

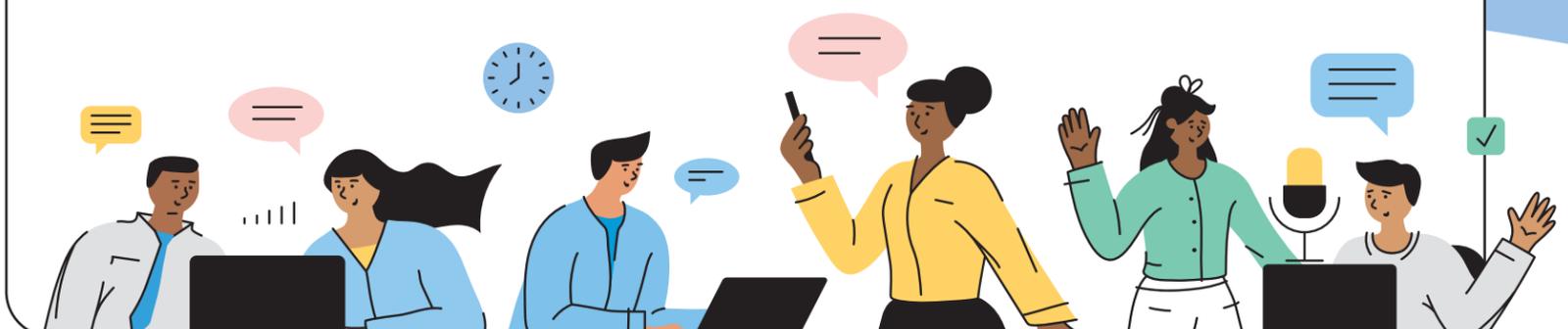
How to Level Up Your Online Conferences

A well-designed virtual conference can be just as engaging and useful—or lackluster and uninspiring—as an in-person event. Here are 10 quick tips that can help you up your game immediately. We also offer four recommendations that can help you think outside the box about video conferences.



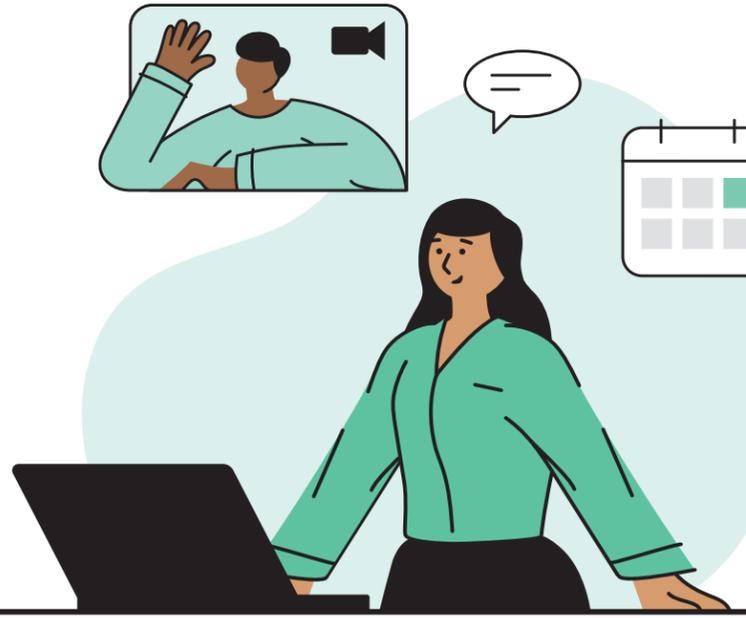
Creating Engaging Online Experiences Checklist

-  **Center on the purpose**
Remember to focus on the WHY before you jump into details. All your decisions about content, technology, and engagement strategies should be based on the main purpose of your meeting or presentation.
-  **Create your agenda with engagement in mind**
Incorporate multiple modes of communication with polls, chats, breakout rooms, and whiteboards to provide variety. Encourage collaboration by brainstorming on Google Docs or creating word clouds using Poll Everywhere.
-  **Plan for a positive auditory experience**
Turn off disruptive ring tones and mute participants on entry. Also, find the quietest and least distracting space possible—and ask participants to do the same.
-  **Use visuals to engage your audience**
Get (and keep) your audience's attention by using well-designed slides, interesting images and graphics, and strategic webcam usage. Avoid having slides that are crammed with text or complex data tables.
-  **Build in time for connection**
Use prompts to encourage individuals to personally connect with one other.
-  **Plan ahead**
Rehearse your event before going live. Check your audio, lighting, slideshow, and any other technology you plan to use to ensure things run smoothly.
-  **Don't try to do it all**
Enlist other team members to play a role, such as co-facilitator, chat facilitator, technical support, and alternative host.
-  **Normalize the work-from-home experience**
Acknowledge that kids, pets, and housemates may enter the picture.
-  **Continue the conversation**
Use project management resources, such as Basecamp or Teams, to allow for ongoing and more in-depth dialogue.



Plan for Success

Be thoughtful about content delivery; your virtual conference should not be a presenter talking into a web camera for 50 minutes. Below are some strategies to help you plan for an engaging event:



Organize your meeting agenda for virtual delivery

Consider breaking the virtual meeting into smaller sessions and combining live and recorded content delivery. You can also stretch meetings over multiple days or hold some sessions at off hours. Examine your meeting agenda and consider how sessions might be configured differently or which activities might lend themselves to another approach.



Get trained on the platform

Sessions should make use of chat, polling, Q&A, breakout rooms, and other strategies to actively engage participants. This requires working with presenters to help them understand the platform and its capabilities so that they use the right tool in the right way.



Create a session web presence

Design and cultivate an online home for your event. Use it to share agendas, compile presentations, and post information participants submit. Make it a virtual learning hub where people can go—before, during, and after the event—for content and ideas.



Partner with technology support personnel

Presenters need to focus on delivering content. Consider assigning a technology support person to each session to launch the event, monitor chats, run polls and breakout sessions, mute participants' background noise, provide real-time technical assistance, and run an end-of-session evaluation.



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