



Comm'l Classroom: What does your home office look like? - by Edward Smith

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This column is offered to help educate agents new to commercial and investment brokerage and serve as a review of basics for existing practitioners.

When I started out in the real estate business, I was taught to dress for success. Always wear the “uniform” (for men a suit and tie), to look like a professional who is used to collecting a big commission.

For most of 2020—and into the foreseeable future—many of us have been working from home and communicating via virtual conferences. As an instructor, I am typically looking at 30-40 students at a time. It is amazing the differences in appearance, rarely do I see anyone “dressed up,” most are dressed neat but casually, but other folks look like they just got out of bed!

Some folks forget that the camera on their device is showing everyone on the call what you are doing. I have seen people eating, playing with their pets, on the phone with others and even one person folding her laundry.

The camera also shows everyone what is behind you. Some broadcast from neat and tidy rooms, others are obviously in a kitchen, bedroom (with an unmade bed behind) or basement. Sometimes we see “art” on the wall behind them paintings, posters, or pictures. These can be nice images or disturbing distractions. We also see people operating out of a dedicated home office, with printers, filing cabinets and stacks of folders all over the place. To some you look busy. To others, you may appear unorganized.

What message is your background delivering about you? Focus on what others are seeing about you.

This is particularly important when you are video conferencing with a client or customer. If you have

a home office or a blank wall behind you, and you have some certifications or awards consider displaying them to enhance your credibility.

Learn to get the maximum opportunities out of the virtual provider that you use. Most offer “virtual backgrounds,” where you can use clip art or a photograph as your background. You could also design your background, perhaps with your company logo or your contact information using a PowerPoint slide, then save it as a photo. If you do decide to use a virtual background, you may want to have a “green screen” behind you, which prevents occasional distortion. Mine is simply attached to the back of my chair.

Speaking of PowerPoint—when presenting a property convert a bunch of pictures of it, into a PowerPoint slide show which you can narrate during your video conference.

Also remember, when virtually meeting with a client, body language talks. One of the first “rules” is to have good eye contact with the person you are communicating with. You do not want to stare; but 50% eye contact shows you are focused and responsive to them. You may only be seeing facial expressions with a virtual conference, but it helps you measure their responses and sincerity. Body language is instinctive and not intentional, which is why it is so revealing. But, also remember your body language, what are your facial expressions telling them.

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