



## Zoom, Zoom, Zoom



I HAVE BECOME proficient using the Internet over the past few years. I love it more today than ever. One might ask from where all of this exuberance comes and I would have to reply, it comes from people! My exuberance for the Internet and my reason for it might seem nonsensical, but they're not.

You may have known or worked with someone who seems to zoom everywhere. These people zoom here for an appointment, there for a meeting, and never seem to stop. Zoom, zoom, zoom, and zoom! They're off.

I know plenty of them. These are the people who make me exuberant about using the Internet to conduct business. Now granted, some zooming around is required from time to time, but I don't recommend it as a lifestyle. To make my life less "zoomy," I have adopted a new work habit. When possible, I now meet with clients on-line. There I can share my presentations with almost anyone and not have to bother with traffic.

Ten years from now this may bring up some interesting party jokes: So, why did the insurance salesman cross the road? Well of course! To meet with his clients! Some people might not find that funny but remember, there was a time when physicians made house calls too. All zoomy-ness aside, on-line meetings are a technology whose time has come.

Our agency recently started using online meeting services from [www.intra-agent.com](http://www.intra-agent.com). No longer am I required to make that 30-minute commute to a prospect's home. Many of my upscale clients have high speed Internet connections, so it is simple to call them on the telephone, have them join an online meeting, and then share with them the presentation I would have delivered in person, all from my computer in a secure 128-bit encrypted environment. The price for online Web meetings used to be prohibitive, but now the producer can host an unlimited number of on-line meetings as often or as rarely as he or she likes for a reasonable monthly subscription. The service allows interactive meetings with as many as 50 people in one virtual room. The producer can make sales presentations, present financial information and spreadsheets, share ideas, conduct polls, and send messages. No more excuses; bring in the accountant, the attorney, and the spouse, and close the deal.

By using the telephone company's three-way calling features along with my agency's telephone system's conferencing ability, we in my agency can meet with people in five locations at one time. For larger conference calls, we may use an outside telephone conferencing service.

Unlike Microsoft's NetMeeting, this on-line meeting service does not require complicated software. There are no problems with firewalls, and no need for attendees to sign up with this service or that. All that is required for them to meet

the producer online is an Internet connection and Internet Explorer 5 or above.

Some producers may wonder how presentations are shared. One way is by using PowerPoint presentations created ahead of time. The producer can upload the various slides to his meeting room, then in a meeting he simply selects the presentations and slides he wants to share. Many insurance companies already have compliant Power Point presentations at the ready. The producer only will have to call the company to find out what is available.

Other abilities of the producer's meeting room include the ability to show selected programs running on the presenter's computer and the ability to allow others to act as presenters. Being able to pass the baton comes in handy when meeting with several people at once, when someone else in the meeting would like to share something on his or her computer.

### **Zoorny Connections**

As with everything on the Internet, the on-line meeting service works best with a high-speed connection. If the producer was waiting for a reason to justify the extra few dollars, then this might be it.

That is not to say that on-line meetings won't work on a dial-up connection. They will; the presentation will need to be paced slightly slower, however, to allow for the additional time it takes for the data to upload. The producer also should keep this in mind whenever presenting to clients with dial-up connections.

Presenting on-line creates a few additional challenges that the producer should rehearse to overcome, the first of which is screen resolution. What looks good on my 1280 x 1024 laptop display does not necessarily look good to someone with a 15" monitor on an 800 x 600 display setting. When making any presentation, the producer will want to ensure it is professional in appearance.

A second challenge is controlling what is displayed to the other participants. Slide presentations are simple, but it may get confusing at times when sharing programs running on the producer's computer. Application sharing requires the presenter to select from a list of running programs, and if the list is too long it is easy to make a mistake.

### **Practice Makes Perfect**

Setting up some practice sessions should be fairly simple for producers in an agency setting. To do this, the producer needs two computers, one as the presenter, the other as the client. Running through various slides and the capabilities of the on-line meeting room will enable the producer to get a good feel for its features while seeing what the presentation will look like to the other in the meeting. The producer also should test various screen resolutions. Producers who do not have the luxury of two computers available may want to team up with another producer and have practice sessions.

I find URL sharing an extremely useful capability of the on-line meeting rooms. In essence, this enables the presenter to open Web sites directly on the other computers involved in the meeting. My agency has many forms available on-line, so all I need to do is enter the form's Web site address to open it on the

prospect's computer

I can say, "Here you are, Mr. Prospect, simply fill this in, print it, sign it, and send it in. Do you have any questions?" Now that is what I call closing the sale.

### **Zooming without the Zoom**

As with most producers, I still have clients who are not Internet savvy. For them, it's still the face-to-face meeting, in the office or out. The tech savvy clients, though, embrace the technology openly and allow me to schedule meetings without the concerns of rushing around or wondering why they may be running late.

So, once again, and thanks to my new online meeting room, I have managed to make my life less "zoomy" and more productive. When I was a "zoomy producer," I thought I was accomplishing a lot by zooming everywhere. But in retrospect, I was too busy zooming around to get much accomplished.

Now I produce more and zoom much, much less, enabling me to spend more time doing what I love: being with my family.