

As video conferencing fatigue continues, here are 10 ways to make virtual team meetings engaging and fun

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Nine months into the pandemic many of us are seeking a reprieve from our computer screens. Whether you're getting Zoomed-out, Meet-maxed, or Webex-weary, even the thought of having to get on another online meeting is exhausting. The irony, of course, is that communication is exponentially more critical in the world of remote work, yet the idea of even temporarily boycotting all forms of electronic communication suddenly has great appeal.

In reality, regular weekly or bi-weekly team meetings are one of the best ways to keep the lines of communication open and to build strong productive relationships among team members (even from a distance). Back in March, many teams across the country switched to regular virtual meetings as pandemic restrictions came about. But now, nine months later, the shine of virtual has begun to tarnish. Which means that if we want to keep people engaged and participating, we need to work extra-hard, deliberately and carefully, to make our online meetings vibrant and fun. Yes, fun. Not fun as in a "let's be silly and get nothing accomplished" kind of way. But fun in a way that makes people to want to attend, playfully interact with each other, and move initiatives forward.

So here are 10 ideas to make your online virtual meetings more engaging and fun.

1. Plan a round table at your regular meetings during which everyone has to share one fun or funny thing that they have experienced since the last meeting.
2. Play water shots – a fun way to encourage a healthy behaviour. Every time a trigger phrase or event occurs, everyone at the meeting must take a swig of water. Trigger events could be every time a pet comes on screen, or whenever someone forgets to take their mute off, or if an overused phrase or word (such as pivot, or "paradigm shift", or "it is what it is") is spoken. Or anything else you want. Amp up the health factor by having people do jumping jacks or a squat every time a trigger phrase or event happens.
3. Utilize online polls. If your online meeting platform doesn't offer this option, something like [mentimeter.com](https://www.mentimeter.com) lets team members use their smartphones to share their opinions.
4. Play online bingo. Do a web search for "remote work bingo," or create your own. Have fun with it – instead of numbers, use things such as "dressed up for a video call" or "worked in sweatpants" or "baked a pie this week" that participants cross off their card.
5. Use breakout rooms. Most virtual meeting platforms offer this, so take advantage of this powerful engagement tool. Divide the team into smaller groups and assign them a specific task with a time limit.
6. Run simple contests. Remember the game in which everyone submitted a baby picture and you had to guess who was who? A great online variation is

the “Whose refrigerator?” contest. Everyone submits a photo of the inside of their refrigerator and people have to guess who it belongs to. Great for good-natured playfulness and to strengthen team bonds.

7. Use a collaboration tool (such as Google Docs) that allows for real-time updating and change tracking. The biggest advantage is that several people can work together on the same document at the same time. Not only does this encourage team involvement, but it’s also a huge time-saving device.
8. Designate a meeting word-of-the-day. The goal is for everyone to somehow work it into the conversation. People love trying to find ways to insert “obfuscate” or “trepidation” into the discussion. Do a web search on “word of the day” and you’ll get lots of choices.
9. Hold a typing speed race. Way more fun than it sounds, it’s perfect for some light-hearted competition. Go to typingtest.com.
10. Highlight your team members. At each meeting, have one person give the others a five-photo presentation that describes them. People love telling their stories in pictures.

Finding ways to make your team meetings more engaging and fun improves the quality of your communication and working relationships. But a powerful collateral bonus is that it positively affects your employees or co-workers who are feeling isolated or lonely.

Merge Gupta-Sunderji is a leadership speaker, consultant and the founder of leadership development consultancy Turning Managers Into Leaders.

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