

LEADING THROUGH VIRTUAL MEETINGS

Hints and tips on working virtually adapted from Zoom and from the research of Ghislaine Caulat (2012) from Kings Fund.

LARGE GROUPS 10-15



- Make sure everyone has the link for the meeting in good time.
- Give people clear instructions about joining.
- Make any presentations short and digestible. People only listen for about 5-10 minutes. Keep slides very simple.
- Build in a process for engaging people early on using questions. Some packages allow attendees to raise a hand, others offer a chat function. In a big meeting ask someone else - a chair or facilitator - to monitor the questions. It is distracting for the speaker to try to keep track of these.
- If you are using a platform with break-out rooms, use them.
- People can connect in smaller groups, talking freely without using the mute button, or write on their own white board. All this helps people stay connected.
- A large group meeting typically lasts max of an hour

EXAMPLE INSTRUCTIONS FOR JOINING:

- Please join the meeting 5 mins before it starts so that you can check out your connection and prep.
- If you join late, join quietly and do not interrupt the conversation or the presentation. The facilitator will notice you've joined and welcome you at an appropriate point.
- Background noise and audio feedback can disrupt the meeting. Please turn off your phone or anything else that might distract you or the other participants. When you are not speaking mute your mic.

FOR SMALLER GROUPS 5-10



- For smaller meetings, many of the same guidelines apply when joining a meeting, but smaller meetings give an opportunity to create more trust and intimacy.
- Don't use the mute button. Encourage people to speak spontaneously. A small group can quickly learn to recognise each other's voices if they regularly work together virtually
- It is okay if people talk over each other and participants soon get used to it. Try to avoid having some virtual and some face-to-face participants. So, don't have part of the group gathered around a speaker phone in one room and others dialing in individually. This can create an 'inner group' with eye contact and side jokes, which does not help overall engagement or build trust across the group.
- Small meetings are more interactive and may last longer. If they are longer than 1.5 hours do build in short breaks - listening and watching a screen are tiring.

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REMEMBER - THE HUMAN BIT

We judge easily. What's in the background? (have you left a copy of the Karma Sutra on your bookshelf?). How is the camera positioned? (Can people see up your nose?) How do you want to look and come across? - remember you're still at work.

A virtual space is exposing - like being in a goldfish bowl. People listen more intensively; think about how you say things - your tone and gestures.

Emotions get amplified too. You can be surprised by peoples' responses which can seem stronger than you might expect; allow for this, check out what they mean and don't overreact in response.

Relearn the basics of actively listening (see below).

Don't be afraid of silence. People are probably just thinking.

People can get anxious if they don't know when or even if they'll get a chance to speak. Agree some rules. Hands up or have rounds (everyone gets a go even if it's to say - nothing to add).

Remember the virtual nod. If people can't see you, you need to say something or make a noise to acknowledge a comment or so people know you're there.

Incorporate the informal. Don't be totally task or agenda led. Allow time for people to share news, chat about parts of the meeting that spark interest, etc. You can't have a virtual coffee, but you can have coffee virtually!

Online meetings are much more tiring than face to face. Consider meeting fatigue (length, depth and frequency). More recharge time is needed than face to face meetings



LISTENING TIPS

Facts

Listen to the facts, data and the specific details that people share.

Feelings

Listen to the feelings expressed or implied through the tone of voice or pace of delivery.

Intention

Listen to what the speaker intends to do, their commitments to any intended actions.

Listen for any unconscious intention (listening for what else people are telling you, by 'reading' between the lines).

EXTRA TIPS

CAST Hand Gestures



I agree: Jazz hands facing upward (see it in action).



I want to speak / I have a point: Hand raised, index finger pointing upwards (see it in action).



I disagree: Jazz hands facing downward.



I have a point that follows on directly from the last speaker's point: Both hands raised, with index finger pointing upwards.



I'm unsure / I don't mind: Hold hand up horizontally and tilt side to side.



I have a technical point (eg. 'we're short on time', or 'I need to leave'): Index fingers on both hands forming a 'T'.

CHATBOX

Sometimes it can be more practical for people to type terms into the chatbox instead of hand signals.

There is less chance of missing someone's point if it is documented in the chatbox. Hand signals can sometimes be missed if a person feels they have held their hand up too long. Additionally it can require a lot of effort from the facilitator / chair to ensure you can see everybody's video in order to catch the hand signals.

THE TERMS ARE:

+++

= I agree

- - -

= I disagree

C

I'm unsure / don't understand. Please can you clarify

Hat

= I have a point

Dhat

I have a point that follows on directly from the last speaker's point