



# THE FEARLESS FACILITATOR

## 5 TOP TIPS ON HOW TO KEEP YOUR VIRTUAL GROUP ENGAGED

In this month's top tips newsletter, the focus is on engagement and how to get your virtual group engaged right from the start and maintain that engagement throughout your event.

The 5 top tips I recommend using in all your virtual events are:

1. Personal Connection
2. Ways of Working
3. Keep them busy
4. Chunk your event
5. Have a co-host



This is a bit of a cheat, but the top tips will be even more effective if you have nailed your purpose for the event and it's relevant to the attendees. If the content of your event is seen to be relevant to your attendees, they will engage in order to get value from it.

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# 1. PERSONAL CONNECTION



## Why

**Building personal connections between the attendees can increase their emotional commitment to an event. When individuals feel part of the wider group, their engagement and willingness to contribute to that group increases.**

## What

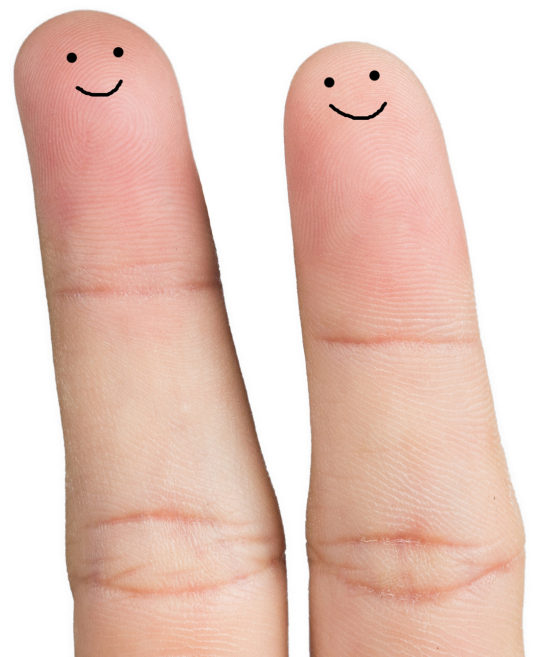
**Going beyond 'what they are' at work and focusing more on 'who they are' as people can help to build common ground among the group and help others to see beyond the ID badge.**

## How

**Before the event, ask your attendees to do one of these:**

- **Send a picture of what they did at the weekend**
- **Send a picture of the book they have most recently read and enjoyed.**
- **Bring a physical object to the event which represents something that's important to them.**

**Allow 10 minutes at the beginning of the event to go through the items. If there are more than 6-8 people in the event, split them off into breakout groups to complete this activity.**



## 2. WAYS OF WORKING



### Why

**Just like with face-to-face meetings, it's important to define and discuss how you'd like to interact and behave in a virtual event to make it productive. If the event feels unstructured and uncontrolled, attendees may disengage from the chaos.**

### What

**Virtual meetings have different social norms to face-to-face meetings, so it's important to surface what is deemed to be acceptable behaviour, so that everyone is clear on this. Asking your attendees to contribute to the formation of a Social Contract can provide an early opportunity for them to engage and shape the event to fit their needs.**

### How

**Have some example suggestions to offer and agree upon. Try and use positive language where possible. Examples could include:**

- Mute when not talking**
- Camera on when speaking**
- Respect others' opinions**
- Full focus during the event (no multi-tasking)**

**Once your suggestions have been agreed, invite other suggestions from the group. Ensure the suggestions are discussed and agreed.**



# 3. KEEP THEM BUSY



## Why

**Our attention spans are ever decreasing. During a virtual event, if we're not actively engaging our attendees on a regular basis, they will disengage. In addition, there are so many other potential distraction, if we don't keep our attendees busy, they will drift away, open up another screen and do something else.**

## What

**If our attendees are busy, they are engaged. They can be busy mentally (problem solving, answering a question) and/or physically (presenting / role plays). Ideally, you want to engage your attendees and get them to do something every 10 minutes. Vary the request to avoid monotony and repetition.**

## How

**Build some of the following into your event design:**

- **Ask open questions**
- **Run a voting survey / poll**
- **Brainstorm using a collaborative tool such as Mural**
- **Run a learning discussion**
- **Run a role play / Real play activity**

**If your group goes beyond 6 people, consider putting them in smaller breakout groups of 3s or 4s to increase overall participation and engagement. Large groups often limit dialogue when working virtually and the introverts may hide in the crowd.**



# 4. CHUNK THE EVENT



## Why

**Chunking can help our attendees stay engaged by helping them with their attention spans, memory recall and energy. If people are tired and / or can no longer absorb content because their short-term memory is full, they are more likely to disengage.**

## What

**There are 2 aspects of chunking.**

- 1. Break your event into bite-size chunks with plenty of breaks or energisers.**
- 2. Chunking your content into easy-to-remember formats.**

## How

**Build plenty of breaks into your event. Even if it's only a 5 minute comfort break, it will help to re-energise your attendees and reset their brain, ready to take on the next part of the event. In a virtual event, each chunk should be around 20-30 minutes. Ideally, your virtual event should last no more than half a day. If people need a break and you don't give one, they will disengage.**

**Use memory recall techniques such as:**

- Show images and tell a story about them to communicate your message**
- Get your attendees to write key content down.**
- Use a mnemonic to chunk several bits of information**



# 5. HAVE A CO-HOST



## Why

**Variety is the spice of life. Listening and engaging with a different facilitator can give the group a real energy boost which increases their engagement and attention. One host may experience technical problems or may drop out due to poor connectivity, so having a co-host can ensure that the session continues to flow seamlessly despite such problems.**

**Also, co-hosts can share the effort if you're running breakout groups. Working alone, it may be hard to get around several breakouts and help your attendees. If some groups are stuck, and not supported, they may disengage.**

## What

**Be clear on the role of your co-host. They could be an active host who shares the burden of presenting / facilitating. They could play a more passive role monitoring text chat and questions coming in while the main host drives the session. They could limit their involvement to helping attendees resolve technical issues. If the event is large, you may need 2-3 people supporting you to drive the session covering all these different roles.**



## How

**Plan ahead. Decide what roles are needed and who could support you in performing those roles.**

**Arrange to discuss the roles and the event design with those who are helping you so everyone is clear on what's needed.**

**If critical, schedule a 'dry run'.**

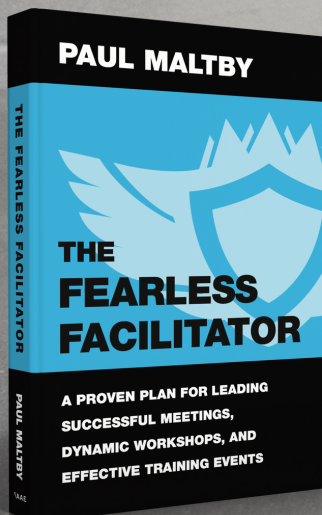


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**July Tips Newsletter**

**5 Ways to increase  
your impact virtually**



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