

GOOD ENOUGH IS *NEVER* GOOD ENOUGH

ACROSS THE LENS



How Your Zoom Presence Will
Make or Break Your Success

PATRICK MCGOWAN, MBA

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ISBN-13: 978-1-957651-19-4
Library of Congress Control Number: 2022917661

INDIE BOOKS INTERNATIONAL®, INC.
2511 WOODLANDS WAY
OCEANSIDE, CA 92054
www.indiebooksintl.com

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FOREWORD

2020. THE GREAT Pause. The Year of the Pivot. WFH. (Work From Home for those not privy to the abbreviation.) You're On Mute. *Pandemic*, the verb. "Where did you pandemic?" "We tried to rent a place on the Cape but ended up in the Catskills."

Some people, like myself, were spared loss and suffering. Others confronted them on a weekly basis. It was a new kind of duress. Unlike other global catastrophes, we were not able to follow our desire to gather, huddle, or hunker down in a group. We couldn't bring a casserole to console our neighbor. We couldn't share a drink with a friend. Like it or not, we are primates and need social interaction, especially in times of great stress. We needed ways to reach out and connect.

Enter: Zoom and other virtual meeting platforms. Suddenly, a huge percentage of people left their offices and worked remotely. While some loathed the balancing act of teaching their children from home and trying to get office work done, others thrived in the new, flexible, and digital workspace.

The effects of the pandemic demanded that we find novel ways to communicate. But the Zoom meeting became so ubiquitous that Zoom fatigue soon set in. Why were four hours

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in front of the computer in virtual meetings more exhausting than four hours in the office?

I believe the fatigue can be blamed on what I call “The Cult of Cool.” As consumers of visual commodities (film, television, YouTube, TikTok), we are a passive bunch. We sit back on our couch, Netflix, and chill. This passivity has infected how we engage—how we present from the other side of the camera—as well. No one wants to look too polished, and most people don’t understand what makes for a good video. Hence, we see a lot of bad lighting, weird framing, awkward pantsless moments, heartless delivery, and impenetrable sound.

Enter: Patrick McGowan and this wonderful book. At the outset, Patrick may seem like an odd choice to spearhead a cultural video transformation. He has—among many other jobs, hobbies, and vocations—been a minister, graphic designer, hospital administrator, father of four, string-bass player, and thespian. But Patrick (and full disclosure here—he is my brother, so I have “zero bias”) is driven by a genuine desire to see all people succeed.

As the pandemic reared its ugly head, Patrick saw an opportunity to help people in a way he never had before. He did a deep dive into home camera technology, lighting, the artistry of filmmaking, acting, and digital meeting platforms.

He invited me to join his team. I’m an actor with thirty years of experience who has recently moved from musical theater to film and television. It’s a pivot, not unlike what many people working on Zoom now experience. A presentation in person is quite different than a presentation on video. You need new skills. My understanding of acting principles (like breath,

spontaneity, presence, and camera technique) informed what Patrick calls “non-fiction acting.” It’s an approach that works remarkably well in the world of virtual meetings.

Patrick was further able to combine the visual finesse he developed as a graphic designer, the hopefulness of his ministry, and the managerial acumen from his administrative days into a technique and book that is guaranteed to improve your experience in the new digital workplace. This book will teach you not only to connect but to connect across the lens.

And like it or not, the new digital workplace is how we work from now on. A 2020 PwC survey said that for 78 percent of CEOs, remote collaboration is a long-term reality. People across the board are more productive, more satisfied, and mentally healthier not going into an office every day. As Patrick says in this book, it’s not the *new normal*; it is *the normal*.

At the heart of this normal is still our desire to connect. And at the heart of this book are the skills and insight you need to make that connection possible.

Mike McGowan

New York City, 2022

PREFACE

WELCOME TO THE video-first world. Your presence matters more today, and more on video, than ever before.

Our video-first world has been in the works since the early 2000s and with COVID-19 it was supercharged.

Video For Everyone

YouTube launched in 2005. It now reports that people watch one billion hours of videos on its platform every day. People like Salman Khan, who built Khan Academy off the success of his YouTube channel, is a good example of how YouTube has normalized the creation, distribution, and consumption of video in our everyday lives.

Video For Work

A 2018 *Yale Insights* article reported 54 percent of US workers regularly participate in video conferences.¹ The same article went on to quote Scott Wharton, vice president of Video Collaboration Group at Logitech, who said, “Video is getting to be part of the furnishing for a room.”

Funny how that article now seems out of date. Today, nearly

everyone regularly participates in video conferences, and video is a furnishing in every office and every home office.

In a study by Zoom, with survey data and findings provided by Qualtrics, 80 percent of Americans, 75 percent of Germans, and 90 percent of Brazilians agreed that “everything will have a virtual component post-pandemic.”² Additionally, across ten countries and a dozen business sectors, hybrid work is overwhelmingly preferred to in-person only or virtual only, with 51–70 percent reporting they prefer to use a combination of both video and in-person meetings.³

Video For Marketing

Other research shows that video has a quantifiable impact on buying behaviors, with 76 percent of consumers saying they’ve bought a product or service after watching a video.⁴

As Gil Becker writes in *Forbes*, “Post-Covid-19, video marketing will be as essential as ever. Brands that want to stay competitive and stand out in an increasingly crowded field will need to produce not simply more but *better* content, the kind that keeps consumers on-site, the surest route to purchase. They will need to act, in effect, like miniature streaming platforms, with diverse, accessible material tailored to multiple audiences.”⁵

Video For Sales

“B2B sellers will become experts at creating and engaging with video,” Forrester Research writes in its *Predictions 2021: Grounded Sellers Fly in The Face Of Old Norms* (October 2020). “As buyer preferences collide with pandemic related realities, 40 percent of B2B reps told us in a recent survey that

they plan to modify their tactics to adapt to remote selling activities. Traditionally limited to email, phone calls, and screen-sharing interactions, sellers will look for more dynamic ways to earn buyers' attention.”

Video For Customer Creation

Video is used everywhere for entertainment, education, training, meetings, marketing, and sales.

But what does this have to do with you?

If you are a speaker, coach, founder, consultant, CEO, author, top sales producer, vice president, or even a department manager, it has everything to do with you.

Peter Drucker, author of multiple management classics, including *The Effective Executive* and *The Practice of Management*, wrote, “Because the purpose of business is to create a customer, the business enterprise has two—and only two—basic functions: marketing and innovation. Marketing and innovation produce results; all the rest are costs. Marketing is the distinguishing, unique function of the business.”⁶

Which begs the question: What are you doing to create new customers?

Let's deconstruct this.

A customer, Drucker says, is someone who pays you money for what you produce. Business growth, therefore, comes from influencing people to buy your products or services.

Logically, we can say that if you get in front of more *potential* customers, you increase your likelihood of having more of them convert into *actual* customers. (Especially as a service professional, you are the product, and time is your greatest asset.)

So, if there existed a way for you to do both—connect with more prospective customers and consequently service more actual customers—that would mean more revenue, right? *Additionally*, if you control your costs, so your total expenses remain flat or even decrease, then you are more likely to realize greater profits.

Thus, we can say that in a video-first market, a better video presence means more connection and more business, which can lead to more profits.

Video Worth Watching

Through the various reports, trends, and usage data, we now conclude that a video-first market requires a video-first response.

It is reasonable to assume that in a world in which everyone is producing and consuming videos, we need to produce videos that get watched.

This means your video better be worth watching.

Watchable video starts with a better video presence.

Hope is not a strategy. Complacency means you lose. As my friend Jake says about video, “Good enough came and went over six years ago.”

Amy Cuddy, social psychologist, award-winning Harvard lecturer, and author of *Presence: Bringing Your Boldest Self to Your Biggest Challenges*, defines presence as “the state of being able to comfortably express our true thoughts and feelings and values and talents and knowledge—so knowing who you are and being able to access that when you most need to.”

What Cuddy describes here is what we refer to as showing up as your best self.

This is not vanity or avarice or any of the other deadly sins. Instead, it is *vanity as a force for good*. The good is for your audience. You level up your video presence because you are greedy for them to learn, grow, and succeed.

Positioning With Video Presence

Everyone has an audience when it comes to video.

Too few people have done what's needed to make it easy for their audience to connect with them on video. In fact, your video presence may still be defined by how sketchy your audio is or how you look like Wilson from the sitcom *Home Improvement*.

To borrow from the great acting coach Sandy Meisner, we must develop the skills needed to master this new medium.

When you decide to level up your video presence, you realize it is not for your own sake but for the sake of your audience. You benefit, obviously. Because when you look better, you feel better, and when you feel better, you do better.

And your audience rewards you with more engagement.

In our media-saturated world, your competitive advantage is the development of a memorable video presence. You will find this at the intersection of technology and humanity. It requires a commitment to using better technology and investing time into training, but the barrier to entry is low.

Video presence is a game-changer for those willing to make the commitment. Your presence is powerful positioning in today's loud and noisy world.

How This Book Is Organized

For some of you, the most important thing you can do for yourself is skip ahead and read Chapter 20: Sixteen Ways Beginners Show Up On Video. We'll wait.

For the rest of you, start at the beginning with Part I: Preparation. Do not skip this section because when it comes to your video presence, *who* shows up is more important than *what* you say.

Preparation naturally leads to Part II: Position. Positioning yourself and your business is as vital today as it was in the '70s when Al Ries and Jack Trout first wrote about it.⁷ The contest for people's attention is real and immediate. Your position raises you above the noise and gives you a fighting chance.

The last section is Part III: Punch. Punch brings in the technical and practical elements of how you show up as your best self. We explore key considerations with your technology—camera, lighting, audio, staging, and framing. We also take a look at your humanity—elements like facial expressions, gestures, wardrobe, and eye contact.

Throughout this book, you will hear from people like yourself on why they made the commitment to leveling up their video presence. *In their own words*, you will hear and see how they've adopted a video-first response and are already reaping its rewards.

Amateur hour is over. Do the work so people are compelled to watch and pay attention.



BEFORE

I captured this screenshot of myself on March 24, 2020. It should be clear why I thought I looked like a potato and need to level up my video presence.



AFTER

To meet my high standards, I put together a digital camera platform. Many people have told me I look like I'm in a documentary or have a YouTube channel (which is coming). This is how I show up for my Zoom meetings.