

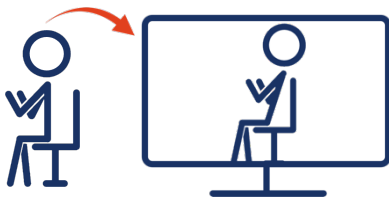


When speaking through a screen – whether a computer or phone or television – the appearance of confidence is essential for effective audience engagement.

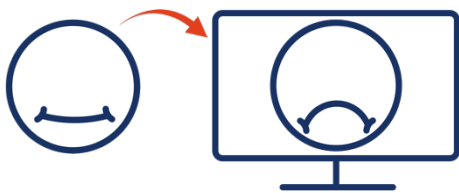
But what audiences experience watching a speaker in person is different from what audiences would experience watching that same speaker through a screen. Why? **Because the screen always distorts.** Some distortions are positive; some distortions are negative. But the distortions are the same across every form of screen.

Therefore, the strategy for effective on-screen performance is to **adapt the inputs into the screen** to play into the positive distortions and neutralize the negative distortions.

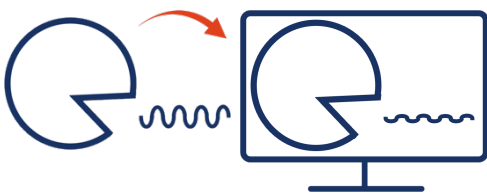
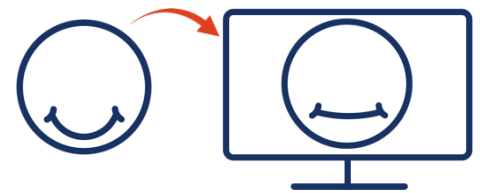
Here are three distortions that affect an audience's experience of a speaker through a screen:



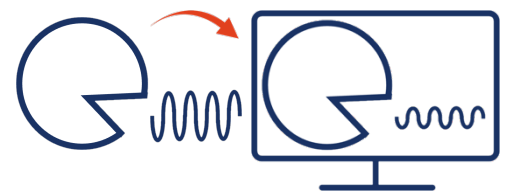
The screen distorts a speaker's posture relative to the camera. An upright posture appears on screen as though the speaker is leaning back. **A slightly forward leaning posture appears on screen as upright and attentive.**



The screen distorts a speaker's facial muscles down. A neutral facial expression is distorted to a frown. **A smiling facial expression distorts to a neutral and confident expression.**



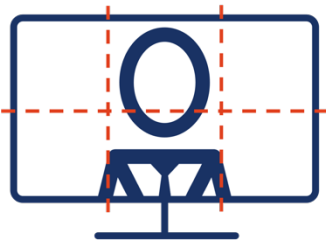
The microphone compresses sound waves. A dynamic voice in person is distorted to a flat voice through the screen. **Exaggerated vocal animation is distorted to a dynamic voice through the screen.**



Audiences who experience a speaker through their computer or phone screen judge those speakers based on their primary experience of watching someone speak to them through a screen - **television news anchors.**

Speakers need to **optimize their staging** when engaging audiences through a computer or phone screen to match the experience created by television news anchors.

There are three ways speakers can optimize their on-screen engagement through a computer or phone screen:



Position on the screen

Television news anchors are always positioned in certain ways on the television screen, which is where the audience's eyes go when watching someone speak through a computer screen. Speakers need to ensure that their faces are positioned primarily in the top half and vertical center of the screen.

Lighting

When speaking through a screen, it is important that a speaker's face is sufficiently illuminated to grab an audience's eye and make the speaker easy to watch. Therefore, speakers need to ensure their lighting enables audiences to see their face clearly on screen. This may require using portable ring lights or other external light sources.

Eye contact

There is no true eye contact when engaging people through a screen. However, speakers need to create the illusion of eye contact with the audience to engage that audience effectively. This requires speakers to look directly into the screen's camera, which audiences will experience as the speaker looking into their eyes.