



Thrive as You Work from
Home

Tips for Virtual Meetings

Coaching and Support for you and your
business leaders



Tips for Getting More Out of a Virtual Meeting

As we move more towards hosting Virtual Meetings, below are a short set of tips that may be useful to help you get more out of your virtual connections.

Transition

Unlike face to face meetings where we might spend time being social as we make a cuppa together or spend some time before the meeting is called to action catching up, virtual calls require time for individuals to transition into the meeting.

- Allow time within the meetings duration for the social aspect. If the meeting is planned for an hour, allow an hour + for the meeting to transition and conclude. We are missing the 'commute' where we might have set ourselves up for what our role in the meeting will be during a drive or time with the kettle.
- Find ways to allow people to move from their 'home' surroundings into the meeting.
 - Share small talk about the weather. Ask where in the world are you kind of questions.
 - Include an explicit tea/coffee moment in the agenda
 - Encourage meeting attendees to bring a cuppa or what they would normally bring to a meeting.
- Invite a moment for people to pause and connect to the meeting they are joining
 - Mindful techniques work really well here
- Set up clear Ways of Working

Ways of Working

Unlike face to face meetings where we will pick up cues in meeting attendees body language that give us data about how they are feeling or whether they are indicating they want to contribute etc. We have to find ways to imitate this in the meeting.

- Kickoff the meeting through a chat facility
 - Ask everyone to open it and say hi/share a word for how they are feeling/say where they are from
 - Explain you will be observing this throughout the meeting for contributions or questions
 - Offer that this can be where attendees can flag up desire to contribute etc.
 - Ask for a joint agreement in how it can be used
- Use chat facility as means for setting up the meeting contract. Ask attendees for thoughts on what meetings 'rules' should be applied.
 - Repeat each suggestion to the group and ask for agreement





- What visual indicators do the group want to agree to which allows for contribution, interruptions etc.

Keep Track of Contributors

Some people will always talk more than others, that's human nature.

To ensure each virtual attendee gets a voice, try

- Have an attendee list at hand
 - Keep a loose tally of who has contributed
- Consider who do you need to draw in
 - Ask "I am going to ask 3 people for their views on "X" – I will bring to Siobhan first, then Ali, then Kathy"
 - Gives notice and process
- Notice who you might need to contain
 - Thank them for their ongoing contribution and then use the draw in technique above

To Mute or Not To Mute...

Muting can be useful to limit background noise and distraction. However, considerations should be made regarding the social aspect and contribution opportunities that an un-muted meeting can offer.

- Muting can sometimes give un-spoken permission for people to be disconnected from the meeting. For example, they can multi-task as the sound of the keyboard can't be heard.
- Un-muted meetings allow for verbal signals of agreement/disagreement, or desire to speak. Laughter. Gasps. Auditory communication that can build connection.
- The suggestion is to start un-muted to build connection and trust. Unless there is a strong need to mask what is happening around the participant. i.e. small children, dogs or others having confidential conversations.

If I could turn back time...

Know that time will not run in the same way a face to face meeting would. It takes up more space and time to facilitate a virtual meeting.

- Plan extra time for set up and conclusion.
- Participants will move from one meeting to another in a tighter way than face to face – respect their time and aim to conclude on time.
- To conclude on time, create time to wrap up and ensure all actions or meeting notes are agreed.
- Consider your planning time should you be using a slide deck/break out rooms etc.





Create Breaks

For those who have spent time on a webinar or video call, you will understand how much additional concentration and stillness it takes to be present.

- Create space for a leg stretch break, a comfort break
- Make this known at the start of the call
- Use break out rooms function to create social coffee breaks and allow for connection
- Notice and be mindful of the attention span of those joining the call. Give permission to dip out or stand up.

And finally...touch the senses

Research shows that to encourage learning to land with a participant (face to face) that we should prick all the senses throughout the interaction. Find a way to bring sensual connection to your virtual call.

- Sounds – play music as they arrive into the session or during the breaks
- Use a slide deck to with images and colour to help maintain attention
 - You also have whiteboard opportunities in some of the software
 - Video links to articles of interest may also provide a break from your voice
- Ask them to bring snacks to the call to allow for the taste sense to be stimulated. It also keeps the glucose intake high which supports healthy brain function
- If you are running a learning session or team meeting – ask them to bring an object to “show and tell” – combine it with a question i.e. what could I not live with out today?” can make it a great icebreaker.
 - You can also encourage fidget toys as a way of allowing a person to be present (You could send them out)
- Question the participants at the start of the session “how are you feeling today” ask them to write it on a post-it note...repeat the process at the end of the session.

Conclusion

*A virtual meeting is a collaborative venture. Using your participants energy and contributions is vital. Providing some clear and engaging ways of working using the above hints and tips will also give **you** space to enjoy the meeting and get the best out of those joining the call.*

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