

10 Tips for Great Global Virtual Team Meetings

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There's nothing new about global virtual team meetings and how to run them effectively, but given how people are limiting travel right now and working remotely from home, it's worthwhile to refresh our appreciation for how virtual meetings are different from face-to-face meetings.

Here are some steps we can take to make virtual meetings as effective as possible.

1. Set up the meeting well

Distribute meeting guidelines. People from different backgrounds and cultures may have different expectations about what happens at a meeting and what the leader's role should be.

2. Check your online meeting facility

Whether you're using a video conferencing platform or conducting a conference call, be sure all participants can easily access the technology. It's useful to send out the login to the meeting platform well in advance and encourage people to be sure their device is compatible.

3. Use an agenda

It's particularly important to keep a virtual meeting focused by sending out meeting objectives and subjects that will be covered. Since many people have back-to-back meetings, it also helps to establish an end-time to the meeting.

4. Limit distractions and the temptation to multi-task

Compared to an office environment, it can be easier to get distracted when working remotely from home. Engage participants frequently by asking questions and soliciting their ideas. Use the Display feature of the meeting platform to project visuals and other content. Actively use the screen to keep participants engaged.

5. Encourage using the camera feature when possible

Being able to see each other enhances the sense of personal connection, which is particularly important for high relationship people and cultures. It makes communication easier since it mirrors face-to-face communication, and it can also help keep participants engaged.

6. Get everyone's participation

It's important to foster an environment in which everyone is comfortable participating freely. But it can be difficult for many people to interrupt the speaker, especially when the meeting is virtual, use the "chat" feature or "raised hand" on the meeting platform, if available. Invite people to articulate their input vocally.

7. Appoint a note taker to send out a follow-up summary

A meeting summary adds import to the conversation and serves as an actionable document when follow-up steps are needed. In addition, it minimizes the risk of misunderstanding what was discussed or decided at the meeting since it's in writing.

8. Remember that culture matters

The nature of virtual global team meetings exacerbates the impact of cultural differences and the potential for misunderstanding.

9. Be aware of second-language speakers

While colleagues may be bi-lingual and very accomplished, the virtual global team meetings present additional challenges. People may take a little bit longer to respond than ordinarily. Be especially careful to allow this time.

10. Watch colloquialisms and use of humour

Humour and slang can be hard translate across cultures and different languages, increasing the potential for offense.