

## Additional Virtual Facilitation Tips

In the course, you learn several things that will help keep your virtual meetings on topic and on task. We call this facilitation – focusing on the process of making meetings easier and more effective. Here are some additional tips to help you facilitate your virtual meetings more effectively.

### *Stay on Track with Your Agenda*

The agenda can be far more than a planning and preparation tool for an effective virtual meeting. An agenda can also be used by you as the facilitator and by the group to check progress and stay on track – but only if it is used once the meeting begins. Start the meeting by reviewing the agenda on-screen briefly to set perspective and remind everyone of the plan and desired outcomes.

Then depending on the other needs of your meeting and your web platform, you may be able to keep the agenda on the screen for everyone to see throughout the meeting. If you can do that, great. If not, bring it back on-screen regularly so you can help keep the meeting from diving too deep into a topic, getting diverted, or in some other way, not meeting the desired outcomes. You can also encourage each member to have access to the agenda throughout the meeting to help achieve this goal.

### *Talk Less*

Chances are you are leading the meeting (responsible for the tasks, content, and outcomes) as well as facilitating it (responsible for the process), and chances are you spend too much of your focus on the leadership role rather than the facilitation role. If you want better results from your virtual meetings, talk less. The more you talk, the less time there is for others to contribute, and especially in a virtual meeting, the more people feel they are even expected to comment or contribute.

### *Save Your Comments until Later*

My advice of talking less is fine, but you are likely wondering when you should share your comments! My advice is to wait longer. The sooner you comment or share your ideas, the less likely others will share theirs. Let the conversation develop, holding your thoughts until later. You might find you don't need to make comments, as others will have done so. When that happens, the ideas belong to the group, not the leader, and that can be a very powerful difference.

### *Ask More Questions*

One of the ways to do what I have just suggested is to replace your next comment with a question. When you ask more questions, and encourage people to respond, you improve the meeting process and increase the participation. You brought the group together to get their input, right? If you don't get it, your meeting can't be as successful as you hoped for.

### *Slow Down*

Time is our most valuable commodity, and especially in virtual meetings, we often go too fast. In the name of efficiency, we move through the agenda and give people some time to contribute, but when there is silence, we assume there is agreement or no further comment. Momentary silence, especially in a virtual meeting,

doesn't necessarily mean either of those things. You must allow a bit longer for people to think and to choose to share than in a face-to-face meeting – in part because people are waiting, not wanting to step on or interrupt someone else. (Using your webcams can help reduce this factor, as people can see each other like in a regular meeting).

### *Ask More Direct Questions*

One way to deal with the silence and delay is to ask more direct questions. I don't mean direct, as in rude or tactless, but directly to individuals or groups. Use more questions like these:

- “Jorge, you have some experience in this area, what do you think?”
- “What does the customer service group think?”
- “What are the implications on the West Coast?”

Questions like these will stimulate the conversation and encourage specific groups or individuals to engage and contribute.

### *Redirect When Needed*

Sometimes you get plenty of input from one person or group, and your goal as a facilitator is to move on to others – so one person, group, or perspective isn't dominating. When this begins to happen, summarize what has been said, and ask others to comment on that summary. This allows the person or group who have been speaking to know they have been heard and allows you to get others involved in the conversation.