



Your quick guide on... The Virtual Insanity of Digital Meetings

Ever had to travel miles for a meeting only to discover you weren't even needed? Or perhaps everything was rescheduled at the last minute? Or important participants couldn't make it?

Organising, travelling to and attending meetings in person can severely disrupt the working day, which is why most businesses have been more than happy to embrace virtual meetings – especially as the technology for it has improved exponentially in recent years. Skype for Business, for example, has revolutionised the way colleagues interact with one another.

That being said, virtual meetings do have their downsides. For one, the temptation to doodle, fidget or multi-task is heightened when no one is physically present. There is also the risk of decreased engagement and concentration, resulting in a lack of understanding to the purpose of the meeting.

But there are ways to combat these issues. By approaching virtual meetings in a different way to traditional meetings, you can have a beneficial discussion while retaining the convenience of not having to be in the same room.

Here are our top 5 tips to create a successful virtual meeting:

#1 Limit the use of technology

It should be requested that all participants refrain from using technology during the allotted time – except for the technology that is being used to facilitate the meeting, of course. It is characteristic of modern day technology users to multi-task, even if it is of detriment to overall productivity, so there should be a reminder of the focal point of the meeting and rules to keep it a focal point.

#2 Preparation

Never rely solely on the technology you use to create a level of interest in the meeting. You should treat Skype (or whatever software you choose to utilise) as the meeting room; there is still a requirement for preparation in regards to the purpose, outcome and process of the meeting. Email important documents ahead of time and be equipped with notes and documentation if needed. It may be harder to remain engaging while on-screen compared to speaking in person, so factor this in to the way you interact with the participants.

#3 Take charge

Virtual meetings can often lead to awkwardness as it can be difficult to tell whose turn it is to speak. To avoid interruptions or radio silence, appoint someone to take charge of proceedings. Having an agenda to stick to could also help maintain a structured flow of discussion.



#4 Prepare for technical errors

With technology, there is a very real possibility that something will go wrong at some point. It's probably best to have some sort of backup plan in place, such as replacement technology or another date in which to set a follow-up meeting, and always have a cut-off time in regards to how long you'll attempt to repair technical errors. No one wants to sit around for an hour only to discover that the meeting is cancelled.

#5 Keep it short and sweet

The biggest benefit of virtual meetings is their convenience. With that in mind, try to keep them succinct and relevant at all times. If you feel the meeting will require an in-depth session that could last well over an hour, schedule a face-to-face catch up instead. You will not be able to retain the participants' attention on screen for that long, which will ultimately make it a pointless exercise. Know your audience, but also know your medium.

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