

How to run a successful virtual meeting and keep the team engaged

Remote working can be difficult when you are not physically with your team. Communication can get interrupted over bad Wi-Fi, and not all messages can get through in writing. That's why setting regular online meetings for the team to check in and keep each member on board about work progress is essential.

Temps de lecture : minute

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However, virtual meetings and conferences have their own set of problems. People quickly lose concentration over tedious, long web calls. And it gets even more awkward when everyone just stares at the screen in silence.

Besides, 70% of all meetings keep employees from doing “real” productive work, and many end up zoning out to multitask and complete their work.

Still, these scenarios are only the downsides of poorly planned virtual meetings.

6 benefits of a highly-effective virtual meeting

When successful, a virtual meeting is a highly efficient way to hold a discussion. It allows digital collaboration that is not bound by geographical location. Everyone can save cost and time attending these conversations

from their *home office space*. It can also make sure discussions are well-structured and productive.

Planned agendas will engage everyone to share their opinions openly, and team members will focus more on meeting objectives with specific action items.

How do you realise the benefits of a virtual meeting? Here are 6 actionable tips to help you run a successful virtual meeting and keep the team engaged.

Connect with small talk before the meeting

Making time for small talk in virtual meetings can be necessary, especially in the post-pandemic era when everyone is working from home. We no longer have conversations by the water cooler, and team members can feel isolated and distant from each other. Having a built-in networking time during virtual meetings can help your employees reconnect.

Reintroducing small talk into virtual meetings can be as simple as a quick check-in with each member to share what has been happening in their lives.

Whether it is asking Susan about her newborn or taking note of Jason's new earphones — it can make everyone more relatable and meeting spaces more comfortable. These moments can *inspire your teams to come together*, grow company culture, and boost the level of performance of the whole team as they feel more connected.

While incorporating small talk can let your team connect and have fun, it's essential to avoid going overboard and keep it short to be respectful of each other's time.

Prepare an agenda

You need to prepare for your virtual meetings. And it is not as simple as just sending invites with the date and time but creating a clear plan. A virtual meeting agenda defines the purpose of the meeting to keep discussions on track while setting up the team focused and excited about the meeting.

It will let team members know what to expect for the call, and they can research and prepare in advance to contribute.

To create a comprehensive agenda for your virtual meeting, it should always include:

- The goal or central theme of the meeting
- List of items to be discussed during the meeting
- Key decisions to be made that will require the team's participation
- Clear action items to achieve the goal and who is responsible for what
- Supporting links and documents for review before the meeting

Though this may take some time initially, designing a detailed virtual meeting plan is important for better productivity and can save your team in the long run.

Keep meetings interactive

Let's admit it. Virtual meetings can get pretty dull when you are just listening.

Without facial cues and any in-person interaction, it is easy for people to get distracted and tune out. Some may end up daydreaming or start doing something else entirely.

The trick to turning meetings into a powerful tool is to create

opportunities for interactions. That means striking a balance between talking and listening.

You can actively solicit ideas and get everyone involved by adding participatory elements like voting polls or quizzes.

Besides, not every meeting has to be a discussion. You can always introduce gamification elements like a virtual team bonding game on Friday, or an online dance party to keep your team engaged.

Assign a host for your call

Running a virtual meeting should never be the same as running an in-person meeting.

An element of virtual meetings you need to be aware of is that only ONE person can speak on a video call. This format means that there should be a host for every call.

You can assign a single individual for the role or get every team member to take turns being a host. More significantly, you must set a proper flow and virtual meeting etiquette. For example, directing the discussion and preventing people from unnecessary ramblings or keeping an eye out for distracted participants and prompting them back in.

A good host should also encourage more democratic participation and ensure that all the team members have shared their opinions.

Celebrate wins

Celebrating small wins and significant milestones during your virtual meeting is yet another great way to keep your team engaged. It recognises victories and can show employees that their work is seen and valued.

Team achievements can notably boost teamwork and create a positive experience, which goes a long way in a virtual working environment. Because if a team is performing well and isn't recognised for that success, it can be a big blow to the team's morale and motivation

Keep virtual meetings short or have breaks

Just like in real life, your team can also feel tired as time goes on with discussions on-camera. The longer the meeting, the easier your members can drift out of focus. So keep your virtual meetings short and no longer than 30 minutes.

Be concise and address your objectives directly to respect everyone's time. If you have long discussions past an hour, add breaks.

Conclusion

Running a successful virtual meeting is part of providing a positive employee experience. You want your team to feel supported when they are working remotely.

That is by preparing an agenda for a productive meeting, having some small talk for team engagement, and leaving enough time to finish the job.

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