

## **ONLINE MEETINGS KNOWLEDGE BASE**

### ***How to prepare and run a successful online meeting***

UNDP GCP operates a range of online meetings to reduce CO2 emissions from travel, increase efficiency across time-zones and bring teams together to strengthen collaboration. However, comparing virtual meetings with face-to-face meetings, a number of challenges arise in maintaining engagement and participation, and even guaranteeing attendance.

The impact of Covid-19 increases the importance of building our skills in creating and running effective online meetings.

58% of UNDP's GHG footprint is mission travel. If we are to become a 1.5° compliant organization, we must elevate the standard of our online meetings to match or exceed the face-to-face experience, and thereby reduce the incentive to travel.

Researchers identify one key difference between the two types of meeting: *coercive eye contact*. In a face-to-face meeting, the facilitator can see the varying levels of attention in the room and bring inattentive colleagues back into the discussion with a look. Online, you cannot do that. The principle we derive from this is:

***In face-to-face meetings, you get the attention you command.***

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***In virtual meetings, you get the attention you deserve.***

Harvard Business Review researchers came up with 5 rules from tests on over 15,000 participants. This note will set out how to put these into practice in the meetings you lead.

- 1 The **60 Second Rule**: Grab participants in the first minute by making them *feel* the issue on the table through statistics, a quote or a compelling visual.
- 2 The **Responsibility Rule**: Create opportunities for participants to take meaningful responsibility, rather than sitting back as an observer.
- 3 The **Nowhere to Hide Rule**: Give people tasks they can actively engage in so there is nowhere to hide.
- 4 The **MVP Rule**: Minimum Viable PowerPoint – use as few slides as you can, and ask whether something else – a live prop or a photo – could do the job instead.
- 5 The **5 Minute Rule**: Never go longer than 5 minutes without re-engaging the audience somehow.

The secret of a successful online meeting is to create frequent opportunities for meaningful engagement, and reward attentive participation.

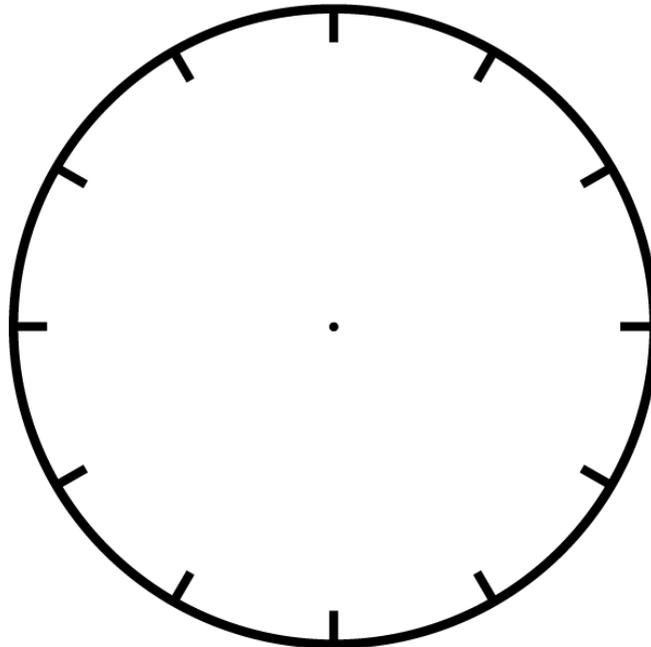
## Preparation

1. Spend as much **time** on preparing for a virtual meeting as you would for a face-to-face one. Just because the audience isn't in the room with you doesn't mean you can't fall flat on your face with them. Make sure you define the desired outcome(s) from the meeting and know what success looks like.
2. Consider the **group dynamics** of participation when determining how people join the virtual meeting. Some offices gather staff in camera-equipped meeting rooms to join a meeting as a group. This is problematic as you will have to deal with the group dynamics of the meeting as a whole *and* the group dynamics within each connected meeting room. GCP encourages people to join as individuals from their desks, even if a number of them are in the same office
3. Block out the **30 minutes before** the meeting in your calendar so that you arrive unflustered.
4. Assemble your **meeting team (see Note 2 for more)**. Multiple attention points must be covered, so you need multiple people. Assuming you are leading the meeting, consider also:
  - a. **Technical Producer** – monitoring the meeting output feed and resolving technical issues with participants
  - b. **Online Facilitator** – Summarising inputs coming in through chat boxes, pointing out participants wanting to contribute, operating breakout rooms, etc.
  - c. **Note-taker and/or graphic recorder** – having a proper/visual record of the flow of the meeting will add to the insights gained by participants.
5. Determine your **Ground Rules** for the meeting, for example:
  - a. **Video on** and screen in **gallery view** so everyone is visible.
  - b. **Mute mic** when not speaking.
  - c. **Turn-taking to speak** – contributors speak when invited by the chair, after putting their hand up (virtually by clicking the icon or by doing so on camera) if they wish to make a point.
  - d. **No side messaging**: parallel non-verbal communication will be by chat box visible to all.

## Content

Meeting the HBR 5 Rules requires careful planning of your running order. Placing items in the right place and in the right rhythm will ensure a successful meeting.

1. Use a blank clock to visualize which element should go where, as the time ticks around the hour.



2. Decide how to win attention in the first 60 seconds – story, statistic, photo? Script this section to give you a concise, targeted start, and include the desired outcome(s) from the meeting.
3. Activate the Responsibility and Nowhere to Hide rules by using virtual breakout rooms in the first few minutes to facilitate introductions & check-in conversations between attendees. Ask a few of them to tell the whole group about their experience when you come back into plenary mode. This will involve everybody and impress on them that they are active participants in the meeting, not passive observers.
4. As you complete the clock, put a star beside each element that will activate the 5 minute rule. Don't risk losing audience attention.
5. In addition to the frequency of the 5 minute rule, you need to consider the overall flow of the meeting from beginning to end. The best way to do this is to use the 3 Act Play structure and the Human Attention Cycle that is linked to it. This is described in the table on the next page.
6. Define what action you want people to take at the end of the meeting. Prepare an outline script for this section so that you can bring the meeting to an effective close.
7. If your meeting has a different duration to 60 minutes, flex the timing of the sections as appropriate. If it has many short topics, try to achieve the 3 Act Play structure within each topic. If it is planned to run for more than 90 minutes, consider whether you should split it into two meetings to maintain attention. There is a reason that stage plays have an interval in the middle.

3 ACT PLAY STRUCTURE: Your intention	HUMAN ATTENTION CYCLE: Audience reaction
<p><i>Act 1: First 20 minutes</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Set-up</li> <li>• Setting out the issue</li> <li>• Describing the people involved</li> </ul>	<p><i>Getting drawn in</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Casting off previous thoughts</li> <li>• Mapping out the territory</li> <li>• Finding a personal “angle” of engagement</li> <li>• Achieving empathy with the situation</li> </ul>
<p><i>Act 2: Middle 20 minutes</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outlining the confrontation</li> <li>• Defining the problem to be solved</li> <li>• Stressing the urgency</li> </ul>	<p><i>Heightened excitement</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Questions arising in the mind</li> <li>• Gaining understanding</li> <li>• Feeling the need to do something</li> </ul>
<p><i>Act 3: Final 20 minutes</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Resolution</li> <li>• Tying all the threads together</li> <li>• Issuing a call to action</li> </ul>	<p><i>Looking for a conclusion</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Filtering options down to one</li> <li>• A wish to ‘get this done’</li> <li>• Ambition to finish better than we started</li> </ul>

### Running the meeting

After all your preparation, running the meeting becomes the execution of your plan and should run smoothly.

Open your virtual meeting portal (Zoom, Skype for Business, etc.) 5 minutes before the start of the meeting so that people know they are joining the right event.

2 minutes after the nominated start time, introduce your team (Technical Producer, Online Facilitator, Notetaker/Graphic Recorder) and remind everyone of the Ground Rules.

Launch into your script for the 60 Second Rule arresting content, then open the breakout rooms for introductions, and you’re on your way.

In line with the 5 Minute Rule, create opportunities for questions and other engagement throughout the meeting, don’t let them bunch up into the final 10 minutes.

At the end of the meeting make sure to conclude things properly (use the outline script you prepared) and make it clear what you expect from participants, and what will be provided – meeting notes, graphic recording, etc.

If there is to be another meeting in the series, give the date and time and ask people to put it in their diaries.

## **After the meeting**

Send out your summary note / graphic recording promptly to all invitees, and remind those who could not attend of the file location of the meeting recording. Many virtual meeting systems record both combined audio and video, and audio only files - it is good practice to provide links to both options so that low-bandwidth users can access a smaller file.

Finally, the key to improved virtual meetings is to review your own planning, structure and facilitation performance by **viewing the recording yourself**. Watch out for aspects that worked well that you should do more of, and for things that could be better. Take those learnings into your next virtual meeting and your improvement will be rapid.

### ***Further development:***

*It is intended that this should be a live document, added to by the wisdom of colleagues from around the organization. Please email suggestions and insights to the address below.*

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