

Balance Humanity with Practicality in Remote Meetings!

Make it a priority to get outside the office at some point in the day to clear your mind and breathe some fresh air. If possible, walk to a nearby coffee shop or around the block. Often, my most creative ideas come to me while I am away from my work environment. Plus, when you set aside a moment to collect and gather your thoughts, it ensures that you are ready to return productively with a clear headspace.

If you are feeling stuck, annoyed, or frustrated— don't sit and stir. Allow yourself to walk away; fill your coffee or water bottle, use the washroom, stand and stretch for a couple of minutes. When you return, your brain will have had that moment to regroup and be ready to embrace the challenge with new solutions.

- As you start your meeting, have attendees show their pet (who doesn't love a cute pet moment?!).
- When your child unexpectedly barges into the room, introduce them and allow them to poke their head into the camera.
- Share a personal 'win' during this Shelter in Place period. I'll start by sharing my Top 4 wins or gifts (#COVID-TOP4GIFTS).
- If it feels appropriate, give a 30-second tour of the room you're working in or share an interesting fact about something within that room.

Of course, there are some remote meetings where simply showing your face with your home as a backdrop is enough. For example, maybe your team predominately consists of introverts or, perhaps, your CEO holds a company-wide meeting from his/her office – remember they may also be a spouse, parent, grandparent and prefer to keep that semi-private. Although remote meetings remove barriers and creates a greater sense of connection and humanity – honor the sacred space.

There is no shortage of logistical tips to run or attend an effective remote meeting. I boiled down mine to what I'll call my critical 3:

1. Set yourself up for success and take an extra minute before a meeting to ensure you can access the conferencing tool. Some tools require you to download a file before you're able to join and others do not. If you're facilitating the meeting, always start your meeting a few minutes ahead of time so that you can troubleshoot issues before attendees join.
2. Always have a backup plan. Include an option for attendees to join by phone and remember to have a one-click mobile number to make it even easier to join. Speaking of mobile phones, you know that annoying delay when talking with someone on your mobile phone? That same delay occurs in remote meetings so be aware of this and gracefully navigate the inevitable interruptions.
3. When possible, use your video! This is a helpful feature that allows you to see face expressions and body language to get a full picture (pun intended) on how each person contributes. How you show up reflects your personal brand. If that's important to you and your business, then take the time to prepare so you present your best self.

My critical three can be a great starting point for your team but remember that you are a TEAM! It's completely acceptable to collaborate on how your online meetings should run. We set norms and expectations during in-person meetings, now just adapt them to fit remote style meetings.

Life is challenging right now as we juggle many tasks – including remote meetings. Just remember that these times have presented everyone with new challenges and changes in lifestyles- give each other a lot of grace and understanding, but help each other be accountable, too!

Hopefully this provides a fresh perspective so that you and your whole team can shine in remote meetings. I'm interested to hear, now that we have been in a Shelter in Place protocol, how are your remote meetings holding up? What are some creative solutions that your team brought to the table? More than ever, we must rely on each other and trust the process and adapt!

#REMOTEMEETINGLOGISTICS
#COVID19
#EMBRACEHUMANITY



A passionate organizer of people and initiatives, Erica Smigielski brings over twenty years of experience in project leadership to financial software and SaaS companies who want to launch their next big idea. She leads large-scale, complex projects like product launches and company mergers and acquisitions as well as focused efforts to bring structure and process to fast-track businesses. Erica holds certifications as a Stanford Advanced Project Manager as well as a Certified Group Facilitator, making her a master orchestrator of strategic planning, as well as a skillful communicator who can expertly navigate complex group dynamics.