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Helping your (newly) remote teams stay productive and satisfied

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PRESENTATION

Andy Choi

Hi, I'm Andy Choi with Verizon, and thank you for joining us for our Small Business Webinar Series. These are webinars focused on what's happening right now as we bring in different experts to share professional insights and ideas, all to help businesses like yours. I'm pleased to introduce to you our host and special guest today, hosting the webinar today is entrepreneur, author, and speaker Ramon Ray. Now Ramon is the founder of Smart Hustle Media. He brings a lot of small business experience with him. Our special guest today is Anita Campbell, who knows a lot about working remotely, something we're all learning everyday right now. She successfully worked with a remote team for more than 15 years. She and Ramon will be talking about how to help your newly remote teams stay productive and satisfied. It is, of course, a huge job so let's get right to it. Let's hand it over to Ramon and Anita.

Ramon Ray

Andy, thanks so much, and I am indeed excited to be here. I'm really excited to partner with Verizon's Small Business Webinar Series, and really excited about the ones we've done, the ones that are coming, and excited to work with my friend, and someone who I consider a mentor, Anita Campbell with smallbiztrends.com, so Anita, Again, thanks to Andy, but thank you, Anita, for joining us in this exciting discussion today all about working from home, what we're all doing and what we probably will be doing, Anita, for the foreseeable future. So, welcome, Anita Campbell. Thanks for joining me today.

Anita Campbell

Oh, thanks for having me, Ramon.

Ramon Ray

You're welcome, and while we're doing this, listen, there's going to be a lot of discussion, we're going to have time for questions and answers, and I encourage you to use the power of Twitter and send out some love to VerizonBusiness on Twitter. Definitely tag Anita at AnitaCampbell on Twitter, Also SmallBiztrends. Feel free to tag me at RamonRay. So, we want to see that Twitter engagement, and as you have a question, if something comes to your mind, ask that in the Questions tab. We want to take those questions and help you grow your business.

So, Anita, listen. I think let's dive right into it. I know that the structure of how we do remote work is important to you, and I think it's important to have a framework. It's amazing, Anita, I've been amazed at some people like you and I, we've done this for ages, for some people, it's very, very new, so what are those three things, Anita, we want to focus on as we're looking at, overall, what is that core structure work at home now or remote working? What do we have to do, Anita?
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Well, first of all, you need a really good platform, so there are three things in your platform. You need chat, first of all. Chat, remember, you're not in the room with anybody, so you've got to be able to communicate very quickly, and so that's where chat comes in. Instead of walking over to somebody's cubicle or whatever or meeting them at the coffee machine, you are actually chatting away, and then that chat has to have the ability to do voice if you need it, but you're not going to pick up the voice all the time. It's really going to be chat. Second thing is you need conferencing, that actual ability to have voice, and it has to really be video enabled. You're not going to use video all the time. Now like in my organization, internally we might only use video maybe one meeting a week or something like that. We're having video for customers and outsiders. We're having it for when we just really need to see face to face. You want to see facial expressions, you want to see body language, you want to see people understand something.

_Ramon Ray_

Anita, that is important because I think we can do [audio] all day and chat all day, which is good, has its place, but I mean video, as you know I say a lot, humanizes and personalizes your brand, so I want to underline that video has its place.

_Anita Campbell_

Absolutely. It does. It's very important, and the third piece you need, of course, is shared documents, and we could not survive without shared documents, so for example, we will use shared documents in a meeting we'll have the meeting agenda or we'll give reports on a shared document. Everybody shares the link to their report in the chat window, and then we all open up the document, and we can talk via voice about someone's report or follow the agenda or whatever it is, because I don't know, if you're like me, I've got to see things. I mean, I have to like actually look at something. I mean, I can't just sit there and listen. So, those are your three things that you absolutely need.

_Ramon Ray_

I think that's important. Thank you for that, Anita. What about when people talk about also the hassles of scheduling and things of that nature? Do you find, Anita, that in your experience of what you're working on, that you have the chat, you have the video, you have these things set up, but what about even the aspect of just the hassle of I've got to do this, got to do that, even the aspect of I have to take care of my family now for those who are not used to it, it's new, being at home, where does that come in?

_Anita Campbell_

Well, we found that it was essential to schedule everyone. We are very flexible. I mean, we're all working from home. I'm an entrepreneur, so I run my business very nimbly like an entrepreneur, we don't have a lot of formality in what we're doing. I mean, we try to present a good formal approach when we're dealing with customers and so on, but internally, we're informal. However, I did find that unless you set schedules and say to people, this is the time that I'm going to work, or that person says, this is the time that I'm going to work, what happens is, first of all, you don't respect people's personal boundaries, OK, and then people start eating into other's personal time. They're chatting away at 7 a.m. and the person is not ready to stand up. They're just rolling out of bed. They're not ready to start chatting about work at 7 a.m., and we also found that once we set up schedules, people really appreciated that. They felt like they had a structure in their day, and so we did something really simple. We use a shared calendar, so whatever calendaring system you use, I don't care if it's Microsoft, it's Google Calendar, Apple, whatever it is. You just set up a calendar that we can call it hours, and everybody has their work hours on it, and so if you want to see if somebody is in at work, you just check the calendar and you see is this their working hour? Because we have people really across all time zones. I mean, we literally have people on other continents who work with us, as well as people on all the U.S. timezones, so it's very important.

_Ramon Ray_
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And I'm curious, Anita, when you talk about scheduling, scheduling, does that go for just those who are in your office? Clearly, we're talking about that, and I know it's hard to schedule; like I'm here with my wife and my daughter, I can't really tell my wife, hey, you're going to do this at a certain time, and my daughter, but I'm curious what you think about that extending to those who, again, for those who may be a bit newer working from home, can you do some scheduling when you're blending that personal and corporate as well, or does that just work for corporate? How does that work as far as you're seeing it?

Anita Campbell

No, I think it's good, and our people really appreciate it with the family too, because the family knows that they get certain time and it's not going to be infringed, and it's especially important right now, during this time of social distancing, and when we have all these concerns, because we have some people who work with us, they have elderly family members, and they're having to go do grocery shopping for them, they have to go assist and run errands for them, and so we are flexible in our schedule to allow them, and I think that's just human to allow it, but at the same time, by them telling us, hey, I'm going to go do these personal things, everybody knows, there are no missed expectations. It's like OK, they're going to be out for two hours, they've got to go grocery shopping for mom or whatever it is.

Ramon Ray

Yes, and I think it's important. I think, as I tell people, sometimes I do some airport pickup for my church and other things that are important to me, my community. The point being is that people don't mind if you're late, or there's a problem picking somebody up at the airport, they just don't like waiting and not know what's happening. If you tell somebody, I'm going to be three hours late, great, no problem, I'll go shopping, but don't not communicate, so I think that's so important.

Anita, to that point about communication, I know one thing that's important to you, we're doing it now, is going back to the tone and talking and things of this nature, any guidance or that you talk to your team about? Sometimes when you're doing an email, I've gotten to this over the past few weeks, you're doing an email, people can't really figure out what you're trying to say. You do a video, sometimes it solves it, or you do an instant message, one of the platforms, any pro/con to sending a text versus sending a voice message versus doing a video, anything we should think about as we're doing this remote work? Because there's a number of options we have. I'm not sure if we do faxing too much anymore, but maybe we should add that to the mix.

Anita Campbell

Well, I will say this, we have to do a lot of chatting, text chatting, in my organization just because of the nature of what we're doing, everybody going back and forth, but we've had to learn how to do that, because tone matters, and I will say this. Emojis help. They really do. You might think they're corny, but they help. Putting a little smiley next to something will prevent the other person from misunderstanding. Giving people a thumbs up instead of having to type oh, OK, that sounds great. Just the thumbs up. It's very fast, and it just feels very positive. We have a little chat group, it's a little what we call our success group where we share something great that happened for the company and give a little attaboy or an attagirl to whomever was instrumental or the several people who did that, and it's great, and we call it our success chat group, and then everybody's able to do thumbs up and hearts and big smiles and everything. That sort of thing really matters.

Another thing I've learned is that when you're doing remote meetings, you have to allow time for, get this, small talk.

Ramon Ray

Yes, that's true.

Anita Campbell
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Yes, and I like to get right into business. I really do. I like to, like, let's get to it, but I've learned that you'll get more attention from people if you just give them 10 minutes at the beginning of a meeting to do a little small talk if they haven't been chatting with each other, maybe you have a once a month meeting. It really does help a lot, and sometimes we'll share images too, so like over our conferencing or our video, say, hey, look what I did this weekend or look at the grocery store shelves or whatever it is. It's great.

Ramon Ray

No, and I think, Anita, part of that is – and we're going to move to a bit here to talk about etiquette and things of that nature, which I want to move to, but I think that the reason why I'm hearing that this is important, Anita, is because we are humans and, like myself, you and I... I like to joke around and kid and all that, but I think it's important that connectivity of as humans. We can't shake hands, smile, give an air kiss, or whatever it is, so I think that that's important. I got in trouble, Anita, and I realized the power of emojis. I have a saying that I do. Stop, and it's more of a kidding, so it only makes sense in person. Like say Anita says something about me, Ramon, your hair is weird or something. I go, ‘Stop!’ But via email, Anita, stop can come out pretty bad. So, I did that with one or two people just because I'm busy, just putting stop, and I moved on. They said I'm so sorry. I was like, no, I meant like, ‘Stop!’, so I think that's important.

Listen, you have a lot of tips, and again, I want to remind people as you're hearing our discussion, please in the chat, in the comment, put your questions, put your comments and suggestions for me and Anita, and again, let's use the power of Twitter. Let people know you're hearing this at the Verizon Business Small Business Forum. Let people know, tag HorizonBusiness, tag me and Anita, SmallBizTrends, RamonRay, let the world know what we're doing.

So, Anita, let's move to another topic that I know is very important, and we've touched on it to a degree already, but the power of etiquette and things of this nature, what I think we'll call some ground rules, as it were, as we're moving forward in this. Etiquette's one of the few points, Anita. Talk about etiquette, what are some things we need to know and why is that important?

Anita Campbell

Well, it's very important that you not assume people know this, and particularly with younger team members who may not have a lot of experience in the business world. I'm reminded of something I read recently, I was shocked that a judge here in Florida had to write to the local bar association and remind lawyers that during this time when the judge's allowing remote hearings in family court not to show up bare chested, which apparently a male attorney did, not to show up in bed, which another attorney did, so all of these things and you would think that – I used to be an attorney, so I would think my fellow lawyers or former lawyers would know that, but people don't always think about this. They may take the formality a little bit too far, so do remind people just nicely and set the tone the right way. No oversharing of details, personal details. No inappropriate images, that sort of thing. Respect other people's time, pay attention to tone, these things all go just a tremendously long way, and really be flexible. Right now we have a situation where you may have people who work at home all the time, but up to now they have been working at home, they might be the only person in the home during work hours. Now, everybody's at home. Right? So, you have college students at home, you've got spouses, you've got kids, and you have to be flexible and allow for that, but you also have to respect other people too, because nobody wants to be in a meeting with a dog incessantly barking in the back. We all love dogs, but please, or the baby's crying and so on. We understand, a toddler throws a fit, but there has to be limits to that, and so, you might just have to remind people. A good way to do it is at the beginning of a meeting just remind everyone make sure we've got the phones turned off, make sure the dog has been taken out, make sure everything's taken care of.

Ramon Ray
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And I would be very transparent, Anita. Me and my wife, we share an office, and as we're talking now, I hope I'm not too transparent, she's like there, so we've had to come to terms, compromise like, OK, talking to my wife, when you come in the room, don't forget to turn off your ringer. My ringer is already off, but yes, we're humans. She has her business she wants to do, I have what I'm doing here serving Verizon Business customers, so to your point, I think it's about us adults all working together, but the thing you said about the attorneys and lawyers, that was off the chain, and just... that was kind of crazy, but you're right, I've seen the same thing too, especially, I guess, Anita, people who don't know. When we go to a big corporate office, I think we have that corporate shroud. We put our suits and ties and jackets and heels, whatever, on, but I think at home we forget, wait a minute, this is business too, so I think it's important.

I know health is another thing, Anita, that's important. I've had to do that myself. I know that even, like yourself, we're used to being at home, but, Anita, I don't know about you, those of us who are used to it, I can wake up at 6 a.m., 6 a.m., whatever, sit down at a seat, and it's midnight or it's 10 p.m., so I have to self-discipline myself as, especially now that we're more forced, I'm not traveling all over the world as you know I do, I've had to discipline myself to be healthier. What's that about, Anita? Why is that so important?

Anita Campbell

It's critically important because that will sap the productivity of your team when people are just... they're not even able to sit up because they... because of poor posture, and suddenly they have a back problem that just comes on them just like that overnight, and I've had sciatica pain and it is excruciating, you can't sit, you can't lie, you can't do anything, and I found that posture made all the difference, and you have to not take this for granted either with people, because you have an office, you have a desk. I have an office with a desk, right? A lot of people do. I'm shocked, though, how many people we bring on the team who don't have a desk, they don't even have table space really to use, and they want to curl up with a laptop on the sofa. Well, that's fine, if you're going to do that for a half an hour to check your emails and whip off a few quick responses. If you're trying to work for eight hours, working on spreadsheets or documents, it's not going to work and you're going to end up really hurting, and we've had team members who have had back pain that has put them out of commission for days at a time, including myself and I've learned. We've had carpal tunnel issues, we have had eye strain issues, so these are really very important things.

So, my tips are this. Remind people to get up and move around, so like in our meetings, what we will do is if it's a long meeting, we might start it just saying, OK, let's stop and everyone stretch. We all get up, we stretch, and actually one of our team members will actually give us all a few prompts. OK, now do a couple of backward leg lifts—

Ramon Ray

She's the resident stretch expert.

Anita Campbell

Exactly, and we have to do that. You can have a step challenge, so that's another thing. Everybody... you have a joint challenge and you can use some sort of Fitbit or something like that, or anything, just self-report how many steps you're taking a day. Just remind people. We have found we just have to take care of ourselves and our health. It's very important.

Ramon Ray

Anita, I'm going to have to join a Small Biz Trends team meeting and challenge you all to doing some stuff. We're going to have to see. Maybe we'll get the Verizon team to join us and we'll have a Small Biz Trends fitness virtual challenge of some sort.

Another thing, Anita, that I know is very – again, these are just great comments and tips and discussions I think, Anita, that people oftentimes just don't think about, even myself, Anita. I've done, as you know, hundreds of webinars, we've done, you and I, during a
year, or more, and I think always you're learning and remembering what did I forget, and I think one of those things is visuals, is noise. I don't know why it is, Anita, but—I live in like a little community, a development here, and when I'm on some webinars, some calls and discussions, my landscaper person, [audio].

So, my question to you, Anita, what are some things we can do to combat whatever the noise, the visuals, which are two different things, what are your tips, your guidance, so we can look as good as we can, and so the sound around us can be optimal? What do you say? What do we do?

**Anita Campbell**

So, a couple of things. One, I recommend people actually try to use a headphone much of the time. For this, I don't have it on and it does mess up my hair, it will look wild when I take it off, but actually when I'm working, I do use that headset a lot, and it's actually a wired headset, and it really... I think it makes all the difference. It cancels out background noise. It focuses the voice. And another thing that we do is, if we're in a meeting and someone's background noise is really a problem, everyone will say please use the mute button, mute, so a mute button is your friend and you might just have to remind everybody, and that's OK, and sometimes we'll have three people out of five in a meeting on mute because of background noises, the dog, or the little toddler throwing a fit, or whatever it is.

**Ramon Ray**

No, that's true, and I think it's so important. I know here – and I think it depends, Anita. I think those who are blessed and who are going to be doing this for the long-term – you and I, of course, I'm sure we have our setups. I have an office, I have a door I can close, and my family's pretty generous. I explain... we have like an internal code, as it were, sometimes you're doing, say, a radio interview or TV that has to be optimal. Here, we're talking to the Verizon Business community, it has to be optimal, but if a door opens or closes a bit, people know we're small businesses so we have that level of... or is it just me and Anita chatting, you can make whatever noise you want, so we have that structure for what we're doing, so I think that's important.

Connections, Anita, I know are another important thing as well, and I know it's hard. We can't get into the detail because there's so many variables, but I think for me, just to remind people, one thing I've done, Anita, and I hope it doesn't get too geeky is I recently upgraded my internal home, because again, a Verizon Business has great connectivity, but internally, I had to buy two little new switches, like little internet things for those who don't know, I got some faster cabling. My internet went better, because that's not the telecom provider's fault, that's internally. But my question to you, any tips, or ideas for us in home that we should note or consider. I know, again, everybody has different situations, but what you have done for your own self, Anita?

**Anita Campbell**

We have a few things. We find that if there's somebody in the home who is a gamer and gaming while trying to hold a teleconference you might ask the family member if they wouldn't mind just waiting until the conference is done.

We actually have learned that it's better not to try to do video if somebody's connection is really, really bad that day, and certain platforms deliver the connections better. For example, certain free platforms, sometimes they're just very sensitive to someone who has a poor connection and things will drop a lot or things will freeze. Some of the better-paid platforms usually can handle that better, so if it's really important that you have a good connection, you might want to try some kind of a platform that's known for being a really good platform, as opposed to maybe the free chats or something that you have.

Screen sharing is another thing that can put a lot of burden on things, so if you can avoid screen sharing like we do in meetings, instead of sharing the agenda for everybody, we talk and then we each individually look at the agenda as a shared document. That helps.
I've even, though, gone as far as... I've given some financial assistance to some team members to upgrade their connections. We had one team member who had DSL and that was a challenge. He's kind of in a rural area, so that was really a challenge with working with him. But you might want to do that, you might be better off rather than constantly being interrupted in meetings with, 'oh, this person dropped, or everything is frozen', it really eats up a lot of time. That speed is very important. And we know that's important in a business setting, but now you have to realize that each person's individual connection really matters. Maybe you're better off saying, 'hey, I'll contribute half the cost of upgrading your connection if you will upgrade it'.

Ramon Ray

Anita, we're almost to the favorite that I like where we dive into the questions from people and, again, people have been sending in questions, thank you for that. I hope Twitter is exploding with insights and retweets and taking screenshots tagging Verizon Business, tagging Small Biz Trends, tagging Anita Campbell, tagging Ramon Ray. Let's wrap up, Anita, with about two minutes, three minutes or so. You don't have to list them all and for those who are like, 'wow, where's all this insight coming from?' that's OK, be patient, we're going to provide this deck, we have some slides and handouts, we're going to provide these to you, so don't worry. Anita, I'm just looking off the screen here, I'm just going to go through some of the points you have, maybe we'll take two minutes and we can trade down this list, but I see computer and built-in video.

My two tips on that, computers are important. Have RAM, good megabytes of RAM, good hard disk space and oftentimes the built-in webcam, I find, on a notebook is not the best. I have an external webcam, so I'm just riffing off to you. What are two or three more you want to echo—go down the list here, Anita, that you can talk about?

Anita Campbell

A good headset and a wired headset. Wireless, Bluetooth, they work, too, but sometimes they can sound tinny, so you're better off with a wired one a lot of times, it's easier. If your microphone in your computer is not working well, you might need an external mic, as I have found. Also, pay attention to the basics. Cybersecurity is really, really important and you have to keep in mind that you now have remote team members, so you want to make sure they've got appropriate antivirus and other security, that their Wi-Fi connection is secure and that they are connecting to your systems through a VPN, right, or some kind of a secure connection, because remember, especially now where people are forced to work from home, they may have to deal with customer records or something. This is very, very sensitive. You have to take care, you can't just assume, it's not the same as being in the office.

Ramon Ray

Anita, this has been amazing. Let's jump to—what I think, Anita—the most exciting part this is to take questions. Are you ready, Anita?

Anita Campbell

Yes, let's go.

Ramon Ray

Let's do it, here we go. Listen, wow, we've had some questions coming in here, Anita. The first question, Anita, I'm going to give you some time to chew and think on this was, tips and tricks to stay motivated. But before we get to your answer on that, Anita, somebody wanted to remind you, they say, "Dear Miss Anita, it's not just about video, but also telex is around", so that is cute, I had to search what is telex.
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Let’s dive into it, a lot of questions here, Anita. Really, I think that’s really a good question and thank you for whoever asked that the first... Anita, staying motivated, we’re all alone, we’re home, as it were, we’re busy, what do you do? I’ll share what I do after you go, but what do you do to stay motivated, how do you motivate your team?

Anita Campbell

I keep thinking about what I’m doing for others. That’s a big thing, so whoever that is, whether that’s your family, whether it’s your team, like in my case being a business owner, it motivates me to think about what I’m doing with my team and how I’m helping them.

Right now, I’m proud of the fact that my team has stayed employed. That’s not a small thing. So, I try not to have hubris, but I just try to feel good about that and that gives me a sense of purpose. I think a sense of purpose is really important for anyone. What are you working for? What are you doing? Have little goals. I like to have little goals. I know one of my team members actually puts her goals on post-it notes, and she has them on her monitor and so she sees them when she turns on her computer in the morning. Another person has tabs that open up every time he turns on his computer and one of them is his goals, right there. That’s really good.

I say stay connected, that’s another thing. It’s really important, watch out for disengagement, like if people are just not chatting and it’s hard to get in touch with them. If they’re giving you little one-word answers in chat and not engaging, that’s a warning sign, so make an extra effort to reach out to them, talk to them, give them a pat on the back.

Ramon Ray

I think that’s powerful, Anita. The same with me. I’ll just mention one. I have so many different methods on motivation. For me it starts in the morning, I usually do some things that I do, but I think one thing is I post quite a bit to Instagram and Twitter, as you know, Anita. For me, it’s just therapeutic, so if I argue with my wife or I’m upset I put it on Instagram, wait a minute, let me check that, maybe not quite that far, but it’s kind of like that. For me, I happen to be open and that’s just my motivation. I wear how I feel right now, on my shoulder.

Let’s keep moving on, questions diving in. Again, if you didn’t get your question in, we are going to try to answer that in some way, shape, or fashion. Anita’s information is in the document you’re going to get after this or during. Feel free to hit her up, hit me up as well, Twitter is great, email, however.

Somebody asked, what apps, products, or services do we use for video conferencing, shared documents etc.

I’m going to answer that, Anita, because I think, listen, we could mention a whole bunch of tools and names and all that. Verizon Business has amazing technology, but I think, listen, Anita tell me if you agree, just go to www.smallbiztrends.com, go to www.smarthustle.com, check out Verizon Business, there are a number of the names of tools and resources, but I think for me you can just use a search engine, there are so many, but it’s more important, I think, Anita, how they’re using them. I think that’s what I find, when people ask me for a list of tools, I shy away from saying a name sometimes because there’s there or four or 10 good ones, it all depends on what works for you.

Think about the small talk, Anita, somebody just wanted to kudos and to you and say, Anita, the small talk idea is great.

Somebody else, again, thank you for talking about... so many are coming in Anita. They’re doing telemedicine work from home and they say, “thank you, this webinar is informative but lighthearted”.

Let’s dive into another question here. Here’s a good one Anita, and I’m going to ask you the question but then I’m going to broaden it. Anita, how do you tell people nicely to stick to a timeframe in a meeting? Let’s take that question, particularly time management
in a virtual meeting, but even bigger, how do you— if you have to talk hard to someone or something that’s not so nice— how do you do that to a team member, so maybe we’ll do both of those.

**Anita Campbell**

Let’s start with what to do upfront, say... you can do it as simple as, I’d like to stick to exactly one hour today’, or say, ‘I have a hard stop at X time’, that works really well. Let’s challenge ourselves to get this done quickly because I know you’re all really busy and need to do things, so it’s not about you, it’s about them and their time. If you’re in the meeting and people are taking a long time, just a lighthearted laugh, well, let’s see if we can pick it up here OK, wrap it up, see where we are. That’s kind of the best you can do. I’ve actually resorted, though, at times to a private chat with that person, so you can also go to whatever it is that you might be using, even if – Skype or texting them on their phone or whatever it is, just say, ‘can you try to speed it up a little bit, it seems like we’re really lagging here’; and just in a nice way.

**Ramon Ray**

Anita, I think that is powerful, because you don’t have to be a jerk or mean, Anita, hurry up, we’re waiting. To your earlier comment about the emoji, [audio] you’re talking, so I have a smile and a little chuckle, ‘hey, Anita, thanks, we’re almost out of time’, you’re not going to be offended. You’re a normal person. You’re going to get the message and I’m saying it in love, so I think that’s great. I love it.

This is a technical question, Anita, where somebody is asking about what kind of headset do you use. For me, Anita, my answer, if you have suggestions or want to show any, go ahead. Me, I happen to not use a headset, so my tip is I have a third party external camera on my notebook, that’s one thing I use which the audio, I find, is good, and I do have, Anita, one of those popular podcaster microphones for my audio. But any tip or idea, Anita, you want to share for you and your team what you guys do for audio.

**Anita Campbell**

Yes, several that have worked for me. Microsoft does one called LifeChat, I think it’s called. They’re great. I’ve had several of them. Very comfortable. Logitech, I think that’s how you pronounce it, they make great ones too. Again, focus on the wired ones, because we can always tell when a team member has a Bluetooth one. It sounds very tinny. Now, I do use the Bluetooth, I have a nice ring one that I use on my bicycle to listen to things, but what I do also is I just ask team members, go to Amazon and pick one and we’ll pay for it. That’s typically what they do, but I do try to dissuade them from the Bluetooth.

I know everybody wants to get up and walk around, but you can get one with a really long cord and you can walk in most of your area.

**Ramon Ray**

That is true. I must say, Anita, kudos to the white little earbuds from Apple. I’ve been on a few calls with them and surprisingly, they’re crystal clear, just maybe in that context they were in a quiet room, because I was looking, like, that, so... OK, I can get sidetracked too, Anita, so feel free to laugh and tell me, Ramon, let’s move on.

Anita somebody says here, “What would be the maximum number of participants for a video meeting?” I think it’s an interesting question, because I think, Anita, for smaller businesses if you have, 20, 30, 40 people, it may be hard to have a comfortable meeting. Any guidance on the optimal size for a friendly meeting, not like a webinar, but like a... any advice on that?

**Anita Campbell**
Verizon

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I think it’s going to be really hard once you get around 10-12 people. If you get past that, that could be challenging. One of the things even with video, if somebody is having, they have something going on in their home and they need to be on, what we call the black screen, so they turn their camera off, we let them do that too, so that’s a possibility. I routinely have a meeting that has about 10 people in it, and that’s pretty much the limit that I feel comfortable with, but your mileage may vary.

**Ramon Ray**

But to the person’s point, you end up having 50 people in a team meeting, everybody is not going to comment, then it’s a whole different ballgame.

**Anita Campbell**

It’s a distraction, you’re just watching people’s heads moving.

**Ramon Ray**

Exactly, but somebody [asked], “Would you recommend a Verizon MiFi device?” of course we would. If you need it, hey, that works in a backup. I have one sitting right with me here. I’m not using it now but as a backup.

Let’s see here. “As a manager, when I’m in the same building as my team member, I can see their productivity, how do you easily evaluate productivity remotely. I’m new to this. Any suggestion would help”.

The aspect of leading and managing a remote team and you can’t see them, are they working, is the work getting done? What do we do Anita?

**Anita Campbell**

Well, a couple of things here. One is that if someone is really remote on the other side of the planet, for example, we have used online time tracking apps. Those can be good for somebody, especially, if it’s like a virtual assistant who is doing basic administrative work and you just want to keep tabs on it, you could do it that way. It does not work very well, though, for professionals and managerial type, they’re going to really resist that very heavily, and I don’t know that that would help.

Instead what we try to do is I ask people, estimate how much time you think this project or this thing would take, and we’ve gotten really good at estimating, ‘OK, I did two of these and it took me X amount of minutes to do each one and I have to do 120 of these’, maybe we’re improving a piece of content, ‘I have to do 120 articles and I have to do X number of things to it, and it takes X number of minutes on average’, and then you kind of have an idea. Well, that’s how long it should take. How long do you think it will take you to finish it? I think I can be finished by Thursday, Friday morning at the latest. Great. We’ll talk to you then.

[Audio] kind of have some structure around it.

**Ramon Ray**

With a smile, I like how you did that, Anita. Great, see you Friday. I think that’s true; I’ve gone through it with my own very small business, my daughter does some work for me. At the beginning what I wanted her to do, what she wanted to do, we didn’t know. I said, you know what, here’s my budget, here’s what I can do it for, do it for two weeks, keep track of it, now we have some benchmarks. And if she’s, ‘well, it takes me a million hours at $500 an hour, sorry, it doesn’t work for me’.

Let’s move on here. There’s a few technical questions that I wondered if you have an answer, Anita, but if not, I think it’s important, because we’re on the Verizon Small Business Webinar Series, but somebody asked about signal strength for employees in outlying areas.
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I know, for me, my answer on that, Anita, as we said just to echo that, I had to do some rewiring inside my home which helped boost some things, so I got some new switchers, routers, cabling that really helped. If anybody wants to email me for the details, but I think if you have a bad connectivity outside the home, Anita, I'm not sure if there's much that can be done, except going to satellite and things way beyond my expertise. Any thoughts on low signals in rural areas, as you mentioned. Any thoughts on that?

**Anita Campbell**

One thing is you can setup extenders inside your home and they're actually very easy today, because you can sort of create a mesh network in your home with things that plug in. I would definitely recommend those. When I did that in my home here, that actually helped tremendously.

But I know, for example, if you're using a mobile signal, I'm in a house here in Florida, all the houses have cinderblock walls and cement filled cinderblock walls, so sometimes the connection inside with a mobile connection is not that great, but you can sometimes just position yourself closer to windows, for example, and there are devices that you can buy, signal extenders outside. I know, I think it's a company called Wilson that makes them. One of our team members actually got one of those and said it worked really well.

**Ramon Ray**

We're talking about leadership, time, tech, we can do it all. This is good. Let's keep moving on. We're going to end in about three minutes, I think, two minutes, Anita. Again, those who didn't get their question answered, hit up Anita directly, feel free to connect to me directly, ramon@smarthustle.com and I think through Verizon Small Business Webinar Series, we want to serve you so we'll try to do that.

Let's squeeze in maybe one or two more questions, Anita. Do you have any suggestions on how to raise your hand you're in a group telephone conference and good etiquette? I think you've touched on it, Anita, but let's talk about that. You've got 10 people, you've got 20 people, do I say, 'hey, Anita, I've got a question', do I use the virtual thing, you hit a button, what's your guidance for a 15-person meeting. How do we have that engagement but not interrupting and stepping on each other?

**Anita Campbell**

It helps if you can set ground rules upfront. Wave your hand or something if you would like to speak or whatever. Some people will clear their throat a couple of times and that kind of gently reminder of somebody is trying to speak here or just, I think, as the leader of the meeting, if you can go around and just say, we haven't heard from everyone, does anyone else have anything they would like to add and then see who is adding things, but that really requires the leader to actually keep that moving.

**Ramon Ray**

I do think that's the best advice. I think, really, the leader of that call, learning how to lead a video conference... what me and Anita are doing right now, we had to plan it our beforehand. OK, Ramon, what's your role, what's my role, it's only two of us but I think that's great advice, because as either the boss in title or delegate it to an employee, 'hey, Mindy, I know I'm the CEO, I'm the boss, but you're good at leading meetings, can you lead our company meetings', and let Mindy do it or whoever it may be.

Somebody asked Anita about money and PPP things like that, I know it's an important question, and I just want to add before we get to the last question here, Anita, go to the SBA, go to SCORE, I know Verizon Business may have some links there as well, but these are some great places for it.

I think we will end on this last one, Anita, and then we have one more thing to come up. “Equipment, hardware, software that I can use to effectively participate in a live webinar".
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Maybe use this time, Anita, in 30 seconds just to recap what we need for a great remote experience. You said a lot, but what are the three or four things you can repeat that we may need for a great remote experience.

Anita Campbell

A good computer that has enough processing power that isn’t really slow, good internet connection. Your computer should have a good camera. If not, get an external webcam, get an external microphone if the sound is not good for your computer. Those things, I think, are really good, and a light, like a ring light of some kind will help, especially if you’re here, like I am in Florida, it’s been overcast, sunny, overcast, sunny while I’ve been sitting here, I can see the cloud go in and out and it really affects things. I do have a ring light shining on me also, so... really, just consider the basics and try it a couple of times, see if you can hold a conference, even do a conference with yourself at first and record it and see how it looks.

Ramon Ray

Wow, and that, Anita, is ninja advice. Do a conference with yourself, I've done the same thing myself. Listen, ladies and gentlemen, this has been Anita Campbell, founder of Small Biz Trends, [www.smallbiztrends.com](http://www.smallbiztrends.com). I'm Ramon Ray with [www.smarthustle.com](http://www.smarthustle.com) and a big, big mega thanks to Verizon Small Business Webinar Series, but don’t go, we’ve got one more thing Anita that we want to show people. Anita Campbell, thanks. Everybody, hang tight for one more message.

Andy Choi

That’s it for today’s webinar. Thank you so much to Ramon and Anita for sharing your insights. Now, in the “Attachments” tab you’ll see that we’re sharing today’s presentation slides. You can check out the other webinars as well in this series on our BrightTALK channel page and you can register now for our next webinar this Thursday April 30, we will be speaking with Rieva Lesonsky about keeping your business operating effectively in the new normal. We hope you will join us on Thursday and, of course, next week for more of our Small Business Webinar Series.

We will see you again very soon. Take care.

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