Judging online for Camera Clubs

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Table of Contents

Contents

Introduction

This document provides guidance for Clubs and Judges on video conferencing (VC) and managing their meetings. It is not meant to be an exhaustive document rather a set of small tips and pointers.

Video Conferencing

Using a video / online system to hold a meeting is different to a physical meeting, but also similar in many ways. Making the most of the technology is key if the presenters, Judges, and audience are to have a seamless and productive meeting. Following some simple guidelines can help smooth the process.

Introduction for members

Run an introduction session for members who are new to this type of meeting/technology

- Check people's technology works - "Hello hello can anybody hear me?" is probably the most used phrase during the learning process
- Let the audience get familiar with being muted and just listening
- Pressing and holding the space bar allows you to ask a question but automatically puts you back on mute
- Encourage people to use the chat for questions
- Show people they can chat by selecting who they want to talk to in the participant list
- Remind them to double check who they are about to send a message to (people send private chat to everybody, which can be lots of fun... or not...)

Meeting Setup

Setting up the meeting in your regular way is important to maintain the same standards as you would with a face to face meeting

- Schedule the meeting to start 15 minutes before your usual start time
- Encourage the audience to gather and get settled (just as you would at a normal meeting)
- Have multiple co hosts so the comp sec doesn't have to run the meeting and the competition/presentation

Meeting Etiquette

Remind the members of the meeting etiquette

- Stay on mute - We don't want to hear your dog or kids.
- Don't have the TV or music on in the background just in case
- If you are going to do something else turn your video off (Making a cup of tea in your lounge pants might give everybody a laugh)
- Pressing and holding the space bar allows you to ask a question but automatically puts you back on mute
- Try to schedule a break to ensure everybody's comfort

Co Hosts

Remind co hosts of their responsibilities

- Checks the chat window
- Mute people who are being noisy
- Manages the meeting / waiting room

Competitions for clubs

Running competitions over VC may need additional steps compared to a standard face to face meeting.

Please liaise with the judge regarding details such as timing; screen sharing; scoring range and any specific requirements on scoring; use of annotate devices.

Booking Judges

Judges should be booked as usual from the range of local or remote judges.

Confirming meetings

Using VC has created some issues with reminders and confirmations being sent to judges in a timely manner. Please remember to confirm.

- VC start time
- Meeting Start Time
- Break time
- Planned finish
- VC log in details
- Details of the competition to be judged

Video compression

Although VC software and network bandwidth have dramatically improved over the last decade, they are designed and optimised for showing the video participants at their best, not competition images.

Factors that can impact the quality (Can vary second by second)
- Resolution of the sharing screen
- Resolution of the viewing screen
- Bandwidth of the sharer (variable by contention in the Local point of presence/network)
- Bandwidth of the viewer (variable by contention in the Local point of presence/network)
- Internet performance (Variable by location and time of day)
- VC server / load balancing (constantly variable due to server capacity)

Effects that can often be seen: -
- Compression effects in out of focus areas (Waffle)
- Banding
- Impacts to sharpness
- General reduction in quality / colours

Pre sharing images

To ensure that all images are viewed in the same way (Quality can vary second by second) and at their best it is recommended that clubs share the images with the judges before the competition is held so the images can be checked for quality.

To ensure the optimum result we would recommend the following: -

- A list of images, in order of display should be shared with the Judge
- Standard competition sized images
- sRGB image space
- Authors names removed
- A request that the Images to be deleted by the judge after the competition

Competition software

We are not aware of any current issues with the standard competition software run by most clubs. Clubs should continue to run their competitions as normal.

Many clubs use the 2nd screen feature of their software in the same way they would with a projector. This does allow the person running the competition to share just the projected images not the competition software.

Screen writing/highlighting

Most video conference solutions include the ability for a judge to annotate directly onto the screen images. This feature is very useful to point out flaws, show potential crops etc..

The two most popular solutions are:-

- Zoom Annotate
- Webex Annotation

We would highly recommend that the club enable these features for the judge to use.

Advice for judges

Introduction

Judging over VC has many benefits. The most significant is of course our ability to continue interacting with clubs and running competitions. VC also allows us a much wider audience of clubs that we can interact with.

The overall quality of images can be impacted by VC software as stated earlier in this document. We would recommend that anybody judging over VC would adhere to the following advice.

1) Request a copy of the images in advance of the competition
2) View the images in a dark room like a PDI competition
3) View the images on a suitable quality calibrated device in a colour managed application
4) Take note of sharpness, image quality and artifacts/banding
5) View images at the presented size for best quality

Judges might take additional time to look closely at the images to understand the quality, composition, aesthetics, atmosphere and narrative/story which would be reasonable given the requirement to assess the images.

Please liaise with the club regarding details such as timing; screen sharing; scoring range and any specific requirements on scoring; use of annotate devices.

Competition Spirit

Whilst we can spend more time with competition images, I have been asked about, and it has been suggested that the following actions could potentially be viewed as not within the spirit of our current competitions.

- Examining the exif information
- Loading images into editing software to view the histogram
- Zooming in to look at fine detail – the image should be reviewed at the size it is presented

Judges have a responsibility to ensure that we maintain the highest standards and should view all the aspects of the images not just focus on technical perfection. Being able to pre judge the images can potentially lead to the following: -

- Concentrating on the technical aspects of an image
- Pixel peeping sharpness
- Focussing on editing quality
- Delivering a highly detailed list of faults on an evening rather than judging the images

Equipment

Whilst we do not mandate what a judge's equipment should be, we would suggest that following would be highly beneficial.

- A high resolution calibrated screen
- A HD quality webcam
- High quality microphone
- A stable high quality internet connection

Annotation

Whilst judging in person, many judges would use a pointer or a laser pointer. As noted above we would highly recommend that judges become familiar with using the built-in annotation tools to illustrate their points. Some of the key features might be.

- Lines / boxes to show crops
- Spotlight to highlight something you are referring too

Remember not to overuse the tools, but to become familiar with their usage.

Zoom annotate https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VrTY026sgIY

Webex Annotation https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BxhyvvJq6xI

Copyright and Recordings

Recordings

When using VC software it is very simple to record a meeting for members to view later but, this raises questions on copyright and permissions. The PAGB does publish guidance on what is possible and what should be standard guidance when considering recordings.

The latest information can be found at :-

http://www.thepagb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/guidance_recording_meetings.pdf

Image Retention

The images supplied by the club are done so as a courtesy, but all copyright remains with the original authors. All images supplied to prejudge should be deleted no later than 7 days after the competition.

Hybrid Meetings

If government guidelines allow for small meetings to take place in the future, some clubs may consider holding hybrid meetings where a portion of the club attend in person and the others attend via VC

Hybrid meetings create a whole new set of challenges and opportunities.

- We want to see the content
- We want to hear the speaker
- Do we want/need to see the speaker/judge?

Case 1, speaker on zoom

If the speaker is on zoom remotely, we can see the speaker/judge (Picture in picture), hear the speaker/judge and we can project the output of a laptop as usual. Members can meet and interact if the laws/guidelines allow to do so.

Pros
- Allows the social element of some members meeting in person (all rules followed of course)
- Allows content to be delivered to members who cannot or do not want to meet physically
- Removes the restriction of distance for speaker selection

Cons
- Speakers picture can obscure the content unless multiple projectors and screens are used
- Speaker cannot interact / see the physical audience easily unless another camera is used
- Side discussions and interactions in the room can interfere with the session
- Questions from the audience need to be relayed between the 2 methods

Technicalities
- Requires a good network connection in the room
- Laptop will need a sound system connected
- A 2nd laptop/camera to show the room to the virtual audience maybe required
- Might be possible to project and use a webcam from one laptop depending on position etc.

Case 2, Speaker at the front of the room

If we want the speaker interacting with the room in the usual way whilst a laptop shares content this raises a few more technical challenges. But does provide a higher quality experience to the room.

Pros
- Allows the social element of people meeting in person (all rules followed of course)
- Allows content to be delivered to members who cannot or do not want to meet physically
- Speaker can interact with the in-person audience

Cons
- Side discussions and interactions in the room can interfere with the virtual session
- Questions from the audience need to be relayed between the 2 methods
- Speaker distance now must be considered
- Speaker may need to be on video for the remote audience

Technicalities
- Requires a good network connection in the room
- Speaker will need a wireless microphone connected to a laptop to feed into zoom and the room
- Content, speaker and room may all need to be presented to the remote audience