

Guilty of Being Judgmental of your Co-workers Home on Zoom?

Dear Stephen,

I've got non-stop Zoom and Face-time meetings with clients and co-workers, and one thing that keeps happening to me is I find myself silently critiquing the interiors of their homes. And worse, especially when it comes to my co-workers, I feel sad for most of them!

Our company manufactures iconic furniture that has been around for years. We sell a very famous line of desk chairs and now, on Zoom calls, I see our own sales people are sitting in something unrecognizable — definitely not our brand. And it's not even just about the furniture in their houses, it's the other design elements you would expect from people who call on architects and designers. We all make good money — I mean we sell furniture so we are not millionaires, but we make a good living, so it's not about that — it's about design awareness and taste.

So here is what I feel guilty about. I now find myself judg-

ing my co-workers, many who I consider to be my friends. Never mind the protocols or the lighting or the etiquette of the Zoom call, or wearing a shirt and tie on top and boxers below, or even the cat jumping on the desk. It is simply that most of my colleagues live in poorly designed and finished places. It makes me feel sorry for them — like, they just don't get it. Not the story of the shoemaker's kids with no shoes, this is just poor taste. Now I know why some use these fake backgrounds, they must be embarrassed about where they live. The irony is many of my designer clients who may make less money than any of us in sales, have terrific homes, proving good design is not directly related to high cost.

Again this is a little window in the screen, not a house tour, but after repeated video meetings you can



You can send your workplace questions to Stephen at: StephenSays@bellow.press

Questions selected to be answered, will appear in this column. Please use the Subject: Stephen Says for all emails. Stephen Viscusi is a bestselling author, television personality, and CEO of The Viscusi Group, global executive recruiters located in New York. Follow Stephen on Twitter [@stephenviscusi](https://twitter.com/stephenviscusi), Like [Stephen on Facebook](#), and follow him on [LinkedIn](#).

sort of get an idea of how your co-workers are living and working.

I have avoided my business associate's social media like Instagram or Facebook so I wouldn't find myself subconsciously judging them on their personal life and activities. Now I have no choice because their personal space is in my face every day. I want to throw some shade, but that would be so wrong. I am not happy with myself but it makes me feel worse about the people I work with based on my perception of how they live. What can I do about the way I feel? I hope it doesn't show.

Signed,

Design Snob

I do think that, at a minimum, manufacturers should make sure employees have decent furniture so when they are on that important call with a customer its own product is showcased.

Dear Design Snob,

Wow, you are a catty one! But I know where you are coming from because I find myself doing the same thing. For me it is not the people I work with, they have great, well-designed homes. Maybe because I also work in television, one of my conundrums is why does a host of the "Today" show making \$14 million dollars have a house that looks like it comes straight from Ikea? Or the many other newscasters and talking heads now broadcasting from home and showing shots of terribly finished interiors with messy bookshelves showing family pics or stacks of the latest book that they wrote and dopey artwork on walls that need new paint. Demi Moore broadcast from her bathroom! Yes, I have taken joy during these cooped-up months

in critiquing the poorly planned backdrops of the rich and famous. I do not focus as much on my clients and co-workers.

As far as what you are talking about, I am sure we have all found ourselves distracted by the background where our customers and co-workers live and work. To be fair this is an emergency situation. Often two adults work from home in any space available. It's a mixed bag, and you sound too judgmental.

However, I do think every manufacturer that makes desk chairs should be sending one — at no cost — to their employees so they are sitting in that chair during a Zoom call visible to customers. I know it would be another expense for the company but why sell a fancy chair and have your employee sitting in a Staples

special from Hon? (Unless you work for Hon). Maybe our homes should look like what we sell if we sell furniture, yet this situation was forced on us fast, and it is not always practical or realistic to make the changes your design sensibilities require. I do think that, at a minimum, manufacturers should make sure employees have decent furniture so when they are on that important call with a customer its own product is showcased.

So lighten up about your judgment of others, recognizing the new and different world we are in. Try and see the humor along with the irony, and you won't have to worry about people judging you because you are judging them.

Stephen