Meetings at a Distance

Why meet electronically?

- Save time and money.
- Involve more people than would attend in person.
- Meetings are easy to record and make available for those who do not attend.
- Meetings tend to be 50 percent shorter than in-person meetings, so are more productive.
- Electronic meetings are faster to schedule, easy to attend (live or recorded).
- Meetings tend to be better prepared, presented, and include more dynamic visuals.
- Don't meet if the same information could be shared in a memo, e-mail or brief report.

Types/uses

- staff/project meetings
- remote training
- webinars/seminars

When to use what

Use a phone/audio conference when:

- discussing an issue among participants who know each other
- examining documents previously shared
- including a remote participant in an in-person meeting
- it's important that everyone participate verbally

Use a data (no camera) conference when:

- viewing a presentation live
- brainstorming using a whiteboard or doing document mark-up
- sharing detailed information or visuals
- visiting sites or documents on-the-fly
- requiring participants to focus on a single subject to provide collaborative input or to avoid confusion

Use a video/Web conference (with camera) when:

- body language and facial expressions are important to the message
- discussing an item that must be seen

Before the meeting

- Share materials/files ahead of time by e-mail or by placing them in a common location, such as a server.
- The host/moderator should test equipment at least the day before a scheduled meeting.
- Provide a welcome page and audio, so participants know everything is working.
- Have needed documents, Web sites, etc., open and ready to share.
- Ask participants to connect (and fix potential mic/camera/speaker/connectivity problems) at least 10 minutes before the meeting, so it can start on time.
- Identify someone to take notes, and share them with everyone ASAP.
- Close applications you don't need.

General tips

- Use the full screen view of the desktop.
- Place the camera properly – at eye level, next to the monitor – so the presenter seems to be looking at a person when looking at the monitor.
- Have good lighting on the presenters' faces.
- Ask for questions/feedback often. Participants can be self-conscious about using the mic or camera.
- Speakers should identify themselves before speaking.
- Keep it simple. Short segments reduce attention-wandering and promote retention and learning.
- Follow 10/20/30 rule: 10 slides maximum, 20 minutes long, minimum 30-point font.
- Encourage attendees' participation by using polling, soliciting questions in chat, etc.
- Break occasionally, if you host long meetings – 10 minutes per hour.
- End on time.
- Practice, practice, practice. Watch the recording to find areas to improve.

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