



Cartoon by George W. Brewster Jr.

ZOOM WEAR AND BEHAVIOR, BEWARE

By Jeremy M. Evans and Christine I.P. Schumacher

When the pandemic reached the U.S. shores, the move to digital was expedited. All the things people and businesses do online took a step forward out of necessity. The quickness of the innovation forced families and professionals to adapt quickly.

There were more Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and FaceTime meetings, as well as virtual conferences on a dozen other platforms. More time to stream, tweet, and spend time with family. If the pandemic has done something positive, it is the ability, or opportunity, to refocus priorities and refashion your image, even if virtually. On the other hand, it would be fair to say that professionalism has not reached refined levels of netiquette.

Gentleman's Notice from Jeremy

Whether it be court hearings, arbitration, litigation, or in the classroom, bathrobes, crying children, and barking dogs have all made a virtual appearance. Appearing virtually should actually be easier. As Larry David, comedian and creator of *Seinfeld* and *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, once said, "I have been practicing social distancing for years." Attorneys and professionals can leave their socks, shoes, and

dress pants in the drawers, on the racks, and on the hanger in the closet. Definitely wear bottoms, but the opportunity is there to be more casual below camera view.

Wear a suit jacket, tie, and pocket square for added flavor. People can still see you, so make sure the shirt is ironed or wrinkle-free, the jacket is crisp, use collar stays, and ensure that the tie matches or complements the color of the jacket, and the pocket square does the same. Watches, cufflinks, and other accessories are still good for Zoom because people can see those items if you want a little something extra, style-wise. By the way, an old television camera trick is to straighten and sit on the jacket's back vent(s) to remove a raised back collar roll.

Dress is important for appearance sake, but equally consider netiquette. While making an appearance, use a professional screen saver profile picture when your camera is not showing, but make sure you are sitting down and facing forward while on camera (as if you were acting in a play or appearing on television). The camera should be even with your eye level. Consider having a virtual background that is of your firm (that may include branding like your logo, office, etc.), which also blocks views of your bed, kids, significant other, etc. Consider using

AirPods or a similar product for client matters to keep things confidential and for at least one part of the conversation to be left unheard if you cannot have a private space to meet virtually. Lastly, during recording mode, be careful of what you write in Zoom Chat because messages (even in private) can be downloaded by the host.

Fashion Expertista Christine

As we look at "Zoom fashion" one year later, perspectives have changed. While more relaxed attire may have been shocking at first, some previously unacceptable attire became more acceptable as the pandemic continued. Here are some do's and don'ts as virtual court appearances and meetings continue.

Tops. A judge once complained to me that some attorneys wore tops so low that she could see the color and style of their bras from her seat on the bench. While this may not be as much of an issue with virtual hearings, keep in mind that you are now seen only from the chest up. Tops that formerly were part of an entire ensemble are now the only thing people see. If we are only seeing your face and décolletage, make sure it is not distracting (no one should be wondering if you are wearing a top).

What's behind you. In the virtual world, what's behind you is now part of your attire like an accessory. Jeremy talks about this, but it is worth repeating. If you are appearing in court and everyone can see your clothes rack or bed behind you, it is as if you wheeled that in to decorate the counsel table. The entire courtroom or conference does not need to see that your wardrobe is mostly blue tops. Consider a virtual background, creative camera angling, or draping a sheet to cover distractions.

Makeup. In a virtual world, there is special emphasis on your face. Extreme levels or application of makeup can now be exceptionally jarring, as can the opposite look of just-rolled-out-of-bed, droopy-eyed with disheveled hair. Zoom has appearance touchup (like an Instagram filter) and virtual lipstick and brows, which you might be able to use in a pinch.

Beeps and dings and other loud rings. Just as you might not want to wear jewelry that jingles loudly whenever you move, you do not want phones or email dings loudly interrupting you as you speak (this

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includes computer sounds). Silence those when you are speaking in court or a meeting. Again, imagine being in court and having your cellphone chiming throughout the courtroom and everyone knows your cellphone is making noise.

Blaze on. We all get it. You're at home and wearing a T-shirt or tank top. Throw a blazer or cardigan on and no one will know the difference, but make the effort to look presentable. The judge is still wearing a robe and physically in the courtroom. You can at least throw on that blazer we all see on the hanger behind you.

Like in-person attire, your virtual attire is about being respectful of your audience, be it the court, other attorneys, attendees at an MCLE/meeting/conference, or clients. While we adapt to virtual settings, remaining professional and presenting yourself well is still the key to being the best advocate for your client and being taken seriously.



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