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FEBRUARY 2021 | YOUR GUIDE TO THE NEW ENVIRONMENT OF WORK • \$9



**COLLABORATING FOR A CLOSE-UP:
NEW ANGLE FILMS AND NELSON
WORLDWIDE JOIN FORCES TO SUCCEED
IN A WORLD RULED BY VIRTUAL VIDEO**

CONNECTION — THROUGH — CREATIVITY



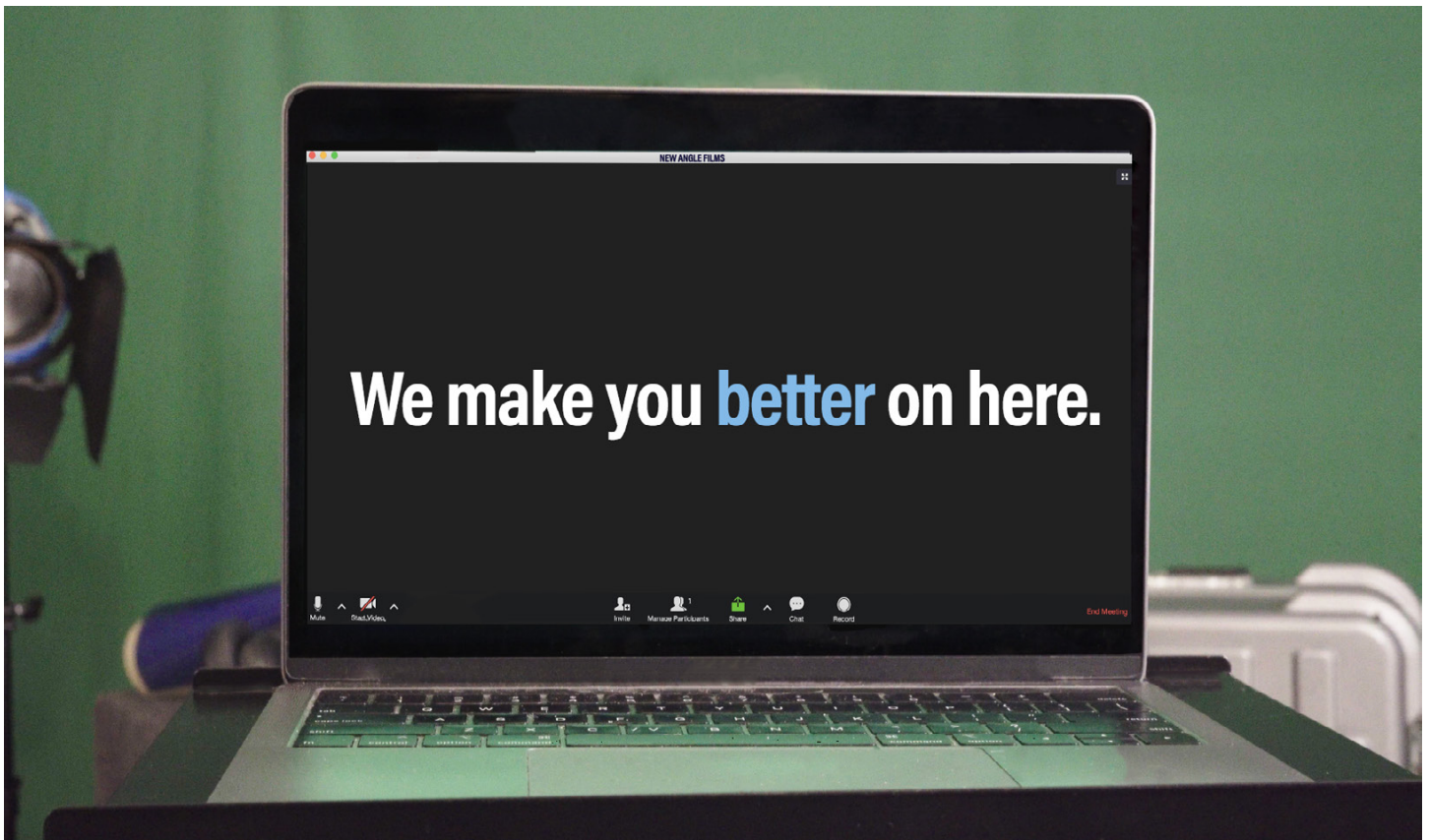


COLLABORATING FOR A CLOSE-UP: NEW ANGLE FILMS AND NELSON WORLDWIDE JOIN FORCES TO SUCCEED IN A WORLD RULED BY VIRTUAL VIDEO

IN ADDITION TO DEVELOPING A SKILLSET THAT INCLUDES VOICE, DICTION, ACTIVE LISTENING AND VISUAL CUES THROUGH THEIR WORK WITH NEW ANGLE FILMS, THE NELSON TEAM ALSO LEARNED TO CONTROL THE THINGS YOU CAN — LIKE LIGHTING AND SOUND — SO THAT WHEN THINGS THAT ARE OUT OF YOUR CONTROL GO WRONG — LIKE A DOG BARKING — YOU WON'T BE AS JARRED AND STRESSED OUT HAVING TO HANDLE THEM.

BY STEF SCHWALB

Early last summer I took on a project as the interim managing editor of a regional publication for three months. Part of my work required running daily production meetings for a staff ranging from seven to 14 people. Not only had I never met any of these people in the real world, but it had been several years since I had to lead meetings and be accountable for agendas and discussion topics. Adding to those factors, I was relatively new to virtual video and Slack. There was a lot to learn — and quickly.



To be honest, the first few meetings weren't ideal. There were lighting issues, sound problems and internet connections freezing regularly. Dressing professionally wasn't an issue (I still had some professional outfits that fit from my pre-COVID days), but slowing down the usual fast manner in which I speak took some practice and patience. What I wish I had at the outset was a how-to guide with insights on everything virtual video.

While the vaccine for COVID-19 has finally arrived, national distribution will take some time. Even once that occurs, there will be many companies that may opt not to return to an office space. They might also choose a hybrid approach to working, which includes a combination of virtual and in-person meetings. Either way, it's safe to say virtual video is here to stay and learning how to be an effective and authentic communicator via this channel will continue to play a major role in all our successes.

With this thought in mind, New Angle Films collaborated with global architecture and design firm NELSON Worldwide to do something about it. The result created new ways for professionals to work together virtually through a series of training programs. Some of these include team building exercises aimed at helping employees find authenticity and comfort in front of a camera, as well as technical and creative direction to help them develop more dynamic presentations.

"When we started New Angle films, we were looking for a place to test our program because we had to put it into the real world," said Co-founder Kari Coleman. "We knew NELSON's company culture was going to align perfectly with what we wanted to do, which was build a future because the old playbook isn't working anymore in business with this new virtual reality."



Coleman

Monica Jun, Nelson team leader, said they are always looking for ways to be on the cutting edge of technology. While it's one thing to be really nimble on Zoom, it takes a whole other skillset to be effective virtually.

"I think communication is key for any successful project, but now, it's not just communication — it's perception," she notes. "It was really important knowing that with all the virtual meetings happening for NELSON we could arm all our teammates with this new type of skillset."

The development of this new skillset and New Angle Films' program was actually rooted in Coleman and her partner's experience directing a virtual improv show.

"We saw that even people who had these skills — I mean improvisers are notoriously facile at being able to adapt — they were struggling to connect with each other and to create effectively on screen," she explains. "We realized we had to develop some new way of looking at things. First, it was introducing the idea of bringing Hollywood into the corporate world and thinking about yourself as a production. Next was fixing technology and teaching skills to connect better in the virtual world because things that you do in real life obviously can work — but you have to adapt them a little bit to work on screen. Third was the improvisational and storytelling, which is team building and just kind of fun. The last thing was dealing with virtual burnout. That was when we came up with this idea of creating this movie together, and we realized that all together what we were offering was training."

For Jun, she learned very quickly virtual communication doesn't come naturally for everyone, so the collaboration with Coleman was a welcome one.

"I think unless you are very self-aware, and you know exactly what you look like in the mirror at all times, you don't really understand how you're coming across on the other side of the screen. I think everybody has great intent, but intent is really hard to get across."

She admits, "NELSON has more than 20 offices, about a thousand people or more all around the



country, and we do work throughout the world. We wanted to make sure that everyone is able to understand this skillset and bring a consistency to the clients, to our consultants and to everyone that we're communicating with."

For practical purposes, some things Coleman covers in the training include setting the scene.

"The biggest thing is being well lit and being able to be heard," she said. "I tell people get on a Zoom call by yourself, do your set up, and see what looks good."

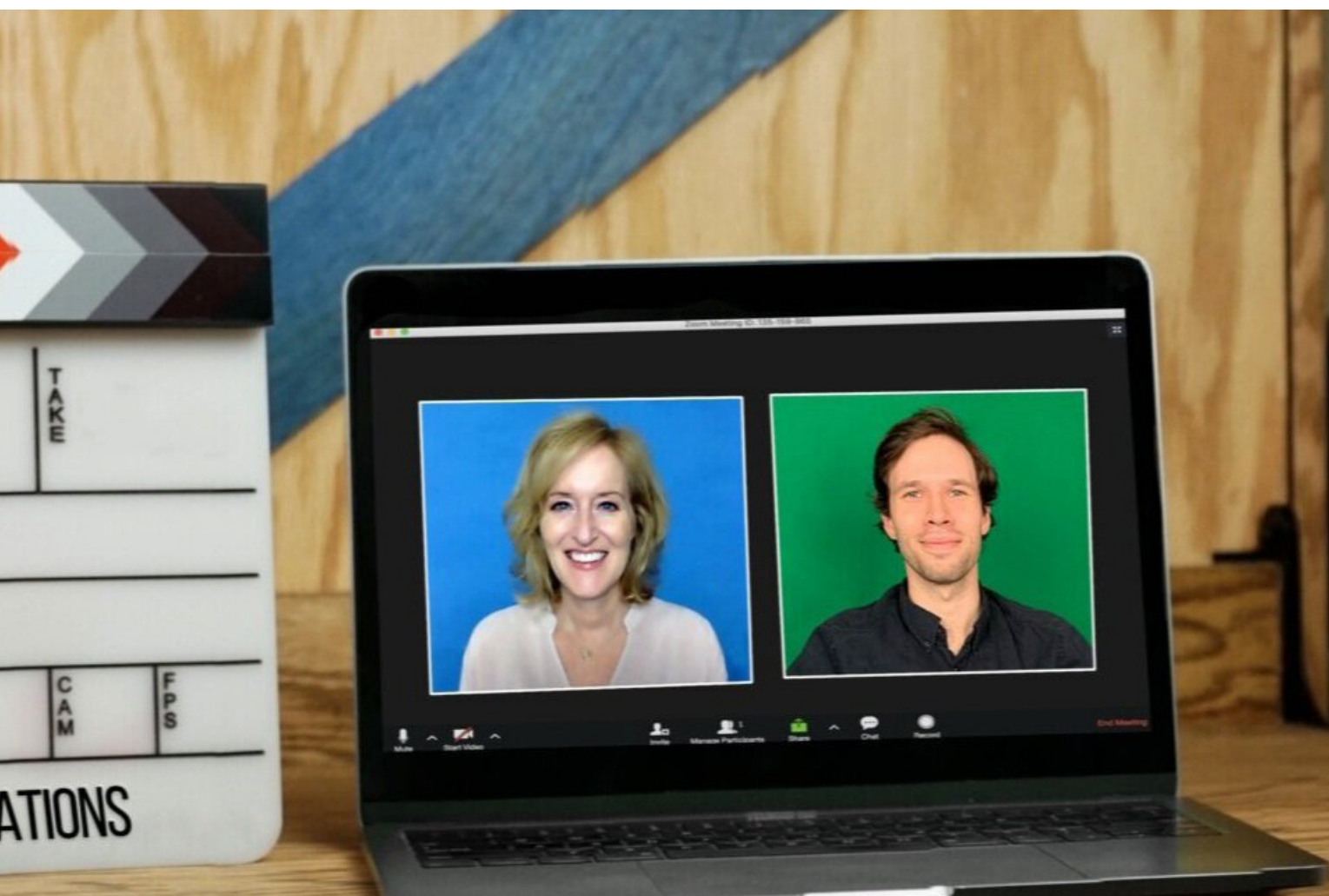
Body language is another subject covered. "If your body is actively engaged, it's what I call second circle, which is an energy place where you're giving out energy and receiving it," she notes.

Making sure your background is inviting rounds out the list. "I thought it was really important," Jun adds. "I think especially in our industry as designers

and architects, it gives little cues about your design sensibility. What I really liked about the ability to control my background is not only the agency of things I can control that are being based off of my perception, but also, the kind of the story I can tell."

When it comes to actual presentation time, Coleman said it's critical to start with your preparation. "I tell people before you get on any kind of presentation or sales call, take a minute to do your work," she said. "You want to have your cue to cue of who's talking. You don't have to script it, but the point is to know when this slide comes up who's saying what so that you know exactly what's supposed to happen."

When that's done, she said the next thing is to work on you. "Stand up, take a breath," she said. "Breathe not from your chest (because that's anxiety causing) but from your diaphragm. It centers you."



In addition to developing a skillset that includes voice, diction, active listening and visual cues through their work with New Angle Films, the NELSON team also learned to control the things you can — like lighting and sound — so that when things that are out of your control go wrong — like a dog barking — you won't be as jarred and stressed out having to handle them.

"When we improvise on stage, we talk about accidents being gifts, because first of all, it's energizing," Coleman said. "I don't know if you've ever watched a performance where everything is going correctly — sometimes it can get a little boring. That's the same thing with a presentation, right? If everything is going correctly it's all one note, and you can zone out a bit; but if something happens in a presentation, it wakes you up. If you get knocked out, and you have to come back again, you know everyone is probably pretty

awake at that point. You certainly have their attention because they're waiting to see what's going to happen, so if you change your mindset around that, it will really help."

Jun said she could see how all of the skills she learned will transfer well into her work — online and off — because her team all does design presentations, and regardless what type of presentation it is, something will always happen.

"Whether that's something with the internet, a client disagrees with something that you're saying or a design isn't working out, I think the idea of being able to roll with it is not just a skill that I think is needed on virtual screens," she concludes. "I really appreciate the habits that (New Angle Films) was showing us. We can incorporate them not just now, but when we go back to being in person, too." **WPM**