



Addressing the impact of COVID-19 Remote project delivery during COVID-19

Public policy measures put in place to contain the spread of COVID-19 are resulting in significant operational disruption for many companies. In response, a majority of the workforce will move to remote work and therefore the ability to meet virtually will be critical to move initiatives, projects and day-to-day work forward. To enable this way of working, companies will need reliable technology solutions, but having the right techniques and roles to conduct the meetings will also be paramount.

All good meetings clarify participant roles, be it team leader, team member, and/or facilitator. In most cases, the facilitator is the team leader, but not always. It is crucial to make the distinction before you start. The most effective and valuable meetings are ones that have great content and solid process. The facilitator's role is much more about the process of the meeting than the content being shared, and separating the process and the content is even more important in a virtual setting because naturally, in-person cues are less accessible.

Reasons why project meetings may become less effective

Virtual sessions can become less effective fast, which is often attributed to distraction. Distraction comes in many forms, including multitasking, relevance of topic to the participant, or personal demands at home. Given this reality, it is recommended to set meeting norms that make sense for the group and acknowledge the different demands facing individual team members. Meeting norms will be situation-dependent, so what works for one meeting might not work for another. Take the time to establish them.

ESTABLISH MEETING NORMS

Meeting norms should be presumptively declared at the start of each meeting, and ideally displayed on the screen. At the start of the meeting, the facilitator ensures participant comfort and willingness to adhere to the norms. That could mean making a statement to assume agreement or asking a question of consent.

Example of meeting norms:

- Use mute only to silence background noise, not to disengage or multi-task
- Break for 5 minutes for meetings over 60 minutes
- Indicate that you need to raise a point, by sending a notification through the group chat
- Say your name before you make a point so everyone knows who is speaking

Effective meeting attributes are even more important in virtual meetings

➤ **Decision-making:** When it is time to make a decision, it is crucial to have participants demonstrate their consensus for the decision proposed. In virtual meetings, it is harder to know if participants are genuinely supportive without visual cues such as body language. Since we know that physical demonstration of commitment increases the likelihood of a team following through on a decision, the facilitator must have a mechanism to test for the consensus. Ways to test consensus include leveraging a virtual voting technology, or simply asking the question of the participants and waiting for every person's reply.

➤ **Engagement:** The key to high engagement is interaction, which is more challenging virtually. Consider ways to build rapport and comfort for interaction at the start of the meeting. The facilitator should also design into the dialogue places to seek out participant input.

➤ **Contribution:** The best outcomes are a result of diverse opinions and ideas. The facilitator must find ways to draw out critical inputs while balancing participation. To enable efficient and effective contribution, sending preparatory material in advance of the meeting is recommended.

Virtual meeting checklist

Pre-meeting

Define your people, purpose and path(s) forward

- Select the right group to attend
- In advance of the meeting send out the agenda and decisions to be made in the meeting
- If you are a meeting participant, discuss agenda items with your team in advance of the meeting to form your opinions and views on the selected topics

Consider the time and duration

- Select a suitable meeting time given different time zones
- Determine the least amount of time required to achieve meeting objectives
- Consider report-outs as part of the pre-meeting package to maximize productive time in meeting

Clarify roles for the meeting

- Determine who will play the facilitator role and differentiate from team leader, if required

Communicate required preparation time and in-meeting expectations

- Suggest participants build time into their calendar in advance of the meeting to be adequately prepared
- Send meeting norms in advance

During meeting

Level-set on the purpose and approach to the meeting

- Team leader reviews the objectives and agenda for the meeting, making it clear which agenda items require decisions from the team
- Agree on meeting norms

Establish engagement

- Ask professional, yet personal, questions to build rapport with participants (e.g. "Does anyone have a tip for productivity when working from home?")

Encourage collaborative problem-solving

- Allow everyone to express their opinions and ensure that all opinions are heard

Drive to decision making

- Post the decision wording on the screen to confirm the proposal
- Take the time to ensure true understanding of the decision being proposed. (open the floor to Q&A)
- Use pre-determined tool to confirm consensus for the decision

Restrict multi-tasking

- Use video when possible
- Leverage meeting norms

Wrap-up

- Agree on next steps and when the team will meet next, if a cadence has not already been established

Post-meeting

Email decisions and Action Items

- Distribute a listing of key decisions made, relevant brainstorm input and action items to the participants after the meeting concludes
- Set-up next meeting, if a date was agreed to in the meeting

Get feedback on meeting outcomes

- Using a quick tech survey conduct a "round table" to seek feedback on meeting process and suggestions for future

Technology is your enabler. Selecting the right technology can help you achieve the desired outcomes.

Don't Forget!

- Test your technology in advance of the meeting and have a back up plan (e.g. conference line, print-outs) in case the technology fails
- At times technology will fail. Don't get frustrated

Contact:

For more information on how to respond, recover and thrive:

- Connect to Deloitte leaders www.deloitte.com/COVID-19-leaders
- Visit www.deloitte.com/COVID-19

Deloitte refers to one or more of Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Limited ("DTTL"), its global network of member firms, and their related entities (collectively, the "Deloitte organization"). DTTL (also referred to as "Deloitte Global") and each of its member firms and related entities are legally separate and independent entities, which cannot obligate or bind each other in respect of third parties. DTTL and each DTTL member firm and related entity is liable only for its own acts and omissions, and not those of each other. DTTL does not provide services to clients. Please see www.deloitte.com/about to learn more.

Deloitte is a leading global provider of audit and assurance, consulting, financial advisory, risk advisory, tax and related services. Our global network of member firms and related entities in more than 150 countries and territories (collectively, the "Deloitte organization") serves four out of five Fortune Global 500® companies. Learn how Deloitte's approximately 312,000 people make an impact that matters at www.deloitte.com.

This communication contains general information only, and none of Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Limited ("DTTL"), its global network of member firms or their related entities (collectively, the "Deloitte organization") is, by means of this communication, rendering professional advice or services. Before making any decision or taking any action that may affect your finances or your business, you should consult a qualified professional adviser. No representations, warranties or undertakings (express or implied) are given as to the accuracy or completeness of the information in this communication, and none of DTTL, its member firms, related entities, employees or agents shall be liable or responsible for any loss or damage whatsoever arising directly or indirectly in connection with any person relying on this communication. DTTL and each of its member firms, and their related entities, are legally separate and independent entities.