digitalUHN

EFFECTIVE COLLABORATION
Virtual Meetings

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BEFORE MEETING

1. GET GOOD EQUIPMENT

- Test and make sure that the equipment such as headset, microphone, speakers and/or webcam that will be used in the meeting are functioning properly before the meeting.
- Ensure that your internet connectivity is stable enough to participate in a virtual meeting.

- The officially supported software for virtual meeting is UHN is Microsoft Teams. Alternately, Skype for Business is also available until Spring 2021.

2. ASSIGN A MODERATOR

- If you are scheduling the meeting, you are automatically assigned the role of moderator. If you are not the moderator of the meeting, and are scheduling on someone's behalf, please ensure that the moderator's name is provided to participants of the meeting in the meeting invitation details.

- For large meetings with many participants, consider appointing a separate person who is not moderating, to act as a "producer", to take care of in-meeting protocols such as: admitting Guest attendees from the virtual lobby, flagging when someone is raising their hand, drawing attention to a chat item from a participant or managing distractions (e.g. mute participants with background noise).

3. TIPS FOR USING A WEBCAM

- If you are using a webcam in your meeting, make sure it is placed at an optimal angle that provides a good view of yourself in the frame, and that there is proper lighting.
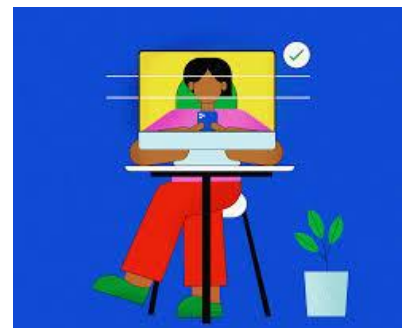
DURING THE MEETING

4. SET MEETING RULES

- Request that participants mute their microphones when not speaking to avoid background noise

- Speak slowly and clearly

- Encourage webcam video use when possible

  - Enables participants to see each other's body language which allows more natural discussion and more clear messaging
  - Reduces risk of people talking over each other
  - Helps quickly flag if participants are unknowingly speaking while on mute
  - Reduces temptation to multitask during a meeting and helps participants to focus

- Consider using the 'Raise your hand' feature in medium/large meetings (MS Teams to release in April 2020)

5. USE MEETING AGENDAS

- Share an agenda in advance of the meeting and store in the meeting/group Wiki or in Files document library, so that participants can easily reference

- Use the @ function to tag participants who are assigned to speak to the agenda topics

- Start meetings by concisely stating the purpose and context of the meeting.

6. HAVE A VISUAL CUE: SHARE YOUR SCREEN

- Share your screen with meeting materials (e.g. agenda, presentation) to help participants focus and follow along

7. GESTURE

- With the webcam video feature turned on, the moderator and participants can take visual cues from each other

- Facilitate the discussion based on participants' body language, facial expression, and gestures

8. ASK DIRECT QUESTIONS

- For better engagement, ask specific, direct, and targeted questions and explain your rationale for the question so that participants understand what you need.

- Use the @ function in the meeting chat to "ping" participant(s) whose input is required but have not responded. They will hear a sound from their device.

9. PAUSE: PROVIDE TIME FOR QUESTIONS OR FEEDBACK

- Pause after asking a question to allow time for people to think about the topic, and engage in discussion.

10. CALL PEOPLE OUT

- The moderator can call out specific people to better structure the round table and facilitate the discussion.

- Allow one person to speak at a time, and provide sufficient time for each person to voice their opinions and/or feedback.

11. TAKE THE PULSE OF THE GROUP

- For longer meetings, take the pulse of the group a few times to ensure everyone has had a chance to contribute.

12. POLL TO GET QUICK FEEDBACK / CONSENSUS

- If there are multiple options to select from and multiple people who need to provide input, create a quick poll and ask participants to vote. MS Forms is enabled within MS Teams and can be launched from the chat dialog.

13. SUMMARIZE DISCUSSION, ACTION ITEMS AND NEXT STEPS
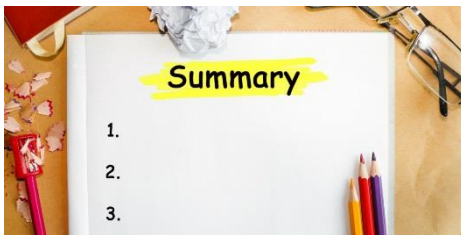
- At the end of each item on the agenda, summarize the discussion points, action items, and next steps to ensure everyone is on the same page.

14. CHECK IN TO SEE WHAT CAN BE IMPROVED

- Time-permitting at the end of the meeting, ask participants if the meeting was effective and if there are opportunities for improvement (most relevant for re-occurring meeting).

AFTER THE MEETING

15. SEND A FOLLOW UP EMAIL

- Share a summary of the discussion points, action items, and next steps.

- Follow up with the owners of each action item.

16. AVOID LONG EMAIL AND TEXTS

- After the meeting, if more follow up is required, avoid long emails and texts and instead consider MS Teams instant messaging or voice Call, which is similar to in-person desk-side chats.

- In general, using MS Teams to see if someone is available and using the Call function may take care of a quick question far more efficiently and effectively than exchanging emails and multiple texts. It may even eliminate the need to schedule a formal meeting!