10 TOP TIPS

for productive virtual meetings

A checklist of 10 practical tips to help you ace your online meetings.

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Love them or hate them, the online virtual meeting is here to stay...

Here's a handy evidence-based checklist that will help you plan and run your virtual meetings successfully, highlighting potential pitfalls and advising on some key 'must dos'.

We hope you find it useful.

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① Agree ground rules and etiquettes

These can include things like punctuality and minimising distractions. Avoid scheduling 1 hour, on the hour, back to back meetings. Try 45 minute slots instead. And make sure you always role model these behaviours yourself.

② Plan and share in advance

Organising agendas and sharing prior to the meetings should really be standard practice for any type of meeting. This ensure best use of time and help people organise themselves beforehand. (This is especially helpful for introverts who often prefer to have time to reflect and compose their thoughts internally before sharing).

③ Informalities first

Before you launch into the task-focused, transactional aims of the meeting, run an informal check in first. Spend a quality 5-10 minutes asking colleagues what they've been up to, and how they are feeling, and really listen to the answers. Some teams find it useful to use the question – "On a scale of 1 - 10, how are you doing today?"

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(4) Encourage positivity

Ask each person to share a daily or a weekly 'What's gone well'. Research shows that people will naturally focus on and remember negative events more readily than positive events (due to our built in 'negativity bias') so encourage positive communication whenever you can.

(5) Avoid interrupting

Video conferencing can be challenging enough without people interrupting or talking over others. Ask people to use the Chat function, or just raise a hand, to lodge that they'd like to speak next. (This can be difficult for extroverts who are used to thinking out loud and building on the ideas of others, so patience and practice may be needed!)

(6) Direct questions and comments wisely

Reduce unwanted domination and the classic "you go…no, you go…" exchanges by using names when you ask a question and directing it at a single person at a time. You could also consider asking a different team member to act as a facilitator in each meeting to monitor responses and ensure everyone gets the opportunity to have their say.

(7) Dial up the humour!

Our sense of belonging to a 'tribe' is vital for wellbeing, so try to emphasise the human touch to maintain that social connection through the screen. Pets, children and minor mishaps are great for this! And there is research evidence to suggest that high levels of humour in team interactions are positively related to communication, team performance and solution-finding. So its a win-win situation!

⑧ Allow non-video participation

The research tells us that video conferencing is very tiring. It increases our 'emotional load' because not only are we interpreting the behaviours of others, we are also monitoring and adapting our own online presence. Connecting without video (where appropriate) will ease the cognitive burden and help with meeting stamina overall.

⑨ Use mute sparingly

As we know, using mute will minimize background noise, especially in larger meetings. However, people are far more likely to disengage and start multi-tasking when on mute - checking their emails etc. So agree with your team that they should use it only when necessary.

⑩ Monitor and review

Don't assume you've got all the answers or that today's solution will always be the best one. Virtual meetings are no longer new, but the tech and people's situations are constantly evolving. Your team members will have good ideas on how to continually improve things. So ask them for feedback regularly, and keep questioning the status quo.

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