

RUNNING MEETINGS VIRTUALLY

Since lockdown commenced, on March 23rd 2020, we have been involved in **100+** trustee board and committee meetings. This has enabled us to confidently provide 10 top tips which might assist Schemes in the planning and running of virtual meetings and which can make a massive difference:

TEN TOP TIPS:

1. **KEEP IT SHORT:** Do not exceed 90 minutes without a break and work out how long the meeting really needs to be. Make sure that you keep at least 15-30 minutes between meetings.
2. **SPREAD LONGER MEETINGS:** Consider spreading longer meetings, such as a full quarterly board meeting, over two days.
3. **SEE EVERYONE:** A tiled view can encompass 15 people comfortably on a single screen. Beyond that, using the chat function or raising a virtual hand becomes increasingly important.
4. **FOR THE CHAIR – ACT LIKE A FIREFIGHTER:**
 - ✓ tell the participants what you expect from them;
 - ✓ set out the rules upfront and how you want feedback/questions;
 - ✓ remind all participants of the flow and when there will be breaks;
 - ✓ your confidence will impact others, so it is really important to keep your energy levels high and allow enough pauses for feedback; and,
 - ✗ do not assume that everyone has studied the agenda and understands the timings.
5. **ASK QUESTIONS PRIOR TO THE MEETING:** Trustees get their papers a week in advance, so if you need more clarity, liaise with the Chair beforehand. This helps meetings run to schedule.
6. **SIMPLIFICATION ENSURES ENGAGEMENT:** If the meeting involves lots of presentations, ask the presenter to simplify, this heightens engagement and keeps people focused.
7. **AGENDA ITEMS & ORDER:** Make sure the agenda lists the items in order of importance. Use ‘**DECIDE**’, ‘**DISCUSS**’ and ‘**NOTE**’ next to agenda items to signal their relative importance. This ensures important decisions are made when everyone is not “virtually” or cognitively fatigued.
8. **POSITIVE BODY LANGUAGE:** When you are presenting, make sure you move around, use your body to give life to your presentation and “own the screen”.
9. **POSITION YOURSELF CORRECTLY ON CAMERA:** Make sure that participants can see your face and upper body including your hands, look down the lens for maximum engagement. Think about the lighting – it makes a massive difference!
10. **LIMITING THE NUMBER OF ACTIVE PARTICIPANTS:** this greatly increases the flow – so consider carefully the meeting’s make up.

We’d love to hear from you, if you have other ideas, or have had any success with our suggestions.