



So You Want to Host a Web Meeting?

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Introduction

More and more people are using web meeting tools to bring groups together, as a cost-savings alternative to face to face (F2F) meetings, as a way to reduce a group’s carbon footprint, and as a regular practice both for distributed (in different places) and co-located groups (all in the same place). This tip sheet offers a review of the essential elements and pointers to useful, deeper resources on the web.

What do we mean by a “Web Meeting”?

We often hear the words webinar, participatory webinar, web meeting, webcast, or just “meeting online.” The basic meaning of these words is: **people connecting online using a web based tool to interact with each other at the same time.**



Most often these people are NOT in the same place so they need this ability to meet across distance. *This is what is in common with most variations of the term.*

Tip: Web meetings are SUPPORTED by technology, but they are not ABOUT the technology. So start with the purpose, then add the tech!

What is different is each gathering itself - it’s purpose, who is participating and what they want to do and/or achieve. Just like a face to face gatherings, the purposes vary widely. It could be an agenda-centric meeting with a very defined purpose, an exploratory open meeting, a learning or training session, a performance or even a party.



The problem is that often when people hear the word “webinar,” or “webcast” they assume a *broadcast model*, where one or a few people deliver content to a wider audience, sometimes with the option of question and answer¹. This emerged from the classic controlled presentation or lecture model. Much of the guidance found online is directed at these online presentations. These



different terms can also get in the way because people have interpreted them from their perspective, often without knowledge of a broader continuum of participation.

This resource is not about the broadcast forms. It is designed to share these possibilities and the practices for convening productive web meetings.

¹ <http://guidedmeetings.com/?p=222>

Why are Web Meetings Useful/Important?

A well designed and run meeting with a clear purpose can enable a group to do and experience many things.

Web meetings can help us...

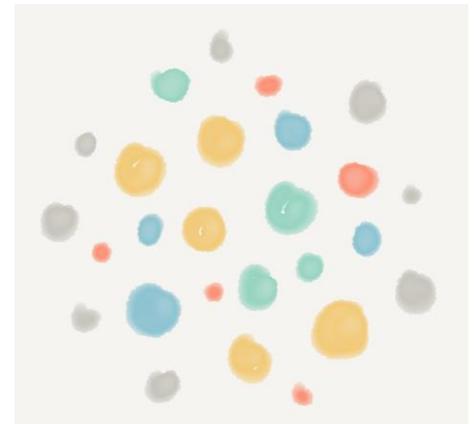
- Get things/work done. For example: planning, brainstorming, problem solving, testing ideas, sensemaking, breakout or work groups. This is typically done with smaller groups of 5-10 people where everyone can participate, or even up to 25.
- Learn things with and from each other. For example: training, community of practice meeting, elearning, just in time learning. This can be very small peer learning cohorts of 2-6, “classes” of 6-25, or more broadcast lectures to complement other learning activities.
- Communicate, present or broadcast content. For example: lectures, streaming out panels from F2F events, rolling out a new program or policy. These can scale out from hundreds and, with streaming of content or use of recordings that can be shared and watched later, reach thousands. This really isn't a meeting...this is that “broadcast” thing we mentioned earlier!



Note each of these examples has an indication of groups size. **SIZE MATTERS!** It is easier to have high levels of meaningful interactivity with smaller groups. When you get to larger sizes, web meetings are most useful for information delivery, presentation or performance.

Web meetings make sense when...

- You aren't physically together. No one disputes the value of F2F meetings, but for most people, getting on a plane to go to a meeting is beyond their ordinary budget. Web meetings can be very cost and time effective IF they are well designed and run. Poorly run meetings are no substitute for anything!
- You are isolated. Web meetings can connect far flung practitioners who are otherwise working in isolation.
- You work across time zones and are feeling out of sync. Web meetings can bridge time zone issues by providing a moment of connection to teams that otherwise work asynchronously across multiple time zones. A great resource for planning meetings across time zones <http://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/meeting.html>
- When your budget is tight. If you do not have the money or time to be together face to face, and you have legitimate reasons to meet, web meetings can be very useful. They are not, however, free from costs. If you have a highly important meeting, don't skimp on planning, facilitation and technical support. At the same time, you can do small scale meetings easily with free tools such as Skype and Google hangouts. Where the risk is low, the cost can be very low.



Web meetings are not great for...

- Resolving highly contentious issues in a large group. It is too easy to be passive (or passive aggressive.) If you want to use a web meeting for this, you should be very experienced.
- Forcing your views on other people. Really, this is not a good use of any meeting. If a web meeting is to “check the box” for “sharing” or “consultation,” but in fact the participants aren’t sharing anything and have no say or choice, or that their input will not be regarded, it is not a good use!
- Simply disseminating information. Send an email, file, recording or video instead!

What are the basics for designing a web meeting?

Let’s be honest. *A poorly designed run meeting is a waste of time, energy and resources.* This is true face to face and online. Some say poor F2F practices ported to the online world are even more awful than F2F! The consequences of a bad web meeting often go beyond that bad meeting. When people have a poor initial or early online experience, they are less likely to join another one, or more likely to multitask and ignore the meeting if they must participate. So plan well. Your first chance is an important opportunity.

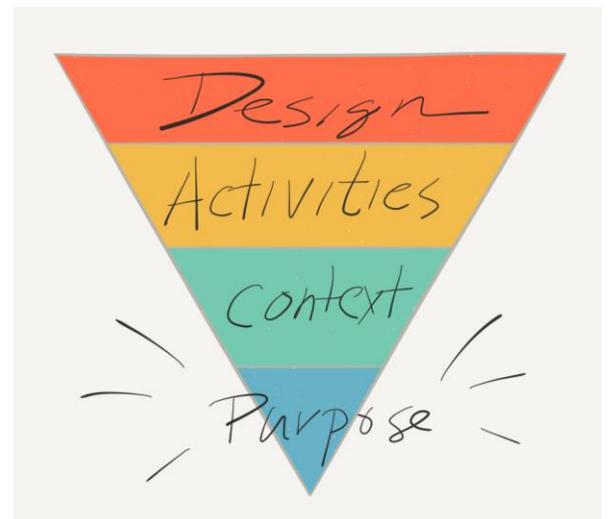
Meeting design starts with **purpose, and context.** These helps you identify what activities will support that purpose. All of these inform both the technical and facilitation or process design. Let’s start with the most important decision: the purpose of the meeting.

Purpose

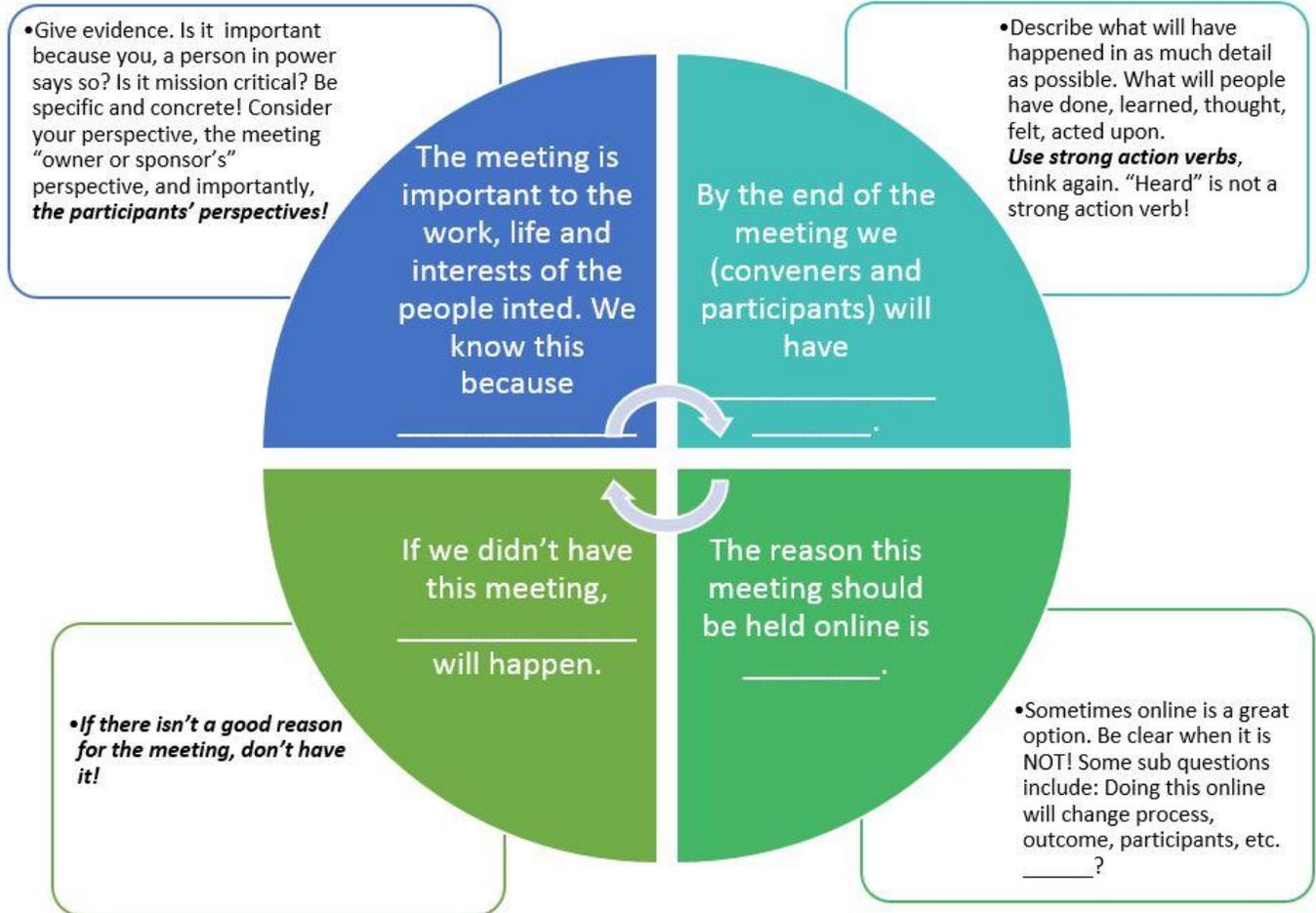
Why are you having a meeting? We have to ask this regardless of where we are meeting, online or face to face. Purpose determines the activities and good meeting design is built around those activities. Don’t start with activities. And for goodness sake, don’t start with the technology!

Stop and think for a minute. What is the purpose of the gathering? Is it simply sharing of info or a discussion or a working event that will result in a product of sorts. Who is in charge? Who is allowed/encouraged to participate and to what extent?

Try and answer the following 4 questions concretely about your meeting purpose. If you can’t stop here. Rethink your purpose or don’t have a meeting. For example, there are many great options if you are just distributing information!



Here are the questions.



OK, you've passed the critical test. You know who needs to do/experience what and why. The next step is to identify the context.

Context

Context includes all those things that influence what you can do and what happens in a web meeting, including the context of participants and the environment. Understanding the context will guide the next steps in your design process.

The most important part of context is understanding the needs, wants and issues of the participants. What do you need to know about/from them before proceeding? (Hey, you can even invite some of them into the planning process -- that's engagement!)

- How will they benefit from participating? Remember, it can be easier to say no to a web meeting.
- What will motivate them to accept your invitation? How will you earn their attention and engagement?
- What else about them do you need to know?

There are the environmental issues.

- What is the internet access availability and quality for participants?
- How many time zones does this meeting have to work across?
- What are the literacy, accessibility and language issues of the participants?
- What technology is available?

A checklist can be useful for this stage of your planning. Here is an example:

- <http://www.fullcirc.com/resources/facilitation-resources/designing-and-facilitating-online-events/>

With purpose and context, you are ready to break this down into what activities have to happen during the meeting to meet your purpose. You design around these activities to address your purpose.

Activities

Activities are the things we do together. In a face to face meeting we might start with check ins or updates, which is a form of getting/giving information. We may do some problem solving or brainstorming. The key to using an activity-centric way of planning is that activities involve people. They are rarely passive. Or perhaps we should say, they are rarely successful when used passively!



If you have “so-so” F2F meetings, start your planning by exploring a wider range of activity and interaction options than you currently practice. The most common practice is to “present” and have participants listen. This is rarely fully engaging and often a waste of precious time together in a synchronous environment. Alternatively, you could record a presentation and send it for people to watch at their convenience, and then design a fully engaged web meeting to act on or discuss that information. (In learning, this is called “flipping the classroom.” Yes, you can flip your meetings!)

Tip: Web meetings can and should be about more than delivering information. You have many other ways to deliver information!

This means activity planning may not just be about how YOU will control the meeting, but how you create that productive space between over control and under control. (Free-for-all aren’t usually a good use of a web meeting either!) Take some time to consider different activities. It will pay off. Here are some examples:

- **Getting/giving information:** talking by taking turns, sharing text, audio or visual artifacts, presenting.
- **Discussing and making meaning:** question and answers, critiquing, evaluating, small group conversation breakouts.
- **Innovating:** brainstorming, ideation activities, prototyping.
- **Practicing:** taking turns, giving feedback, coaching, peer consulting.

- **Deciding something:** evaluating, checking consensus, voting, polling.
- **Planning:** identifying needs, constraints, opportunities, prioritizing, co-creating/editing.
- **Reflecting:** reviewing, evaluating.

The activities you choose will then inform how you design your process and support it with useful web conferencing tools and features. We'll demonstrate more about below.

Design

Meeting design can be as simple as setting a time and date, express the need and invite the appropriate people to join you on Skype or another free tool. Keep those meetings simple.

When we talk about design here, we are talking about designing larger or higher stakes meetings, often with people who don't meet regularly. If you have a simple meeting, don't worry about a lot of this stuff and don't overdesign!

There are two aspects of design we'll consider: the **process design** and the **technology design**. We'll start with the agenda, then move into technology, not because it is more important than process, but for web meetings it tends to constrain some of your options.

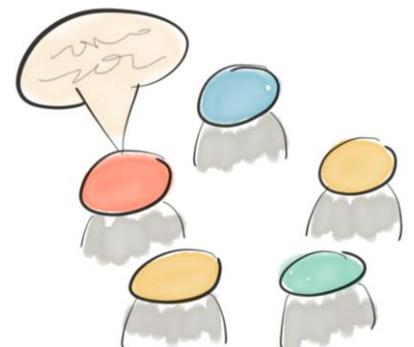
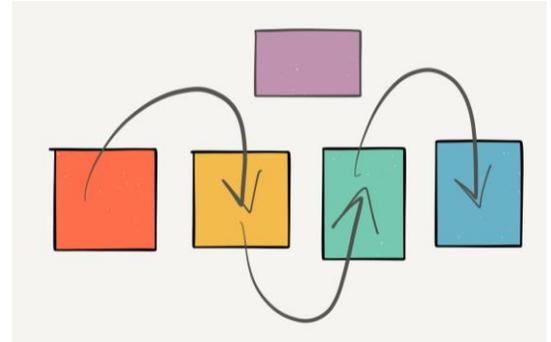
An Engaging, Visually Supported, and Well-Paced Agenda

Attention is scarce face to face, so it follows that it can be even scarcer online. Thus designing an engaging, well-paced and visually supported agenda will improve your chances of success. We've talked about this from an activities and technology perspective. Let's dig a little deeper.

Engaging

Engaging agendas are about fostering the opportunity and mechanisms for multi directional communication and activity. A presentation might be engaging, but chances are there are better ways to spend your web meeting time. Consider:

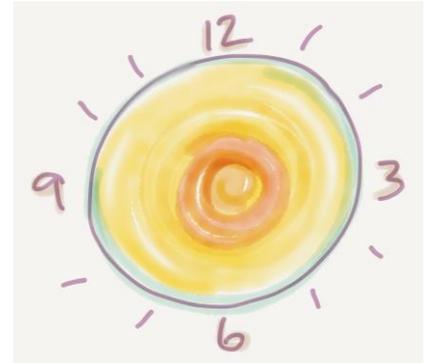
- **Earn people's attention and participation in a variety of ways:** call their attention to something on the screen, use sound and video, polling, whiteboard activities, etc. See ideas from Management Issues <http://www.management-issues.com/connected/6429/make-your-virtual-meetings-more-real/>
- **Distribute roles:** Think about who talks, when, and who doesn't and what do they do instead? Give different people a chance to talk, and give the non talkers something to do like chat, respond with non verbal response tools, or look at things.
- **Be creative:** Remember how many things that can be done in F2F gatherings. These can happen online with some creative thinking. Some are even easier online (web tours, [web quests](#), everyone having a say through chat).



- Check out [Guided Insights icebreakers fact sheet](#)
- Consider particular facilitation approaches and how they might manifest online.
 - [Liberating Structures](#)
 - [World Cafe](#)
 - [Open Space](#)
 - [ToP Methods](#)

Well-Paced

It's easy to rush the process online because we don't have the body language cue us. Consider that we are asking participants to view and process a request, formulate a response, and then take action. Face to face, we can gauge if people understand our question, if they are thinking or tuned out. Online, we have less information. For example, in text chats, participants not only take *at least* one minute to *begin* typing, but that they also tend to edit themselves, substantially increasing response time. Too often we rush in when we don't see anyone typing or after the first response. If we do this, we are essentially telling the participants that we don't really want them to respond. Give participants time to think and respond and help facilitators and presenters avoid rushing. One trick is to play background music for at least 2.5 minutes while people formulate responses. Tell everyone they have plenty of time to think and type, and that when the music is over, the group can begin to digest what has been written. Respect the participant and their contributions...whether you use music, a timer, or some other mechanism to allow space for them to share their thoughts.



One way to really internalize this issue is to test yourself. Time how long a friend takes to verbally answer a three question quiz. Repeat the same thing in text, when you can't see or hear each other. Use the difference as your multiplier for setting timings!

Here are a few more tips:

- Help focus attention by changing the visual field every 60-90 seconds. This applies to presentations AND other activities.
- Design for participant engagement every 3-7 minutes. This doesn't have to be an "activity" ...it can be a strategy that begs for their attention, such as "Look at the image in the upper left corner..."
- Check out these great "rules of thumb" from Guided Meetings https://www.dropbox.com/s/s3dm24o6tjyb7o/Rules_of_Thumb_4_Participatory_Webinars_SLLS_2013.pdf?dl=0

For more ways to think pacing and engagement, look at [Kolb's Learning Cycle](#) and what we are learning from advances in brain science from books like [Brain Rules](#).

Visual

In the previous section you may have inferred that changes in what participants see is important. It is so important we offer a few more tips. To learn more, check out the Brain Rules ideas around vision: <http://www.brainrules.net/vision>.

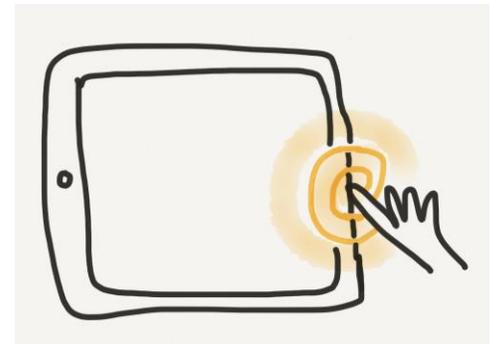
While you can use visuals in many ways considering the ideas we just mentioned, it is worth a note on why visuals are so important in web meetings. Click on the links to SEE what we mean!



- Visuals help us think about the familiar in new ways. For example, take a look [here](#).
- Visuals can be used as a HOOK to help us to [organize](#) and [remember new information](#)
- Visuals can be very helpful to those of us whose primary language is not that of the meeting. Check out this [visual dictionary](#), for example. This example is [for kids](#), but it makes the point as well!
- Try this: Ask people at the beginning of meetings where they are from, or sitting. These can be mapped on to a local, regional or global map and offer instant useful visual feedback for participants and facilitator of where people are.

Technology: A Useful Platform

Web meeting platforms offer different tools for you to use. Most often people use the speaking capability for presenters, and the display of slides focusing primarily on presentation as the dominant activity. These platforms can allow us to do so much more. You have audio, text, visuals, chat, webcams, video and a range of interaction tools that allow you to use more than one modality for engagement. To learn more about web meeting platforms in general, visit:



- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Web_conferencing
- <http://bit.ly/1IKoU5x>
- <https://www.k4health.org/toolkits/km/remote-meetings>
- <http://bit.ly/1M2Npl4>
- <http://www.kstoolkit.org/WebMeeting+Tools>

Tools that Support Multiple Modalities

Using more than one modality tends to hold our attention better than one. Most of us quickly tune out with just audio when we are not in the same room, picking up on visual cues and body language. This is especially true when you are in a group larger than 3-4 and it becomes easy to be “invisible” in all ways. Attention can wander easily.

Voice plus visual keeps our minds from wandering. Chat both gets us responding and interacting, plus adds a kinesthetic experience. Webcams bring in visual cues and some level of body language. Some people say seeing others talk makes a web meeting “more human.”

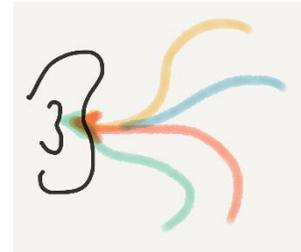
Tip: Technology and process must work together. For example, just because you have a polling tool doesn't make a poll good. Well-designed questions, timing for deployment and how you debrief the results matter!

Web Meeting Tools

Finally, you have to know or be able to imagine how the following tools can support your intended activities. Let's look at the tools, then give a few examples.

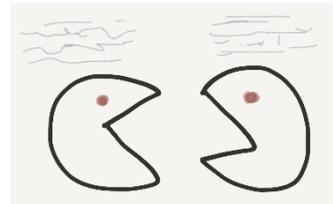
- **Audio** - Audio is the core modality in all web meeting platforms. We talk to and with each other. As you consider audio, determine how much talking AT, and how much talking WITH.

- If you have more than 10-20 people, it becomes hard to engage everyone in a conversation. Consider using tools with breakout rooms or blending voice with chat. Some talk, some chat.
- Audio can get messy and cluttered quickly. Use hand raising tools and protocols to avoid people talking over each other.
- If you want participants to speak, open the web meeting room early and have people test their microphones!
- We can learn from the “old style” telephone conference call tips too! <http://www.fullcirc.com/resources/facilitation-resources/telephone-conference-call-tips/>

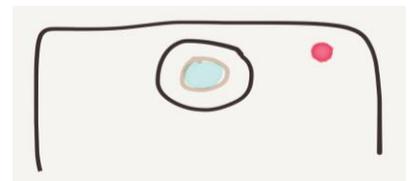


- **Chat** - Chat or text chat is one of the most useful and often underused web meeting tools. It helps jump over audio challenges, it allows a less intimidating way to “speak” and can be used in many ways. The most important issue here is to ensure your web meeting tool allows many to many chat. Some restrict chatting to just communicating with the moderators. This is great for technical problem solving, but not for participant engagement.

- Why Chat Streams are Critical to Online Events <http://www.fullcirc.com/2011/11/16/why-chat-streams-are-critical-to-live-events/>
- When and how to use chat and questions tools <http://www.management-issues.com/connected/6825/you-need-to-chat-in-webmeetings/>

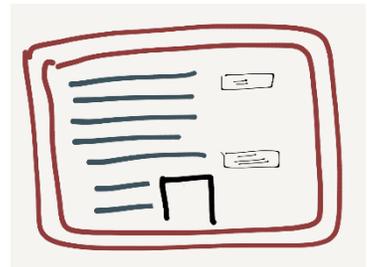


- **Video cameras**- Many people find video cameras (“webcams”) to be a significant improvement for engaging real time with each other. We see faces, body language and that “human touch.” They are getting easier to use, especially when people are using their smartphones which come with the camera. The down side is video takes up more bandwidth and, well, sometimes we just don't WANT to be seen on those 5am global meetings!



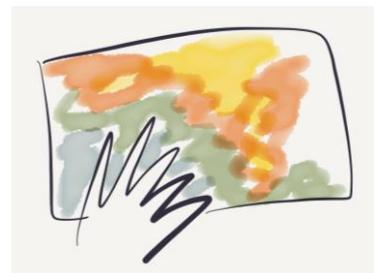
- 7 Unexpected Ways of Using Video Conferencing <https://highfive.com/blog/unexpected-ways-to-use-video-conferencing-now>
- Top 5 Reasons to Use Video Conferencing <http://summitbiztech.com/top-5-reasons-to-use-video-conferencing/>

- **Shared writing spaces** - Most web meeting tools do not have shared editing spaces beyond whiteboards, which can be awkward for writing together. You can share a url to something like [Google Drive documents](#) or [Microsoft OneDrive](#). People stay listening to the audio on the web meeting platform, but are visually looking at and potentially co writing on the other tools. Other shared writing tools include:



- Online Post it boards such as <http://www.boardthing.com> and <http://en.linoit.com/>
- Purpose specific tools like Kanban boards <http://leankit.com/kanban/online-kanban-board/>

- **Interactive whiteboards** - Quick sketches, annotation of existing images and shared note taking are familiar in our F2F world with our flip charts and whiteboards. Online interactive whiteboards are useful once teams get used to using them. They are challenging for one-time-only groups. Here are a few examples.



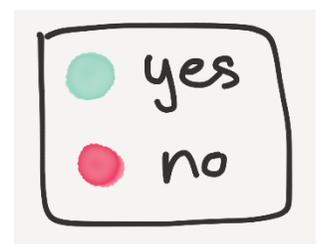
- Drawing together online <http://bit.ly/1HRwSUS> and the Role of Visuals in Online Communities <http://bit.ly/1NGRgUI> and <http://bit.ly/1lpm7PJ>

- **Multimedia** - Video, desktop or application sharing and other multimedia tools do two things: they use visual engagement and they allow us to “show” versus “tell.” Demonstrating a piece of software. Looking together at a piece of text and editing it “live.” Showing short videos, or taking a tour of websites. Don’t just talk, really engage people! Here are some examples:



- Use the ‘share screen’ in Skype or Google Hangouts, or web-conferencing software for demonstrations etc.
- Use web tours and web quests which either guide people through a series of websites, or asks them to navigate on their own.

- **Polling Tools** - Most web meeting tools now allow the person in the administrative role to prepare polls in advance to deploy during a meeting. Some allow you to create them as you go. Some are simple yes/no, while others allow multiple choice or even short text responses. Once people have responded, the results can be shown and used for discussion, decision making or other uses. Here are a few examples.



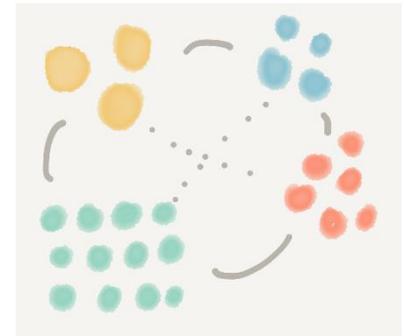
- Test responses to ideas or opinions expressed in presentations or panel conversations.
- Test potential for decision making with preliminary or “straw” polls.

- **Nonverbal Signaling Tools** - This is a catchall for web conferencing features that quickly allow people to indicate something. There are buttons to “raise your hand,” which can also often set up a speaking queue. There are thumbs up/down, checkmarks and other emoticons to get feedback from people about how the meeting is going.



- Use the “smiley” face tools on some web meeting tools to check people’s state of mind/participation. People can also use these emoticons in the text chat.
- Use the hand raising or check tools to check on clarity of meaning.
- Check with participants if the pacing or clarity of a meeting is useful with a “red/yellow/green” poll. Green means everything is fine and keep going, red means stop, or slow down and yellow means they aren’t sure!

- **Remote Hubs and Between Online and Offline** - This one is not a tool per se, but a reminder that we can use technology to link face to face groups meeting in different locations. They can be meeting in a room then join other groups online to share ideas and interact. Or remote folks can “listen in” to face to face meetings, ask and answer questions, etc. Here are some tips and examples:



- Tips for Conducting Hybrid Meetings <http://www.goinginternational.com/2015/08/11/tips-for-conducting-hybrid-meetings/>
- Virtually Connecting - Distribute Participation in F2F Events <http://virtuallyconnecting.org/>

Just for fun, here are some of those tools shown with the types of activities they can support. You can probably think of many more examples!

Activity	Possible tools
Getting/giving information (talking by taking turns, sharing text, audio or visual artifacts, presenting)	Audio, video, chat, screen sharing... heck, almost any and all features can help us do this. The question you need to ask is what KIND of information needs to be shared. When do you need more than text or voice? That would dictate a more fully featured web meeting platform. Otherwise keep it simple.
Discussing and making meaning of information (question and answers, critiquing, evaluating, small group conversation breakouts)	Audio, video, chat complemented by hand raising, polling and breakout room options.

Coming up with new ideas or approaches (brainstorming, ideation activities, prototyping)	Audio, video, whiteboard, chat (chat is GREAT for brainstorming). Prototyping may take more advanced skills and tools like desktop or application sharing.
Practicing something (taking turns, giving feedback, coaching, peer consulting)	Audio, video, chat, breakout rooms.
Deciding something (evaluating, checking consensus, voting, polling)	Audio, video, chat, polling, hand raising.
Planning (identifying needs, constraints, opportunities, prioritizing, co-creating/editing)	Audio, video, chat, whiteboard, desktop/application sharing, using wikis or Google docs while on a call.
Reflecting (reviewing, evaluating)	Audio, video, chat. Don't forget, sometimes reflection benefits from the slower asynchronous environment like discussion lists.

Technology Stewardship

The final technological design issue is translating the activities you have designed into your agenda, and figuring out how to do them with your selected platform. This role is sometimes described as the “technology steward” - the person who knows enough about the technology, and enough about the community or group of people to select, configure, deploy and support the technology. If you are using webinar software for the first time, FIND A FRIEND to be your technology steward. Don't do this alone. It is too much juggling.

What are the basics for running a web meeting?

You have determined purpose, context, activities and technology. Now it is time to get into the nitty gritty of running your meeting. Here are a few basic steps to consider. A useful practice is to write out a plan with timing, process and tech facilitation needs, and notation of content or other materials you will use. Your plan should consider the before, during and after of your meeting.

Tip: Be Flexible

Make your plan, and then plan to be very flexible because there will be challenges.

Prepare Yourself and Your Participants in Advance

Just like a face to face meeting, people want to know what is going to happen when, and what is expected of them. So do you! Here is some advice:

- Convener tips and tricks
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1O0m4oytxv3Pe7C3xVbqJxrtNQmGwQW12FHP1XYV-fN8/edit#>

- Participant tips
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1OOm4oytxv3Pe7C3xVbqJxrtNQmGwQW12FHP1XYV-fN8/edit>

Establish the Roles of Facilitator and Technology Steward

If you have a complicated meeting, there are probably other roles besides yours as the convener. Before the meeting, get clear about who is going to do what. Who is facilitating? Who is taking notes and screenshots? Who will remember to hit the “record” button! If the technology set up is new, DO A PRACTICE RUN!

Plan for Meeting Notes and Artifacts

It is often useful to take meeting notes and harvest relevant meeting artifacts. This may include poll results, visuals or text co-created during the meeting, chat transcripts and even the recording of a meeting which might be viewed by others afterwards. Let’s look at three common artifacts.

- **Recording:** Will the event be recorded and viewed by others? This has implications.
 - Is the design one that creates a useful post-event viewing artifact? This means there is sufficient context and content for later viewing. Otherwise, you may have to edit it down to the parts that ARE useful for post-event viewing.
 - Do you need to get permission of participants for the recording? AT THE MINIMUM, always advise people if a meeting will be recorded.
 - What kind of recording format does the web meeting tool offer? Some create files you can use outside of the platform making them easy to share. Some can only be replayed within the platform, which may limit the options of who can see it. These internal, proprietary files often cannot be edited as well. So if you have a meeting where you DO want to edit and share the recording, choose an appropriate platform or use a third party recording tool.
- **Collaborative note taking:** Traditional meetings have a single or team of note takers. Web meetings offer you the chance to create collaborative notes, having people note key ideas, decisions, or actions in the chat tool. You can then save the chat and edit the notes for a quick, collaborative result.
- **Screenshots, poll results and whiteboard files:** Few tools capture poll results so if they are important, stop and take a [screenshot](#) before you move on. Some tools DO save the whiteboard images, but again it may be useful to take a screenshot.

Be Prepared for Challenges

It is inevitable that something will go wrong with your technology in most of your meetings. We aren't to the point where the tools are easy for everyone to use and connectivity issues alone make reliability rare. You can't anticipate every problem. So stay calm. Work with your technology steward. One approach many of have taken over the years is to always have a "plan B" which usually means having a list of all the participants' emails. If the technology totally fails, email everyone and either move technologies, or reschedule. You can't control everything. ;-)

Tip: Don't Panic! When something goes wrong, because it will, **don't panic**. Some of challenges you can address. Some of them you can't.

Set reasonable expectations. People generally want you to succeed and will be supportive if you have been realistic!

Because we have fewer ways to see how people are doing, there are some common facilitation challenges we face with web meetings. Here are a few common issues with some possible options.

Facilitation Challenge	Options	Resources
Everyone is doing their email during my meeting. What do I do?	<p>First of all, multitasking is common, both face to face and online, so don't worry about everything.</p> <p>For events where you critically need people's full attention, ASK FOR IT. Ask people to turn off their email or phones. If you ask for their attention, design for their engagement. If they are stuck just listening to you, they are going to go back to their email. Trust us on this one.</p> <p>Briefly communicate tips for their successful engagement and participation.</p> <p>YOU MUST DESIGN the meeting to KEEP attention and FACILITATE engagement. This is on YOU!</p>	<p>Multitasking http://www.management-issues.com/connected/6313/dont-fear-distractions-during-online-meetings/ http://www.brainrules.net/attention</p> <p>Tips for Participants https://docs.google.com/document/d/1O0m4oytxv3Pe7C3xVbqJxrtNQmGwQW12FHP1XYV-fN8/edit</p>
I have no idea if people are engaged or not!	<p>There are three parts to this: how to listen, deciding to respond, and how to respond.</p> <p>Listening means not just listening with your ears, but listening with your eyes by watching the chat. If this is too much for you, have a co-facilitator watch the chat and convey key issues to you.</p> <p>Deciding to respond means realizing that YOU should not be doing ALL the TALKING. Sometimes others can respond, building more engagement across the group.</p>	<p>For more about limited non-verbal signals see http://www.management-issues.com/connected/6981/five-seconds-to-better-virtual-meetings/)</p> <p>Asking and Answering Questions http://www.management-issues.com/connected/648</p>

	<p>Instead of being THE voice, be the CONNECTOR between others.</p> <p>How to respond means issues of timing, brevity and modality. You can put something on the whiteboard, say something or put something in chat. Each may result in a different result. Experiment!</p>	<p>9/asking-questions-getting-answers/</p>
<p>Our facilitation team is tripping all over itself!</p>	<p>Do a practice dry-run with all panelists/presenters in the platform you are using. (such as GoToWebinar, Adobe Connect, etc.) Everyone should be using the technology (computer/microphone/phone) that they will use and in the same place where they will be day of...</p> <p>Have a checklist!</p>	<p>See https://docs.google.com/document/d/1OOm4oytxv3Pe7C3xVbqJxrtNQmGwQW12FHP1XYV-fN8/edit#heading=h.lngo5dfk7fh8</p>

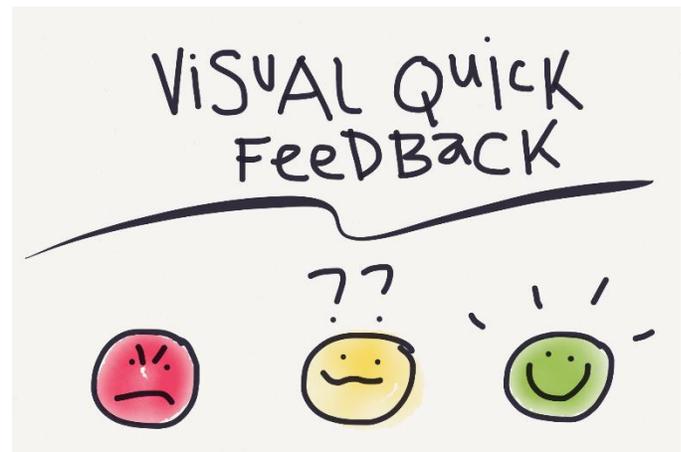
Technology Challenge	Options
<p>My participants all seem to have different experiences and challenges?</p>	<p>As Nancy White says, online interaction technology is “Designed for a group, experienced by an individual.” Different participant hardware configurations (i.e. “but I don’t have a mic or webcam!”) They are sitting in diverse environments. You will never be able to ensure everyone is having the same experience.</p> <p>Communicate the technical requirements in advance, remind participants just beforehand, and know the platform well enough yourself to give them tips and ideally have your technology steward help people as they log in.</p> <p>Have a backup plan if your technology fails for everyone. Have all participants’ email addresses handy in case that is your only means of contact.</p> <p>It WILL happen that at some point someone won’t succeed in getting in. Stay calm, communicate via email or phone that you will follow up after the meeting to tell them what happened/get their input.</p>
<p>Everyone is having audio problems!</p>	<p>Audio troubleshooting is the ficklest and difficult technical challenge due to varying bandwidth, the different ways different platforms use audio and the individual configuration of participants’ computers.</p> <p>Oh, and some people don’t have mics, headsets or even sound cards on their computers, making audio an impossibility.</p> <p>COMMUNICATE the technical requirements well in advance.</p>

	<p>In terms of solving audio problems, if you have a technology steward, check to see if they are familiar with both PCs and MACs, as they handle audio differently.</p> <p>Consider having a “technology steward,” whose task it is specifically to help people with technical problems</p>
<p>Everybody is participating on a mobile. How does this influence my design?</p>	<p>First, remember the screens are smaller. Any visuals you use must be simple and clear. Avoid slides with tons of text.</p> <p>Second, it can be hard for participants to locate the tools within a web meeting platform that are more visible/obvious on the desktop interface. For example, you may have to hover over an area to find a chat box. So keep your design as simple as possible.</p>

Monitoring and Evaluation

Web meetings are an emerging and evolving practice. We have a lot to learn, so every meeting is an opportunity to reflect, evaluate and improve.

So how do you know how well you succeeded with your web meeting? What can you monitor during a meeting to allow for on -the-spot improvement? How can you evaluate the meeting? How do you use this information to decide how much time and resources to invest in web meetings?



The simplest thing is to ask people what did they get out of a meeting, what worked, and what can be improved. If you'd like a format, consider [What, So What, Now What](#) from Liberating Structures. Use a poll during the event or design a useful survey. (Please note: bad surveys are like bad meetings: a bad idea. [Here is some good advice on creating surveys](#).) But ask for feedback.

Some web meeting tools will give you statistics about who used which tools. Keep the chat transcript and note who did and didn't chat, how people used the chat. Watch and learn. There are also the “return on investment” metrics comparing the cost savings of NOT traveling. For example:

- <http://blogs.adobe.com/adobeconnect/2015/01/the-skinny-on-webinar-roi.html>

Resources for Good Meetings practice

There are many terrific resources on web meetings on the web beyond what we noted above. There are also a few great resources on meetings of any kind that can ground your practice, be it online or off. Here are a few of our favorites.

- Participatory Webinars from Guided Insights
https://www.dropbox.com/s/6vqaophxqyui19s/Participatory_Webinars_dr9.ppt?dl=0
- No Travel Required from the CGIAR
http://ictkm.cgiar.org/html/Document/No_Travel_Required.pdf
- Resources on Designing and Facilitating Online Events - Full Circle
<http://www.fullcirc.com/resources/facilitation-resources/designing-and-facilitating-online-events/>
- Raising the Bar on Online Event Practices - Full Circle
<http://www.fullcirc.com/2009/08/11/raising-the-bar-on-online-event-practices/>
- Useful Synchronous Online Facilitation Practices - Full Circle
<http://www.fullcirc.com/2007/01/25/what-are-your-most-useful-synchronous-online-facilitation-practices/>
- The Web meeting section of the UNICEF Knowledge Exchange Toolbox
http://www.unicef.org/knowledge-exchange/files/UNICEF_Knowledge_Exchange_Toolbox.pdf
starting on page 177
- The Essential Web Conferencing Checklist <http://blog.hubspot.com/sales/the-essential-web-conferencing-checklist>
- Guidelines for Engaging in Generative Dialogue aka Conversation.
<http://emergentbydesign.com/2010/06/01/guidelines-for-engaging-in-generative-dialogue-a-k-a-the-conversation/>
- USAID Learning Lab Online Facilitation
http://usaidlearninglab.org/sites/default/files/resource/files/PPL%20Guidance%20Docs_Online%20Facilitation%20FINAL.pdf and Webinar guidance
http://usaidlearninglab.org/sites/default/files/resource/files/PPL%20Guidance%20Docs_Webinars%20FINAL-NEW-3%20aem.pdf
- About Back Channels <https://todaysmeet.com/about/backchannel>
- Traditional Webinar Resources
 - Readytalk Webinar Best Practices (from a vendor)
https://www.readytalk.com/sites/default/files/docs/support-training/ReadyTalk_and_AMA_Webinar_Best_Practices.pdf
 - Tech Soup's 10 Steps for Planning a Successful Webinar
<http://www.techsoup.org/support/articles-and-how-tos/10-steps-for-planning-a-successful-webinar>
 - Blue Jeans Network: Stop Hosting Boring Online Events
<http://pages.bluejeans.com/rs/bluejeansnetwork/images/Stop-Hosting-Boring-Online-Events-eBook.pdf>
- Management Issues has a series of useful articles:
 - <http://www.management-issues.com/connected/6700/web-meetings-stink-before-they-even-start/>
 - <http://www.management-issues.com/connected/6825/you-need-to-chat-in-webmeetings/>
 - <http://www.management-issues.com/connected/6857/why-better-webmeetings-matter/>

- <http://www.management-issues.com/connected/6278/the-most-common-questions-about-webinars/>
- <http://www.management-issues.com/connected/6857/why-better-webmeetings-matter/>

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