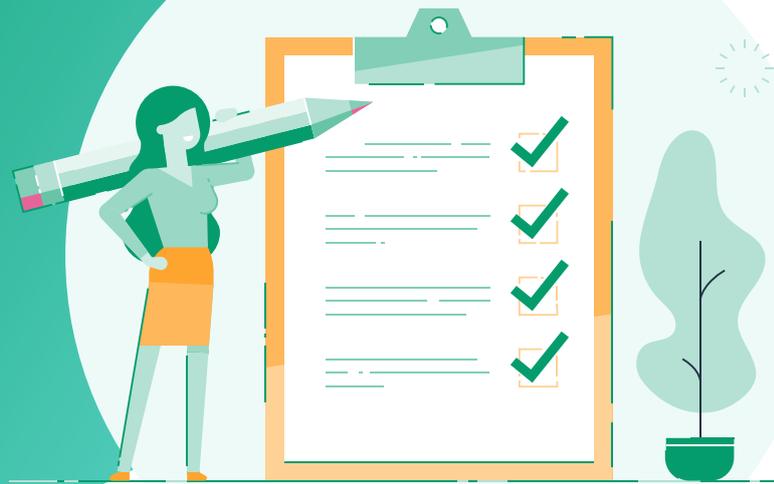


# Better Remote Meetings



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In our last bulletin, we looked at the toolkits that are out there to enable virtual collaboration in these disrupted times. Now we're going to focus on how to deliver focused, effective meetings in the virtual world.

Boardrooms may have been replaced by kitchens, spare rooms or even sheds, but there's no reason why remote meetings can't be more efficient than face-to-face meetings. After all, they can promote a sharper focus and a more disciplined approach. Our tips should help you do exactly that – some of these techniques apply to physical meetings too, so they could help as a good reminder of best practice.

## 1. Preparation is key

All meetings need preparation, but virtual catch-ups add a layer of complexity. It's worth spending a bit of time thinking about the structure and mechanics in advance:

- **Circulate an agenda** – give people enough time to prep and remember that not everyone's working hours and patterns are the same.
- **Allow breaks** – remote meetings can feel intense, so give people time to move away from the screen for a while.
- **Keep energy levels up** by never going longer than five minutes without a discussion or group activity. Use breakout groups to get people working together in smaller teams.
- **Keep things tight and interactive** – focus on the quickest, simplest and most effective ways to share information, promote discussion and make decisions.



## 2. Be present

Working from home makes for all sorts of distractions but encourage everyone to be present and stay “in the (virtual) room”:

- **Clear your work space.** Have pen, paper and the agenda in front of you but nothing else; put your phone on silent and out of view; close the door.
- **Encourage everyone** to have their cameras on (but stay on mute when not talking). This helps you all stay focused and fosters a team spirit.
- **Stand up when you present** if it makes you feel more comfortable, but remember where the camera is!

## 3. Start right

Start the meeting by bringing everyone into the “room”. Connect as human beings – we need that right now – and help colleagues get into the right mindset by welcoming them in.

- **Do a tech tour** so everyone knows how to participate. Ask people what room they’re in or what they can see from their workstation to break the ice and introduce the chat function.
- **Agree the purpose.** As for all meetings, remote or otherwise, if there’s no purpose there shouldn’t be a meeting. Why are we here? What do we want to achieve?

## 4. Encourage everyone to participate

Everyone has a shared responsibility to engage, rather than watch from the sidelines. Make sure everyone feels willing and able to participate fully:

- **Set expectations** of engagement from the start. In your tech tour, remind people about functionality like chat and hand-raising.
- **Remind people** that everyone has a voice – frame your meeting as an open forum where everyone’s point of view is valid.
- **Avoid talking over each other.** As you can’t read the body language this can be tricky, but try to keep control of the meeting by asking people to speak in turn.

## 5. Use tech to collaborate

Video conferencing platforms such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams have excellent additional functionality to help your teams collaborate remotely:

- **Zoom** enables a facilitator to split the meeting into up to 50 separate breakout sessions, which is useful for workshops; you can also create polls for instant feedback
- **Miro** offers digital whiteboards and includes some useful templates
- **Google docs** allow you to co-create, edit and share easily.

One benefit of lockdown is that it's forcing us to learn fast, improve our working practices and think more about how work and life co-exist. And in the post Covid-19 world, remote meetings may well remain a core part of our working lives. Companies will invest more in enabling tech and less in office bricks and mortar; we'll spend more time working from home and less time travelling.

With the right tech and tools to hand, there's nothing to stop us connecting to tackle problems and explore opportunities, productively and effectively. And if we can do so in our slippers, then what's not to like?

**During lockdown we've worked with clients who are looking to re-pivot quickly on existing activity or do new activity in response to Covid-19 and these are a couple of the templates that we've found most useful for this – feel free to use yourself.**

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