yes, I'm going to. No, I can't, mmm on the fence or we'll see how it goes." At the very least flags something for people that "oh there is something here, it's not just me listening in the background."

Karen: Yeah it's – I've designed this to be engaging, please engage. Please make sure your network connection is a decent network connection. If you're on a bus or you're stealing WiFi from Starbucks in your car – which I've had people do and they're the presenter – our expectation of consistency of the network connection is way off. So I really push people toward getting a wired connection. Or a really excellent network connection. Or have a backup

plan – which is a huge thing that I promote. But I want you to take responsibility for those things. Don't tell me my audio is cutting out. Like, my connection is great. So I don't know what's going on with your connection, but I don't have any way to control that from here, I need you to take responsibility to control that.

And the other ground rules are things like muting your mic when you're not talking, and being respectful of other participants in chat. Y'know you're not chatting with somebody you went to school with and talking about the good old days there – you're keeping your chat on topic. And when I use a tool like Adobe Connect and we can have multiple chat pods, I have a separate chat pod that's just tech chat. And my facilitator minds the main chat along with sometimes some peers that will help mind the chat when there's a couple hundred people logged in.

And then I'm minding the behind the scenes “uh-oh my audio cut out” “uh-oh my bar chart just changed to red, what do I do?” “uh-oh, I can't see the video” – So I'm able to respond to people that way. But I want them to know what that's all about. Don't type in chat to me that you are answering the presenter's question, type it in the other chat.

Brent: Getting them to practice that stuff up front somehow in some sort of interaction too I think – especially when you know you've got people that have never used the tool before or maybe it's just they just need a refresher – maybe they haven't done it in a while, or maybe you use the tool a little bit differently than the last person they were

Karen: Totally. Some people don't want you to type in chat at all, and they don't want you to click any of the buttons at all. They just want you to sit there so they can “chalk and talk.” But if you want it to be interactive and if you want it to be learner focused – which is what I want – I need for people to give me feedback constantly. And I know there's a guideline to say like “every 3 to 5 minutes” – how about every time it makes sense? When I feel like I'm going to tell you something – like “here's a list of good things” – why not ask you? “Do you have a list? Let's all together make a list, and then we'll talk about what's good and what's not good about this list.”

But any time you feel like you're going to just tell the learners something, you could be asking them something. And find out, what is their background on this? And we know that to be true from the research, that when people can associate what they're learning now with something they already know, then they're just reconciling whether or not that aligns with what they believed to begin with. But if I tell you “In Excel, you need to use @SUM and not =SUM” OK well you have to reconcile that. But if I thought you were using =SUM because you were used to Lotus123 – and I'm really dating myself using that example – but I know now what the issue is. You're thinking about the old way and I need you to start seeing it the new way, so I'm going to drill and practice that new way to be sure you get it.

Chris: Way way back we did a spate of marketing related webinars. And the consultant group we were working with taught me one wee little trick. Even for those – which are literally nothing but “spray and pray” and you're trying to do – show off etc. – but he said “I always ask at the beginning for people to type into the chat whether they can hear me OK.” Which sounds – but he said that's how they find where the chat is and they know that you know that you can see that you know there's a little bit of something so at least theoretically they know where to go if they do have a question, etc., and that did seem to work, even that little subtlety of having people find that other half of the communication thing, that they can actually send something to you etc. did seem to encourage a bit more participation that way.

Karen: Let me add to that and say that you should type that in chat. Because if I can't hear you, I can't answer that.

Chris: Yeah fair enough.

Karen: So, being mindful of a Plan A and a Plan B. Knowing that 20% of your population is having a technical problem – at least 20% but I try to follow the 80/20 rule, right? So 20% can't hear you, they can't get their speaker connected, they're still fiddling with their headset, they're still plugging it in, the headset isn't plug and play, so they logged in first, then plugged it in, it's not connecting.

So I tend to use little tutorial slides at the beginning. And I'll rotate them around kind of like how you guys were doing the music at the beginning with the logo. I'll rotate slides that we call "tweens" because in Flash that's what's between two different things. So the tweens represent that blank time between the login time, which I always recommend you have. The buffer time. Log in 10 minutes or 15 minutes before the start time. So we can hassle around with people's technology and audio before the official start time. Otherwise we're cutting into the content time and people complain "we never start on time." You will never start on time. Log in early, get everybody to log in early, and then those tweens give you the opportunity to show marketing, have music playing, show people how to type in chat, how to use private chat. Show people where to go to fill in a question or a poll – and then they're learning that stuff as you get started. And then, Chris, when you kick things off, you can say "Where are you joining from?" and "Who do you work for?" and those kinds of things, which I find are a little bit more compelling just "Can you hear me?" and what I like to do is I kind of like to fill that chat pod with really relevant content that looks like I'm doing something.

I can tell by looking at somebody else's webinar, even without listening, if they're engaging the audience. Cuz you know what's sitting there in chat most of the time? Either "I can't hear" or "I can hear" or "Is this being recorded?" or "Can I download these slides?" I don't want my chat populated with silly questions like that – I want it populated with people having a conversation. We know from the research that learning is social. And people love to be social. So why am I being antisocial by discouraging people to communicate with each other in chat? And what I find is people will answer each other's questions. They can fill in the gaps that I don't have time to answer. So really, really push that chat as a backchannel communication tool and have people not prioritize their mics so much. Unless their mic is fabulous and tested and they're on a really great internet connection.

Chris: Oh and just the chat itself is an advantage, I think, over face-to-face. Because if there's someone standing in front of a room, everyone else is quiet, and yet you've got all of these people who have experiences or things that they can share just like our gang is doing in the chat. Like look at the stuff flying by with ideas going by. And it just amplifies the learning process. And it brings so much more than simply individual expertise into play.

Brent: Yep so what do we got for more tips? Before I – we are smoking through – I think we snuck in some secret tips without even asking you for tips.

Karen: I know, I was ready. I've talked about this for 20 years, I know how to sneak it in. So somebody asks here, Yi Chin Tan asked "What's the ideal duration to run in the virtual classroom?" The Guild did some research a couple of years ago and most people sort of landed around 75 minutes as an ideal. And I like that number as well because it gives you a little buffer time to get logged in and sort of storm and norm as you might expect. It gives the presenter an hour's worth of content time. And then you still have time for some technical hassling or Q&A at the end or whatever buffer time you need. So 75 minutes is really great.

But I've done up to 4 hours at a time. It doesn't have anything to do with whether or not people can sit. Because I bet all of you are sitting at that desk for 14 or 15 hours a day and not complaining. It's not about whether or not

you can sit there for 4 hours. It's about whether or not the content is compelling, engaging, relevant – and is something I really want to be part of. If it's chalk and talk, I can come back to this recording any time at my convenience, when I'm on the treadmill or commuting if I'll ever commute again.

But why did we all jump through hoops to log in at the exact same time? Especially when people are coming in from other parts of the world and it's 4 AM? They're there for the community experience, not to hear you do what you could have recorded and put out as a standalone thing. Which is not a bad thing! You know, certainly pre-lecture – like little clips – you can put together a whole beautiful blended program with clips that are recorded ahead of time, some let's get together and apply, maybe use breakout groups when it's relevant. And then we go back to the community space or the online environment where we type in discussions or take questions or whatever it might be. But we don't have to complete all of the objectives in the live event.

Brent: Love that.

Chris: I'm scrolling back through some more questions, "What can we do to enhance the learner-learner interactions and problem solving, as opposed to the speaking head and the learner, the learner-instructor relationship?" You were just mentioning I think – You mentioned a moment ago breakouts and stuff like that.

Karen: Yeah breakouts are a tough call for me, and if you see my blog post, I encourage people to really get clear on what's the point of a breakout. Because if you're putting people in breakout groups to talk about their favorite film or what they did last weekend, it's kind of a waste of time. But often that happens because we're trying to mimic that social experience in the classroom where we would have said "turn to your neighbor and" But if people aren't really prepared to apply and engage with each other, you're going to burn just 10 minutes getting in and out of those breakout groups, just with the technology stuff. And then of course you want to debrief everybody's experiences, so you're going to burn another at least 1 or 2 minutes per group. So make it something really substantive.

And when I worked for American Management Association, we had a course called "Fundamentals of Finance and Accounting." Four hours at a time. Actually, 3 hours at a time, over four weeks. They went to breakout groups and I would listen in and they're like arguing about accounting principles. Y'know like they're seriously trying to solve a hard problem in that breakout group. So if your content is really substantive like that, and the participants are going to be able to turn on their microphones and be able to communicate with each other, and they have enough background information on the exercise that it's going to be really meaningful, and relevant in there, then yeah, do breakout groups.

Otherwise, you can do things like paired chats, where you say "Hey, Chris and Brent, this is your chat pod, you guys collaborate in here and come up with your – brainstorm your list." And in Adobe you could do that with multiple chat pods at the same time. But it can be as simple as "share this experience with your colleagues. I'm gonna ask everybody to type in chat an example of when something went catastrophically wrong in their virtual classroom session. Now we're going to wait and have everybody type and then I'm going to ask you to read what your colleagues have written." So something as simple as that gives the people who might feel like they're a little bit further along in the process, a little bit more experienced, they can help and share with the less experienced people. The less experienced people are gonna have stumbled over the same things we all stumble over – couldn't connect the headset, couldn't connect to the internet – so they share those ideas with each other and I can just sit back and watch it happen and go "mhm, uh huh, yep great excellent. Thank you! OK."

Brent: Good to go!

Chris: Back to the questions, “Do you think chat communications take the audience’s attention from your presentation?”

Karen: Maybe. But if I keep them focused, and I ask them questions, I wanna ask them questions. Not wait for them to ask me questions. Because then the conversation goes in whatever direction it’s supposed – It’s like a cow wandering the streets in London. Let’s not have the conversation just go wherever. I’m going to ask you questions so that when you answer those questions, I can gauge whether or not you’re really with me. And learning and on the same wavelength. So in those cases, no, chat is not a distraction, chat is validation and confirmation, and then opportunity for course correction. So if it’s random, and people are just talking to their high school friends about what went down in the old days – yeah OK yeah then it’s a distraction. But in my ground rules I say “Please don’t do that”

Brent: Yeah, keep it going. It’s interesting when you said – when you were giving the example of “type something into chat that was your worst situation,” some people thought you were talking to us. That’s what I thought was awesome. Oh this is great, I love this, Laura says when somebody answered an incoming call and their background music kicked in and overrode the session.

Karen: Oh yeah. Oh sure that happened to us 20 years ago. I mean that was something we learned the hard way – the school of hard knocks – and I want to sort of point out to you that I still operate from a place of deep, deep paranoia. That everything will go wrong all the time. Everything! Everything you trusted, everything you believed, everything you’re resting your laurels on because it worked well last time. Forget it. It means nothing next time. Your internet connection, your PowerPoint, your – the functioning of your headset, the stupid little mute button on your headset – everything can be different next time. So assume that’s true and have a backup plan for everything.

Chris: I spent Friday working out an issue with my camera. I had upgraded my computer recently and I had to get the new Logitech app on camera and Brent was chatting through Teams. He was giving me guidance because things just weren’t quite working right, had it all prepped up. And then we had a company team meeting at the end of the day – social time on Friday. And loaded it up and the camera was crappy. And I’d spent a chunk of time solving this technical problem I was confident it was good to go, and then boom it just – pshww – It was like I was in the darkest room. So even all of that prep, stuff’s still going to go wrong.

Brent: It’s like when you’re switching between apps too, it becomes a real issue and there’s, there’s – Sam Rogers always says “Just reboot your computer before you’re doing anything but do it like half an hour before and then just open up the app that you’re going to be using. Just make it a habit, if you know you’re going to be going online and doing a virtual meeting, just schedule some time ahead to shut your computer down. Shut everything down. Or do whatever you do. If you’re really geeky and you know how to run the apps that clean things up. Clean everything up, make sure everything is ready to go and then just open that one app that you need to use.

Chris: And then be prepared for Microsoft update to put a message up in the middle of your session saying “Do you want to update now?” “Do you want to update now?”

Karen: Yeah, no. I totally agree with the rebooting thing, but I really want to push the idea of a Plan B and even a Plan C. Like if you’re thinking, “OK if the audio fails, we’ll just switch to the conference calling service” – great! What’s that number? If you can’t copy and paste it into chat right now, it’s not a Plan B, it’s just a good idea. So as of right now, I have a whole other system set up to my right. Another computer, different network connection,

different keyboard, different mouse, different headset. So when this machine crashes in the middle of my live session, I can just tear off this headset, roll my chair over there, put on the other headset and I'm ready to go. So I want you to be that paranoid about it. Assume that it will go wrong.

And if nothing else, you should have a second device logged in so you can just say to the other presenters "be right back!" You know, you don't want to be completely out of communication with the other people. Because I've had my machine just shut down in front of me and I'm sitting here going like – like what do I do now? How do I solve this? I don't even know where to begin to solve it, I just want to cry.

Brent: Yeah a friend of mine once told me he always knows when he's dealing with a professional because a professional buys two of everything. And kind of the same thing applies, right? You just, you've always got that backup. If you're going to go – he was a musician and so it was like you know, we were shopping around for stuff and he's like "well you know you've got to buy two, right?" and I'm like "I'm not buying – I can't afford two, I could barely afford the one" and he's like "oh you're not a pro. You're not" – right it's like if you have – like I've got two mics set up now, just in case I don't like how one's working – of course I'm always testing and tinkering, but same thing is true. I mean if you're legit doing any type of work, you've got to have that backup, you have to have that Plan B and that Plan C. And unfortunately in the technical world that means having two computers or two microphones or two headsets or two complete stations to work from.

Karen: Can I add a little virtual classroom trick to that one?

Brent: Yeah sure.

Karen: So when I am logged in on a second computer, I like to downgrade that user to participant. So that I can see what participants are seeing. But I want to be set up in such a way that I can quickly re-upgrade myself to host if I need to. Because if I'm just a participant there, there's a lot I can't solve. But if I can upgrade myself to host on that machine, then that can truly become my backup machine. So go a little bit further to make sure those extra things are in place and seriously let your paranoia drive your decision making there because that is going to impact your readiness to solve the problem in the moment.

Brent: Yeah I like – the two internet drops, though that's going to be a tough one for folks, but y'know it's – I feel ya on that for sure. *(Karen holds up her phone and mobile hotspot.)* Oh yeah the mobile one. Yep, I love it. I'm just trying to open up.

Karen: Even if the second one is a poor wireless connection, it is far better than nothing.

Chris: There's a couple of smaller level questions in the chat too y'know do you recommend webcams?

Brent: *(Holds up cell phone displaying that he's watching the livestream from his phone now as well.)*

Chris: Hey there we are!

Karen: Yeah! Y'know I'm not a huge proponent of webcams, probably because I'm old school and we grew up in the days when a webcam would crash our virtual classroom. So I've decided that it's not a priority. However, when I'm doing a thing where the facilitator is needing to y'know build rapport with the participants and wanting to really get to know people. I encourage the facilitator to turn their camera on. And say "Welcome, thank you for

joining. This is my name and I'm here to welcome you." And then maybe pause the video so you just have a photo there instead.

But to have everybody's webcam on all the time? I'm going to go back to I fear that that shifts us back to the "I can read your body language therefore I can determine whether or not you're learning." And I can't. I'm pretty good at reading body language, and I spent many years in a classroom doing it, but I learn from you better by what you type in chat and how you respond to the polls. I don't learn from you what's happening by just smirking and smiling or not.

Brent: It's hard, it's different – it's very different. Even though we can see people in videos, like Chris was mentioning when you're in that Zoom space and you've got thirty blocks of videos, it's not really the – reading their body language – that's not really the same thing as having those 30, 20, whatever number of people in a classroom sitting in chairs in the exact same style chair. And they – all neatly rowed up nicely and you know all paying attention and doing whatever when – you have different people in different locations with different backgrounds and their different chairs that they're sitting in. Some are in relaxed chairs, some are on the couch with the camera looking up their nose, some are y'know.

Karen: Some are on a bus.

Brent: I love the Starbucks – piping through the Starbucks.

Karen: Brent, that was a real online forum speaker! And she lost her connection 5 times!

Brent: I remember you told me about her! Ah the good old days.

Karen: If I can't be a good example, at least let me be a horrible warning.

Chris: "Let me be a lesson to you." Another small level question – do you limit the number of participants for your sessions?

Karen: I have different ways to feel about that. If I'm teaching trainers, which I do a lot, I want to be really immersed, and I want to get to know them and I want to coach them, and I want to give them enough of my time that it's worth them taking a real course instead of just a one-hour webinar. So I want to limit that to 10 or 15 people. Usually 15 is what is my max. But when we do our Hearing First events, we'll have 200 learners joined from all over the world. And I don't limit it. We don't – we've decided not to limit it because the content is really important. But I also want to say that we're not depending on the live sessions being the whole community experience. These are 4-week programs with a community space, with blended content, with discussion boards and videos and quizzes. So we're not relying on the live event having everybody bond and get to know each other and read everybody's bios and stuff. We do that over a month. So I think it works really well that way and I definitely recommend looking at a blended solution instead of just expecting that you're going to mimic everything you did before like this.

Chris: Mhmm. And I think that ties a little bit in to another question that's in here about suggestions for a 3½-week new-hire contact center training moving from the classroom to virtual – specifically I'm concerned about screen fatigue impacting concentration, info retention and how to replace the camaraderie experienced in our lively -based classroom. And I think you've suggested one thing there for sure is that y'know an adaptation that

moves from this being the only kind of thing to other opportunities for people to connect and share and learn in a blended approach.

Karen: Yeah, check out Kassy LaBorie's book too – "Interact and Engage! 50+ Activities." She's got 50 kind of fun, icebreaker kind of things that you can incorporate into any course. But I think the blended program is really the way to go. I think if you think it's going to be one-to-one and you're going to move your entire physical classroom into this space, just remember, why are we doing this online? Why – Are you seriously going to read slides to me? I'm going to log in at 7 AM so you can read slides? I don't need you to read slides to me. Just give me the stuff and I'll read it and then you can quiz me later.

Chris: Yeah. Send me a PDF and I'll deal with it.

Karen: Well and you – some might argue "But our students won't do it. Our students refuse to operate this way." Well a pandemic kind of helped us determine that we don't get to make that choice anymore. You either have the information, or you don't have the information. But we can only provide it to you in the ways that are available to us.

But it goes back to the agreements. We need to change the expectation of learners about what the trainer can do for them. I can't make you learn. I cannot make you learn. I can design a great program, I can build in all kinds of interaction. I can make it so there's camaraderie, we can have happy hour or coffee hour or joke hour, or whatever you want to have. But if people don't commit to it, and they think something else is a priority over this. Not a lot I can do to change that.

If management gets involved, we know from research that when managers are involved in end-users' learning, the outcomes, the positive outcomes, the learning outcomes, the effectiveness is like 225% higher than when they don't. So, managers saying to people "Lookit, you really need to commit to this and I need to know you're going to be there and if you're not going to be there, you're going to watch the recordings, and I need to see that you've completed the tests." That's the kind of thing that we should be pushing for, and not just sort of "Let's just wing it and hope that people are paying attention." They're maybe not because why would they? Every other webinar they've ever been on they didn't need to pay attention. Nobody ever expected them to type in chat. Or turn on their microphones. Why should they do something different for you?

Chris: Jennifer's pointed out – so much depends on the motivation for people doing a learning project or a course or whatever. That they – whether – Are you personally committed? Do you see value in it? Is it connected to your work? Do you see the connection? Is it realistic? All of those things. Or do you just – or is what you're experiencing something that you just feel is wasting your time. Which is the same no matter what training modality we're using. People go into classrooms and check their emails all day and listen to somebody talking in the front of the room too.

Karen: Dudes. When I worked in the training center, people would literally come to class just to get out of work and because they knew we served a really great lunch, and these giant chocolate chip cookies. I'd say "Oh I work at this company" and they're like "Oh I love the cookies!" Oh Eddie just repeated it because he worked there too. People were in it for the wrong reasons. And these days, if you're in it for the wrong reason, that's fine, you can join my session and tell me that it's not a priority to you. But I'm not going to go out of my way to make you feel happy and build rapport with you and make sure you're learning because I can't make you do it! I can only invite you.

And I'll continue to invite you and I will never belittle you or bully you or embarrass you into participation. I'm just going to keep inviting you back. And I'm going to ask you questions whenever they make sense. Whenever it makes more sense for me to ask you than to tell you. And then I'm going to ask you "How are you going to apply this? How would you use this? How can you explain this to your colleague here who's not clear on how to do this?" So yeah. You get it.

Chris: Yep. It's the same, only different. Really, yeah. And that probably gives us a good place to press pause on today's session. Hey gang, how are you guys going to apply all this stuff, today?

Brent: I was just going to say that! Everybody as we're wrapping this up, everybody drop in one tip that you've either learned today or that you've learned in your experiences and we haven't talked about today, just so people can get a little – an extra tip or two maybe in the chat as we're saying goodbye here today and saying thank you so much to Karen for hanging out with us.

Chris: Yeah. Karen, chance now for you to drop in your contact stuff or places where people can find you or connect with you, that kind of thing. And we'll maybe read a few of these chats and Brent's probably queueing up the music, so it's almost time to dance, gang. Plan B! Have a plan Z, I love that actually, Laura's got a great summation of that one there, so awesome.

Brent: Thankfully, Plan B isn't Brent sings instead of the music if it doesn't work.

Chris: Yeah no kidding. *(imitates a trumpet)*

Karen: Tap dance. Yeah. We used to tap dance in the classroom.

Chris: Somebody just said "I'm going to go reboot" so let's all go reboot gang and we'll see you guys all – we'll see everybody again next week. Thanks so much for joining us gang! Karen, thanks so much, this has been fabulous, so much stuff going back and forth.

Karen: Thank you. I appreciate the invitation. Be well.

Brent: We'll have you back for sure when the pandemic's over and we'll see how much people have learned from you.

Karen: I'll still be right here, I'm not going back.

Brent: I don't think any of us are! Bye everybody!

Chris: Bye gang!

