

# Tips for Virtual Board Meetings

Virtual board meetings have a lot of advantages – like reduced travel and improved attendance. But they have a serious downside too. It's hard to maintain engagement, participation, and good board dynamics when meetings are virtual. These practical tips should help.

- **Do pre-work.** Encourage board members to exchange feedback before the meeting via file-sharing or secure chat platforms.
- **Take more breaks.** Virtual meetings create fatigue. Schedule plenty of breaks – about one 15-minute rest every 90 minutes.
- **Schedule shorter meetings.** Shorten the agenda by focusing on fiduciary responsibilities and decisions to be made. Updates can be provided by file-sharing or email rather than taking up meeting time.
- **Spread sessions out.** Instead of one long meeting, spread in-depth discussions over a series of shorter meetings. The usual two-day board retreat can be spread out over a two-week period instead.
- **Be deliberate about building trust.** Use exercises designed for participants to share things about themselves and learn about each other. Google 'virtual icebreakers' to come up with ideas for your board.
- **Use virtual breakout rooms.** Breakout rooms can be used for discussions that require candor, testing ideas, or challenging discussions. Afterwards, reconvene as a group to hear reports.
- **Invite guests.** Widen the board's perspective with new people. Have experts drop in remotely to share their expertise. Or consider hearing from employees who wouldn't usually interact with the board.

**Source:** '[The Upside of Virtual Board Meetings](#)' by Keith Farrazzi and Sarah Zapp. Harvard Business Review. July 10, 2020.



# Virtual Meeting Checklist

## Before the Meeting

- Download / install the app or software. Ensure it works on your device.
- Familiarize yourself with the platform. Check your video and audio settings to see how you will look and sound.
- Do a test video session with the administrator. Know the backup plan if problems arise (e.g. use your telephone.)
- Get comfortable with how the meeting materials will be viewed (another device, split screen, paper?)

## During the Meeting

- Find a quiet place and set aside some uninterrupted time. Mute your telephone so it doesn't ring during the meeting.
- When not speaking, mute your microphone to minimize surrounding sounds from leaking through to the meeting.
- Use headphones or earbuds to minimize distractions and improve your ability to hear others.
- Focus on staying engaged and attentive. Look into the camera occasionally as though you are making eye contact.
- If needed, ask how to speak up. Should you raise your hand visibly or does the platform have a "raise hand" function?

## After the Meeting

- Do a brief self-assessment. What should you do differently next time?
- Provide feedback to the Board Chair and administrator about your experience with the virtual meeting.