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Let's Make 3 New Year's Rezoomlutions

Along with your resolutions to spend more time exercising, less time doomscrolling, and to finally reach out to that person whom you've been avoiding (even though they know what they did, and it really shouldn't be your responsibility to call, but Michelle Obama said "go high," so that's what you're going to do) – yes, along with all those good intentions, we'd like to suggest a few work-related resolutions for the New Year.

While we're all excited about the prospects of being vaccinated and eventually returning to our workplaces, most of us are still looking at a minimum of 4-6 months of working remotely, which means that videoconferences will remain a significant part of our day-to-day activities. With that in mind, and drawing from the learnings in our report, "Unmuted: What works, what doesn't and how we can all do better when working together online," we respectfully offer the following three New Year's Rezoomlutions for a brighter and more productive 2021. *(Please scroll down for the full story.)*

Upcoming online classes at The Goodman Center

PLAN CAMPAIGNS

Strategic Communications: Cutting Through the Clutter

January 21 & 22
11am - 12pm PT

WORK ONLINE

Unmuted: The Webinar

January 28
11am - 12pm PT

TELL STORIES

Storytelling: Tapping the Power of Narrative

Feb. 3, 10, 17 & 24
9am - 10am PT

Let's Make 3 New Year's Resolutions

No matter what videoconferencing platform you use, the following "Resolutions" are for anyone who wants to ensure that their online meetings, webinars or webcasts are as engaging, educational, and productive as they can be:

We resolve to make our videoconferences as accessible as possible. This should be a no-brainer: if your participants have any difficulty seeing, hearing, or understanding the content, nothing else that you do in the course of the convening will matter. The most widely used platforms (e.g., Zoom, Webex, Microsoft Teams, et. al.) have all improved or added to their toolkits for accessibility, making it easier for organizations like yours to provide closed captions, real-time language translation, automatic transcripts and more. You can also consult websites such as [Section508.gov](https://www.section508.gov) and [webaim.org](https://www.webaim.org) to find recommendations and guidelines for making your videoconferences and all communications materials as accessible as possible.

We resolve to give everyone the time, space, and knowledge to participate fully. The pandemic. The insurrection. Whatever other awful thing happened between the time we wrote this and the time you're reading it. The New Year is already feeling too much like the Old Year, so little wonder that many of us continue to feel overwhelmed. Let's not underestimate this when we gather online. As people join, they may need a minute or two to catch their breath and refocus before they're completely ready to engage.

Let's build that time into the beginning of each session, whether that translates into a formal activity or simply checking in with people as they log on. And if you are unsure of participants' familiarity with the videoconferencing platform itself, take time to cover instructions for muting and unmuting, asking questions or dealing with technical problems, turning their cameras on and off, etc. Let's make sure that people feel welcome, valued, and that they know how to use all the tools that are part of the experience.

We resolve to rediscover the benefits of the telephone. Remember the phone call? You could actually converse with someone without having to think about what you were wearing or what your immediate environs looked like. And you could take notes without worrying about possibly offending the other party because you weren't staring directly into their eyes nonstop for 30 minutes. Those were the days, weren't they?

Let's bring them back – your colleagues will thank you. In the survey for our "Unmuted" report, we asked this question: "How often do you feel that a web meeting could have been conducted just as effectively (or even more effectively) via telephone or other audio-only format?" Nearly two-thirds of respondents answered sometimes, frequently, or always. Anecdotally, I've lost count of the number of times I have scheduled telephone calls instead of Zoom meetings and heard expressions of gratitude for the chance to be off-camera for a few wonderful minutes. Sure, there will be situations where the telephone will not be an adequate replacement for a videoconference, but knocking a few Zoom calls off the calendar could make you feel better than all that exercise you never got around to.

About Us

free-range thinking is written by Andy Goodman and edited by Celia Hoffman. To read back issues, download free publications, and to learn more about our work, please visit www.thegoodmancenter.com.

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