



Your Free Business Guide to having to have a virtual meeting that's not painful (and actually productive)

Important! No matter what industry you're in, or the size of your business, leading effective meetings is often a difficult task. Most people think that it's a waste of time, and there are a lot of articles and research backing that up that claim. The challenge is much more significant for virtual meetings, and people know it. So much that it often leads to the all-too-common question: "Do we need to meet?"

At Google, we approach meetings with the intent to inspire spontaneous creativity and bring the best ideas to life. We have a distributed workforce with offices in over 160 cities, spanning nearly 60 countries. But working with colleagues in different locations is not unique to Google. You can think what you want about remote working, but it's not going to slow down anytime soon. According to the [London Business School](#), more than half of the workforce will be remote in some form or another this year.

When they predicted this only in 2019, they probably didn't quite envisage the current COVID pandemic but based their research on overall changing trends across global workforces. In any case, COVID has accelerated this development that was arguably on the way to workforces. Over the years we've homed in on the best ways to have productive, enjoyable virtual meetings that bring teams together and so we can best advise our clients, especially now during times of global crisis. We asked ourselves, how can we create meetings people love?

Below are five best practices at Cinnte Technologies, that allow us to scale the culture of spontaneous creativity and productivity across offices.

LAY THE GROUNDWORK BEFORE THE MEETING

Whether you're meeting virtually or in person, take the opportunity to set expectations for the meeting in advance and lay out details and logistics. Who will lead it? What is the end goal? Try to [format them in a way](#) that moves away from status updates, and gets to the crux of what you're trying to solve.

Find ways to build ritual into meetings to keep the [creative juices](#) flowing. We recommend that Managers, Team Leaders, Business Owners & Directors begin their team's weekly meeting with everyone sharing a personal or professional failure and what they learned from it, which helps build comfort with taking risks, as well as something positive from the previous week which helps retain focus at crucial times. It is our experience and belief that,



the key to innovation is to have an explorer's mindset, and that involves the willingness to face failure and take risks. When you help your team get in that frame of mind, they'll probably be more likely to come up with innovative ideas.

PROMOTE A "VIDEO-FIRST" APPROACH

At Cinnte, we realized a while back that voice-only conference calls limited the level of collaboration and team dynamic. Not being able to read people's body language makes it more likely for misunderstandings to arise, which can throw an entire meeting off and impact the overall team dynamic.

With video, attendees can interpret the facial expressions and social cues, which allows everyone to "read the room" and react accordingly. By bringing these other interpersonal interactions to a virtual meeting, you can inspire the type of productivity that might happen with everyone in the same room. Video may seem awkward at first, but as with any new process, you adapt and then wonder how you ever got anything done without it. You'll also discover that video can be a great way to bring your team together, such as an impromptu online gathering to congratulate a remote staff on a job well done.

MAKE MEETINGS INTERACTIVE TO KEEP EVERYONE ENGAGED

It's easy to let distractions steal attention from what's happening on a video or voice call. In one [recent survey](#), more than 60% of respondents admitted to doing other work or sending an email while on a conference call.

A great way to avoid distractions is to make the meeting more interactive. For starters, working out of a live shared doc allows everyone to contribute in real time. You can also have participants take turns presenting to the group with screen sharing to maintain engagement. By introducing interactive components to a meeting, you can encourage a fruitful conversation while capturing attendees' attention.

ACTIVELY ENCOURAGE EVERYONE TO PARTICIPATE-INCLUDING YOUR REMOTE ATTENDEES

We've experienced that people enjoy meetings when they have a role in the discussion and can participate. When meeting virtually, though, it can be more difficult for everyone to speak up, leading to people feeling left out and increasing the temptation to check out. One way to make a meeting more immersive is to ask participants directly for input. This practice helps everyone feel engaged in the discussion and avoids any one person sucking all of the air out of the (virtual) room, which is especially important if the goal of the meeting is to brainstorm ideas.

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SHARE MEETING SUCCESS

Because virtual meetings don't have the same level of external visibility as face-to-face meetings, be sure to share back the productive conversations and ideas that occurred during the meeting. This can come in the form of a meeting recap, next steps, or even calling out a meeting MVP, where you recognize outstanding contributions to the meeting. Building strong meeting muscle takes time, but when you take some time to revamp your practices, you can create an environment where [some of the best ideas come to life](#). With the right tools and best practices in place, you can inspire a culture of creativity and collaboration, even when you're working across five different time zones.

If you want to learn more about how to get the best out of video conferencing tools and other remote working software, please reach out and let us guide you to get set up or improve the remote working software you already have!

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