

# Tips for Making Virtual Meetings Effective

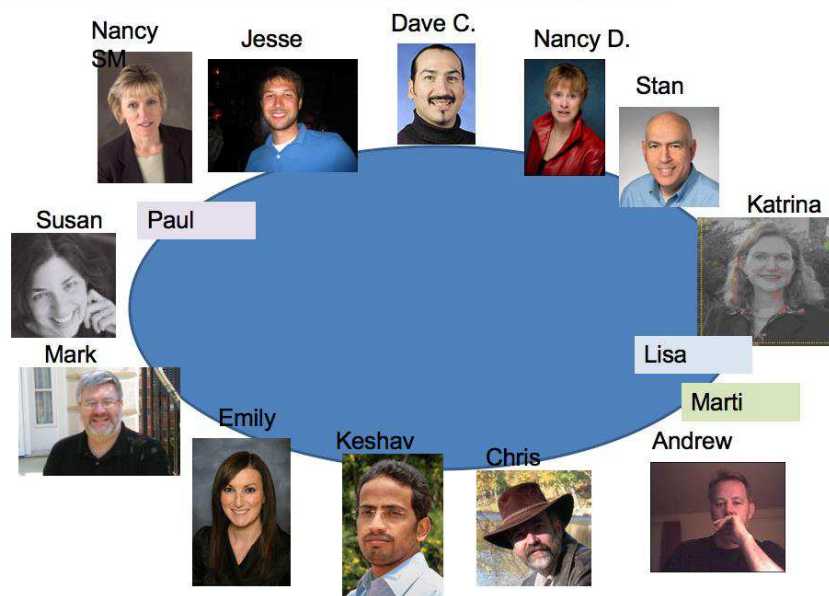
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## Small Group Virtual Meetings

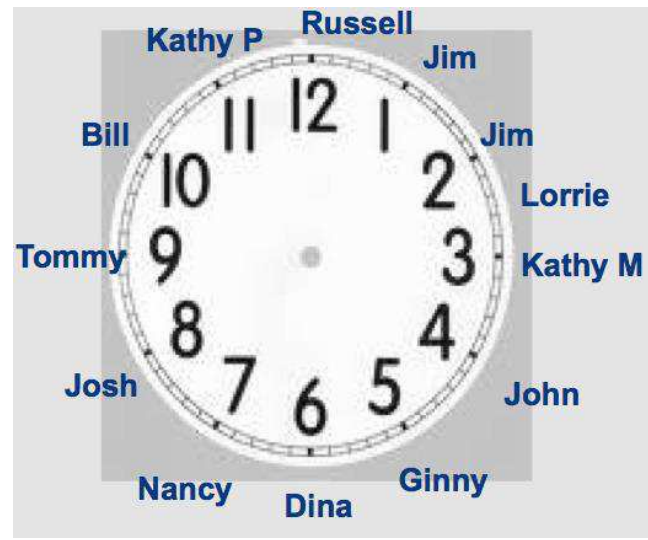
### Before the Meeting

- Keep virtual meetings small; no more than 12, even if that means you have to hold 5 different virtual meetings. You can hold a discussion with a small group, but that is not possible if there are 30 or more people on line.
- If you hold a series of virtual meetings keep the same small groups together each time. After several virtual meetings twelve people can begin to feel like a community, recognizing each other's voices, remembering what that person looks like, what ideas are important to him or her - in other words members get to know each other. Which in turn makes them more willing to offer their ideas and thinking.
- Contact people personally before the meeting to build rapport. Reach out to participants whose participation is particularly important.
- Create a picture collage of people who will be on the call. Pictures help make the others on the call real to us. We have much better memory faces than for names. We have a sense that we "know" another person if we can recall how they look. If a few people don't send a picture, you can still include their names in the circle.

### **SIKM Meeting Participants – Sept 15, 2009 (as of Sept. 11)**



If pictures are not possible use a clock face to help yourself and others know who is on the call.



#### At the Beginning of the Meeting

- Have the pictures of the people on the call up on the webinar screen. Or if it is a teleconference send a PP slide with the pictures so they can put it on their own screen.
- Ask people to always say their name before they speak. The format is: “This is Joe Fitz, I agree that .....” If someone forgets, ask them to say their name after they have finished. “That was very helpful, who was just speaking?” The facilitator should also say his/her name each time he/she speaks to help to set the norm. After the same group of 12 people have met 5 or 6 times, these norm can be dropped.
- Provide time at the beginning for a check in. Get each person’s voice in the room at the beginning. Checking in creates a friendly atmosphere. But people will need an example to know how long they should talk. As the facilitator, provide your answer first so others will have a model for how detailed they should be. Before you provide your example, give everyone a moment of silence to think about what they want to say. Here are some possible check in questions:
  - What is something about (x) you’ve learned in the last week?
  - What do we need to be working on together?
  - What was the highlight of your month?
  - What have you learned from others that you have tried?
  - What is the most interesting thing that happened in your shop this week?
  - What are you most grateful for this morning?
  - What has inspired you this week?
- Alternatively ask each participant to send a 30 -60 second video clip to update to the group, on what they’ve been doing or what the weather is there, to be played at the beginning of the meeting. People really look forward to these updates with pictures of family, pets, co-workers

- Call on people individually early in a meeting. This sets the expectation that you may call on them at anytime.

### During the Meeting

- Many virtual meetings are scheduled as presentations by either faculty or members. However virtual meetings can have a broader range of goals that just informing. Virtual meetings can:
  - Problem solve
    - Post a challenge e.g. what do you do when.....? and ask people to come with answers.
  - Make decisions about how or what work will be done.
  - Generate ideas

### Near the Meeting End

- Create a list of “to dos” and list them verbally at the end of the call.
- One of the most effective ways to end a meeting is to ‘check-in’ with each member to gain closure.

### After the Meeting

- Summarize the call and send to everyone. If the chat function is used clean it up (remove time stamps, standardize or clean up names, correct spelling) and send the script.
- Send the to-do list to everyone on the call.

## **Large Group Meetings With a Speaker**

Virtual meetings are poor medium for presentations. As listeners, we simply don't experience enough cognitive stimulation to keep our attention on an audio presentation. However, there are alternatives to having a speaker present for an hour.

- Send an article or report, out ahead of time so the call can be a discussion of the content. If you send out content put it in a separate email and put in the subject line “Action required.” Send the content out about 3 working days in advance of the call. Let members know “It will take 20 minutes to read this.” Or “We only have 45 minutes on this call so we will assume everyone is prepared.”
- Send an article or report out ahead of time and ask participants to prepare questions for the presenter. Then during the virtual meeting call on each member to ask his or her question. Because questions are often based in a specific context, give the question asker time to provide enough context for the speaker to provide a useful and thoughtful response. Some questions

may even become more of a dialogue as the speaker asks the members for their response to that question.

- Keep presentations to no more than 15 minutes (no more than 3 slides) before giving the group an opportunity to interact for at least 10 minutes. Group interaction does not mean asking the presenter questions. Rather the facilitator asks the group a question (see attached questions) that gives them space to offer their thinking about what the speaker has offered. Then the presenter might continue again for 10 minutes, then again group discussion. Ted Talks must surely have convinced us all that 15 minutes is all that is needed to present even the most complex of ideas.
- Make good use of the chat function. Ask a question and pause while everyone responds via chat.
- Plan the virtual meeting in 10-minute segments. Recent evidence suggests that attention spans may be about 10 minutes long in this computer-addled, information-overloaded age. Switch from presenting 1) to chat function, 2) do a round robin of responses, or 3) take a poll.

## **Meet Asynchronously On-line Rather than by Teleconference**

Over a 2-day time period do one of the following:

- Have one group pose a problem by video clip and ask others to send in suggestions.
- Have everyone send in the top three challenges they have about [name a topic]
- Ask, what do you do to [state a topic]? (For example, What do you do to prevent pressure ulcers?) Asking everyone to respond.

When the two days are over, summarize the results and send out to everyone, acknowledge the good ideas with the person's name

## **Questions a Facilitator Can Ask During Virtual meetings**

Instead of "Are There Any Questions"

Questions to ask during a Webinar or teleconference to get a discussion started after a presentation or another member's comment.

- "John has just raised an interesting issue. I'd like to hear other's thinking about that issue."
- "Mary has told a story about a frustrating experience. I'm sure many of you have had similar experiences. I'd like to hear a couple more examples."
- Jack has explained how his team does "X." What are other ways you have accomplished "X?"
- What are the 3 most important things to consider when doing "X?"
- "Fred has given us a very interesting presentation. What did you hear that really stuck with you?"

- “How would you complete this sentence? ‘The greatest difficulty we face with XXX is \_\_\_\_\_.’ And then do a round robin
- “Sue has told us about an improvement in a rural hospital.
  - What did you hear that would work in your setting?
  - What did you hear that would need to change because your setting is so different?”
- “What did you hear in Joanna’s presentation that you could put into practice next week?”
- “We’ve heard three examples, what did you hear that was similar in all three examples?”
- “What possibilities come to mind based on what you have heard?”

### Methods to Use to Ask the Questions

- Ask one of the questions above, and then say, “Let me give you a minute to write a few notes to yourself before people start to answer. (then count to 60 before opening the microphone or calling on people)
- Poll the group – If the group is under 10, call on each person in turn. Then summarize what you heard in the poll. “It sounds like we are divided between (X) and (Y).” or “I’m hearing general agreement about XX.”
- Poll in a random fashion if the group is large – “I’m going to call on a few people to get a sense of the reaction to (Bill’s) idea.” Then call on 5 people. Then ask, “Who else has an idea to offer?” And wait at least 20 second before moving on.
- If all the responses to a poll are similar ask, “I’d like to hear from anyone with a different view. Who sees it differently?” Then give it 20 seconds.
- Present a simple scenario with a question, and ask each participant to share how they would respond in that situation
- Use the chat function to get responses to a question on a 1-5 scale. “Just type a number from one to 5 into the chat area.” Then ask, “Most of you put in a 4 or 5 but there are a few people who were at a 1 or 2. I’d like to hear your thinking”
- Use the voting function on a webinar with pre-designed questions based on the presentation.
- Pause to have a paired conversation. Say, “If there is someone else at your site, talk with them for a few minutes before we call on people for their response. If you are by yourself then make some notes.”
- In the chat function, ask participants to write in brief notes during the presentation about what they agree and disagree with, for example, “X’ was a good point.” Or “I agree with “XX.” These notes are not for the presenter to read, but for others on line to see the reaction of their colleagues. It also is useful for starting the discussion after the presentation. “Many of you agreed with “XX,” Bella, what was your thinking that caused you to agree?”
- If you are the speaker don’t feel you have to answer every question asked of you. It is often useful to ask the group members what their thinking is on that question.

### On-line starter questions (give a minute to think)

- What is something about (x) you’ve learned in the last week?
- What do we need to be working on together?
- What was the highlight of your month?
- What have you learned from others that you have tried?