

Tips for Effective Virtual Meetings

BEFORE THE MEETING:

Address logistics by ensuring everyone has the needed equipment, is able to access the meeting and log in, and can hear meeting participants.

Set clear goals for virtual meetings just as you would with any synchronous meeting. Taking deliberate measures to create an effective meeting is important. [These tips](#), which include thinking about who needs to attend, identifying the purpose of the meeting and creating an effective agenda, can help you design more productive and engaging virtual meetings as well.

Set expectations for virtual meetings. Expectations might include attendance, use of video (see below), setting time limits for sharing, a commitment to not multitask and setting roles including a time-keeper, document-manager and note-taker.

Record a message on a core topic for the meeting. Video recordings can be shared with team members ahead of the virtual meeting. This can be especially helpful when it's necessary to set the context from or for a larger discussion.

Consider pre-work for participants to complete before the meeting. Pre-work can include reviewing the agenda and contributing additional agenda items, reviewing videos or documents, asking all team members to share written, brief updates before meeting, and/or asking people to have specific items ready to share during the meeting. This can help ensure your colleagues are ready to discuss pertinent issues and do not need a great deal of background information to get started.

Minimize distractions by silencing notifications on all of your devices, eliminate obvious distractions, and request that your teams do the same. Here's how to silence notifications in [Microsoft Teams](#) and in [Microsoft Outlook](#).

DURING THE MEETING:

Use video: People respond well to faces and being online is no different. One of the best ways to help yourself and your colleagues remain engaged is to use your web camera. Generally, if the leader uses a camera so will others; you can also ask all attendees to use their cameras. A camera has the added benefit of allowing everyone to know who is speaking at any given time in the meeting.

Be ready for the camera so that others can see, hear and feel engaged. One simple way to increase engagement is by making eye contact with the camera when presenting.

Make time for human engagement, especially during times when virtual meetings are not the norm. If employees are already feeling additional stress and disconnection, making time for chatting, sharing personal updates or laughing together can help strengthen relationships and keep everyone connected.

Keep it interesting to maximize engagement. Incorporate technology by using [polls](#), asking team members to contribute to a specific question by using the IM tool and sharing specific documents when referring to them.

Share the airtime by ensuring everyone has an opportunity to contribute to the conversation. Ask specific questions of more reserved team members. You will also need to help team members share the airtime. Remember, in the most effective teams, [each team member contributes roughly the same amount](#). One way to manage this is by addressing airtime when setting expectations.

Focus on collaboration and problem solving rather than individual report-outs. Instead, the leader can bring a topic for consideration or which needs solving, and the team can use the time to share necessary information, individual points of view and to generate new options for moving forward.

Take notes, or better yet, ask team members to take turns [taking notes](#). This will help individuals stay engaged and it will help lighten the burden of keeping track of what is happening.

Stick to the time identified when the meeting was created in order to help employees meet other obligations.

Review next steps to ensure everyone is on the same page and understands what they are accountable for and by when.

AFTER THE MEETING:

Consider adding a checkout before everyone leaves the virtual meeting room. Think about how your meetings usually end and then imagine how to recreate that online. If people seem like they need to share frustrations, return to friendly chatter or talk about how to connect with specific individuals. Give space in the meeting for those activities before everyone logs off.

Send out references for colleagues including notes from the meeting, decisions made, action items and next steps.

Create opportunities for feedback on what did and didn't work well. Ask team members to keep track of what is and isn't working well throughout the meeting and collect them once the meeting has concluded. [Polly polls](#) allow for polling and for participants to comment — it might be one way to gather feedback.

Manage concerns by speaking directly with team members involved outside of the meeting. For instance, if someone is dominating the discussion, speaking directly to the individual will help him or her understand the impact of the behavior. This may also be an opportune time to ask how to best support the team member.