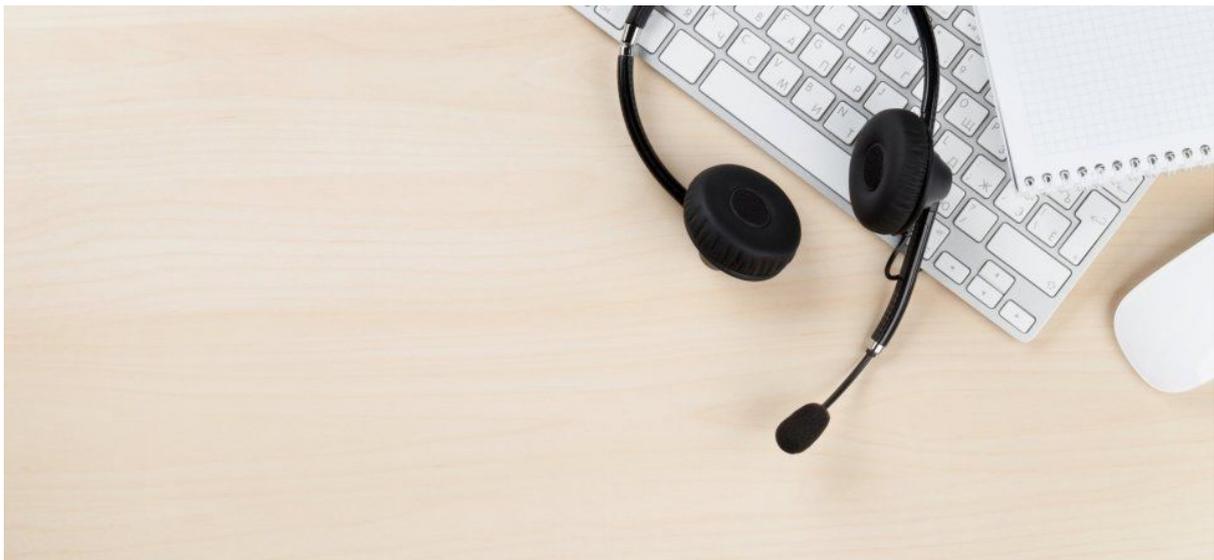


Virtual Meetings Are Here to Stay. Here's How to Make Yours Better

Virtual meetings can be challenging to run. Try these seven techniques to make them worth every minute.



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As a business strategy and [leadership coach](#), I spend a lot of time with teams on setting and developing [priorities and goals](#). Most of my time is spent in meetings: [facilitating conversations](#), getting to root causes, and working through different opinions on where a business should focus and what it should prioritize.

This work is tough enough in person, dealing with conflicting personalities, differing opinions, and misaligned objectives is a core part of my job. Listening to what's being said while also watching body language and non-verbal cues zeros me in on critical issues that need to be addressed.

Over the years I've worked with more and more companies who have distributed leadership teams. As a result, I'm doing more of my work via video and having to adapt my process and flow to an online meeting format. And while meeting virtually is not the same as in-person, you can still create a powerful and productive experience. In fact, virtual meetings can have some benefits if you leverage the format.

Here are seven key principles that I use with my virtual teams when we host online meetings. Whether you're having a quick 15-minute chat to catch up, or an all-day session to develop strategy, these will help you get more done in less time.

1. Accept that virtual meetings are different.

The trick is to accept that an online meeting will not be the same as an in-person meeting. And once you let go of that expectation, you can begin to apply more efficient virtual meeting strategies.

2. Limit one person per login.

One of my hard and fast rules is that each person in the meeting needs to have their own login, screen and camera. When two or more people try to share a computer, sound and video quality goes down considerably. It also makes it difficult to use the "breakout room" features that are now on many online meeting tools. I want one face per login and good, up-close sound and video.

3. Use two screens.

I encourage everyone in my meetings to have two screens or even two devices. One is for the video meeting tool, the other is for the collaborative documents we're working on. Switching between the two disconnects people from the team. I want everyone to be able to see both the other people and the document at the same time.

4. Leverage collaborative documents.

While many video call apps have screen sharing tools to allow anyone to share a document, this doesn't really allow for collaboration. Instead, I like using a virtual document that everyone can access and edit at the same time. A virtual document like Google Docs allows this to happen. And while you will need some facilitation and structure to avoid chaos, it makes for a much more collaborative meeting.

5. Pay attention to visual cues.

I encourage everyone to use the "gallery view" for the video meeting so they can see everyone at the same time. This way, we can all see people's reactions and non-verbal cues while we're working. A questioning look on someone's face or a hand raise can cue the facilitator to back up and make sure people are following.

6. Invest in good technology.

Once you factor in everyone's billable time, meetings can cost a company thousands of dollars an hour. So when you have delays or interruptions because of technology issues and bad connections, the costs can quickly add up. There is no excuse not to invest in good hardware, software, and bandwidth to make things run smoothly and easily.

7. Have someone facilitate

Once a meeting has more than a few people, it's critical to have a facilitator who can set ground rules and keep the agenda moving. This can be someone in the meeting already; however, it's better to have someone who's not a participant so they can really focus on running the meeting.

While the level of interaction and collaboration of in-person meetings can never be duplicated by virtual meetings, if you follow these tips you'll find that they can still be extremely effective and productive. And for remote and distributed teams, they are a must if you want to create organizational excellence.

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