

COVID-19

HOW TO HOST EFFECTIVE VIRTUAL MEETINGS

Now that not being in the same room for meetings has become part of our daily routine, virtual conferences really shouldn't impact on productivity.

Preparation is essential. Go into it with defined objectives and an agenda, ensuring you have invited the right people and that they all bring a value and purpose to the meeting. If needed, pre-assign someone to take notes and, before you start the meeting, ensure you've outlined the key messages you want to have as discussion points. Should there be any background materials that would aid the meeting, send them well in advance to participants so they have time to prepare and research. Finally, check the virtual meeting systems work and run a practice session with a tech-savvy colleague, especially if you're using a new platform.

Engaging everyone in a virtual meeting isn't always easy when you don't have all of the non-verbal cues used during a face-to-face meeting. This means you have to set a meeting etiquette, this could be encouraging everyone to use video, putting microphones on mute to avoid background noise, finding ways to signal that you want to ask a question – this could be using a chat function or simply raising a hand (virtual or real, depending on the platform). Adding polls to a meeting can also help quickly gauge opinions on different topics. You also have to put participants at ease, acknowledging that working at home does mean the meeting could have a few extra attendees – from small children to animals.



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Following up on the meeting to ensure progress is made is also important. So ask people for closing comments or questions, explain how you will move forward on the items discussed and then follow up within 24 hours either through meeting notes, a recording or even a schedule for the next meeting.

Together, all the way.®



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