

## RUNNING AN EFFECTIVE VIRTUAL MEETING

Whether your organization has 10 or 300 members, running an effective meeting is an important aspect organization success. They give members a chance to discuss and evaluate goals and objectives, keep members updated on current events, provide a chance to communicate, keep the group cohesive, and allow the group to pool resources for decision-making. Effective meetings need structure, order and ground rules. Without these elements, meetings can prove to be ineffective and negatively impact the organization. Below, you will find some tips, tricks and best practices to help make sure your virtual meetings are successful, productive and FUN!

### BEFORE THE MEETING

**Purpose of meeting.** Meetings have several functions so it's important to define the purpose of each. The purpose is the reason people come to the meeting. Without a purpose, members may feel that their time was wasted and it could discourage from engaging in the future.

**Create an agenda.** The agenda should outline the main topics, subtopics, and any time limits. It should also help clarify the purpose of the meeting and define member roles. It should be shared in advance. For longer meetings, try to organize your information into 10 to 15-minute segments. This accommodates shorter attention spans and helps keep everyone engaged and focused.

#### **Sample Agenda**

- I. Call to Order
- II. Correction and Approval of Minutes from Last Meeting
- III. Announcements
- IV. Officer / Committee Reports
- V. Unfinished Business
- VI. New Business
- VII. Special Announcements
- VIII. Adjournment

**Determine meeting time.** Use scheduling tools like Doodle to help find the best meeting time for the group. Once determined, set a time limit and stick to it. Be sure that everyone knows when and how the meeting will be held. If possible, hold meetings at the same time every week.

**Choose the right technology.** Each virtual platform has different perks, features and limitations. Be sure to do your research and pick the one that most meets your organization's needs. [Zoom](#) and [Microsoft Teams](#) can accommodate both small and large group meetings but don't be afraid to explore other options.

**Protect your privacy.** Unwelcome outsiders can be disruptive. You should avoid using your Personal Meeting ID and instead create a unique link for each virtual meeting. You can also utilize features such as waiting rooms, attendee passwords or even lock the meeting once all attendees are present to help protect the meeting. Have a plan in place for addressing any disruptions.

**Test your tech.** All participants (especially the facilitators) should test their tech in advance to ensure that it works properly. It's a good idea to appoint another officer to handle tech issues during the meeting and come up with a contingency plan to handle common glitches.

**Update your device.** Ensure all necessary updates have been installed on your device and that it is charged up. The last thing you want is to delay a meeting or exit a meeting due to a software update.

**Send and track invites.** Knowing who will or will not be in attendance helps with your planning especially if there is business that needs to be voted on. In HornsLink, you can [create an event/meeting](#) that is only viewable by your members and keep a log of attendees. This will allow you to track and store RSVPs and attendance in one place.

## DURING THE MEETING

**Arrive early.** Log-on 15-30 minutes early to prepare the technology, load presentation(s), test audio/video, and open all necessary tabs/windows/websites.

**Elevate your presence.** A virtual meeting is most effective when others are able to see facial expressions and other nonverbal cues. Arrive to the meeting with your webcam on and ensure you are visible to other attendees. Cameras should be eye level on the monitor you plan to use for the conference. Videos look best in well-lit rooms, without backlighting from windows or lamps. Virtual backgrounds can be helpful and creative but should not be a distraction to others.

**Ground rules and etiquette.** Ground rules provide attendees with guidance on how to engage during the meeting. Adopting Roberts Rules of Order is a useful tool for providing structure for any meeting. Other common rules include asking participants to join the meeting five minutes early and to mute their lines unless speaking. Before the meeting begins, the presenter and attendees should close all non-essential programs and windows on their laptops, put phones on silent or do not disturb, and avoid multi-tasking to stay focused. Ground rules should be shared with participants in advance and reinforced as attendees arrive to the meeting.

**Provide a dial in option.** Video conferencing can work very well but having a reliable internet connection is key. Calling in may be the best option for those without access to the internet. Many platforms allow participants to dial in directly no matter their location.

**Get Everyone Involved.** One of the biggest challenges with virtual meetings is that participants can find it hard to get involved and contribute. Your job as the facilitator is to make sure that team members have plenty of opportunities to speak up. Facilitators should ask for feedback often and encourage the lesser-heard voices to share their insights. Also, real-time polls, chat box features, and Q&As can be useful for gathering information and keeping attendees engaged. Avoid asking open-ended questions to the whole group; instead, call on people by name to encourage participation.

## AFTER THE MEETING

**Meeting evaluation.** An evaluation of the organization meeting can be valuable in determining how effective meetings are and changes for the future. These should be done periodically by the President.

**Share meeting notes.** Write up and distribute the minutes within 2 days. Quick action reinforces the importance of the meeting. You can store and share your files using the [Documents Tool in HornsLink](#).

**Follow up on delegated tasks and next steps.** Make sure that members understand and carry out their responsibilities. Also share reminder of when the next meeting will be.

**Give praise.** Give recognition and appreciation to the members for excellent and timely progress.