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UPCOMING EVENTS

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April 21st
Building Operations
and Pandemic Emergencies
Presented by Janet Lockridge
Online Webinar
More Info Coming Soon!

7 Keys to Successful Virtual Meetings
Virtual Meetings Can Be a Make-or-Break Aspect of Your Remote Workforce

With the world deep in the throes of a global pandemic, many leaders are allowing at least a portion of their teams to work from home. But virtual leadership is a skill set most have not yet had the opportunity to study or to hone, and just ‘winging it’ could be disastrous.

One of the most important components of a work-from-home team is the virtual meeting. It can be a make-or-break aspect of your remote workforce, with everything from productivity to job satisfaction hanging in the balance. It also represents a significant investment in both time and money, so how can we better utilize it?

“We must reframe virtual meetings as moments of connectivity,” suggests Wade Shows of Crucible Coaching & Consulting, “where team members gather to create value that could not be accomplished...
Facilitating successful meetings can be significantly challenging in a virtual space—with everything from the limits of technology to plain, old-fashioned distraction working against you.

To combat these barriers, Shows suggests focusing on the ‘four Ps’… People, Preparation, Practice, and Pursuance. The scope of knowledge on each of these topics is far too broad to cover in just one article, so for now let’s focus on the second “P”—preparation—as this is a piece of the proverbial puzzle that is too often overlooked, or at least underestimated in terms of importance.

Here are the 7 keys to successful virtual meeting prep…

1. Define the purpose of the meeting – What is it, precisely, that you want to accomplish? Far too many meetings are held without a clear answer to that question, which is almost certainly a waste of time, money, and resources.

2. Confirm the need for the meeting – Ask yourself if this will be a good use of everyone’s time. The purpose of a virtual meeting should be to leverage and harness group energy. If you’re only planning to deliver information, could that be accomplished via e-mail instead?

3. Determine the topic(s) of the meeting – Perhaps the most ubiquitous saboteur of any meeting, online or otherwise, is having too many topics. In order to keep a meeting productive and focused, especially in a virtual framework, don’t attempt to cover too many bases. Stick with one or two key topics, and no more than two or three lighter points.

4. Create an outline for the meeting – Decide in advance what you want to cover, in what order, and what process you will use to achieve each objective. This will not only help you to stay focused and on-topic, it will also ensure the flow of information and participation is productive and meaningful.

5. Determine the length of the meeting –
Be realistic about your time. If people are genuinely engaged, a meeting will almost always take longer than you think. Factor in at least five minutes of initial transition time at the top of your meeting, and don’t count on those minutes to be productive. Likewise, be sure to leave room for 10-15 minutes of question, comment, and clarification time at the end of the meeting.

6. Prime the meeting – Did you know that you can work to ensure attendee engagement before the meeting ever transpires? Priming is the key. Reach out to each attendee prior to the meeting, let them know why you want them in that virtual conference room, what you’d like them to contribute, and what it is you hope to accomplish. Assign everyone a role, in advance.

7. Select and learn to effectively leverage your technology – There’s nothing worse than a delay, derailment, or even cancellation of a meeting resulting from confusion surrounding a technology or platform—especially when you multiply that wasted time by your number of attendees. Whatever software you choose, assign someone to manage it, make sure that you have a thorough understanding of how it works, and ask all attendees to test their access to it in advance.

These are merely the broad strokes, of course. There are numerous tips, tricks, and best practices associated with each of these seven ‘keys’. For now, this is a good starting point for anyone new to virtual meeting leadership.

The bottom line is that you must take responsibility—as a leader—not only for the outcomes of your virtual meetings, but also for their successful planning and execution. Far too many would-be leaders fail at this fundamental skill. Remember, too, that how you show up—be that facilitative and inclusive, or directive and autocratic—determines how attendees show up. Developing your mastery of planning and leading virtual meetings will not only improve team productivity and satisfaction, but set you apart as a leader.
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