A Guide to Digital Stage Management

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**Setting Up:**

* You will need **reliable** technology.
* As the work will be shared live online you will need computers with top specs in terms of speed and performance.
* Run the live event from your **main computer** with a **second monitor** plugged in to access the media shared without needing to exit the main event software i.e. Zoom.
* Consider having a **secondary computer** to use as a backup in case there is an issue during the event. This computer would also be logged in to the same event or webinar platform, also as a host.
* Consider **previewing the event as the audience would**, such as from an iPad, phone or a secondary computer. That way you can see what the audience is seeing from a variety of devices during rehearsals and the main event.
* Consider also having your **tech script** on a separate iPad, and also to manage project communications such as WhatsApp messages or emails.
* Consider having **different internet sources** available from different providers in case one drops out during the event – these can be plugged directly into the computer using an ethernet cable.
* You can use consoles such as **Stream Deck** or **Loupedeck** which you can plug into your computer via USB which have a number of physical buttons you can assign to software commands. For example, assigning button to share screen, or stop sharing.
* You could also use phone apps to trigger cues during the event such as the **VLC remote app**. This will avoid showing the VLC menu when the media is being shared.
* Another useful piece of equipment is the **ATEM Mini Video Mixer**; an entry-level video mixer that mixes up to four HDMI sources such as cameras, computers or iPads.
* Make sure your set up is appropriate for your needs and **tested** in a real-life simulation environment.

**Preparing for the meeting:**

* The host needs to **compile all the relevant scripts, media and information** into one folder and copy that folder to the secondary back-up computer.
* **Run several tests** by doing a mock-up meeting to practice sharing all of the media as well as swapping in between the main and back-up computer.
* A useful idea is to **disable all notifications** on all devises and close all applications that are not being used, so as not to be distracted during the event.
* Carry out **video link checks with key participants**, speakers and performers at least a couple of days before the event. These meetings take up to 15 minutes to check internet speed (using speedtest.net) and also provide basic tips to improve sound quality and video image framing.
* Think about **what you would like the audience to see** as soon as they are let into the event – a slide, a short video clip, a countdown, some music?
* Think about what you would like the audience to see before they enter the event. With Zoom you can set up a welcome message for the waiting room.
* **Start the event 30-60 minutes before the call time**. Your team members can log in around 30 minutes before the event starts and key participants about 15 minutes before so you are ready to allow your audience in around 5 minutes before the start of the event.

**Housekeeping & Rules of the Meeting:**

* These will vary depending on the event.
* You should consider **safeguarding**, **accessibility** and having **tech support** available throughout the session.
* Plan with your team who will be responsible for delivering housekeeping rules; as the Digital Stage Manager you should be focussing on any tech issues that may arise and operating the tech during the event.
* An example of the types of roles a team may take:
1. **Digital Host** or **Digital Stage Manager** – this person will manage the software, will start and end the event, mix and share all the media, create breakout rooms, etc.
2. **Event Presenter** or **Host** – this person engages with the audience and verbally introduces the segments of the event.
3. **Safeguarding Support** – this person will publish all the safeguarding notes and make themselves available to privately message during the event if the need arises.
4. **Tech Support** – this person will be available for the audience to message if they need tech support during the event. These could be simple problems like having the latest zoom update installed, muting or unmuting or navigate settings on their device.
5. **Access Support** – this person will support the audience in accessing any alternative formats you have available during the event.
6. **Chat Moderator** – this person will monitor the chat function during the event.
* Sometimes for smaller teams or budgets it is possible to merge some of these roles together, but it is not ideal. However, you must not expect the Digital Stage Manager to take on these roles as their focus should be on running this event.
* You should **include the rules and housekeeping in the event booking confirmation** and also reiterate it at the beginning of the event; you should agree a script with your team ahead of time and this probably shouldn’t fall on the Digital Stage Manager.

**Top 5 Tips for Working Online Accessibly:**

* Build the right **team**.
* **Test, test, test**. Then plan, adapt, then do some more testing.
* Aim for the Big 3: **British Sign Language**, **Captioning** & **Audio Description.**
* Give yourself and your team **more time** and **budget** for this.
* Stay up to date with **software updates** and changes.
* **Develop relationships** with people who can fill in access roles such as BSL translators, as they are often in high demand.
* **Don’t compromise**!

**Additional Resources:**

Zoom Help Desk
<https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us>

Vocal Eyes Resources
<https://vocaleyes.co.uk/services/resources>

Graeae Resources
[https://graeae.org/about/resources](https://graeae.org/about/resources/)