

LEVEL UP YOUR ONLINE MEETINGS

BY

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One thing is for certain: online meetings are here to stay.

If this is true for your company, perhaps it is time to invest a bit of time and energy in ensuring that they stay both inspiring and productive. In 2020, most companies were thrown into the deep end and given only a few days to get online and learn to navigate the use of platforms such as Zoom and Teams, with little help except for 'how to' YouTube videos and learning by default. Overtime, as with all things, bad habits crept in and now we find ourselves caught in the 'same old-same old' way of doing our meetings.

A good meeting is one which is not only well attended, but also one where every person attending feels heard and seen and comfortable enough to bring their contribution to the challenge or opportunity at hand. Gone of the days of the 'one man show' where the leader gets to stand up and spew forth wisdom for all to process and scurry off to produce results. People want to be part of the solution, but this will depend on whether they are given the air time and the space to participate. If you, as the leader of the team, come away from meetings feeling drained because everything is always '**left up to you**' it may be time to reassess your style of convening a meeting and make a few small changes that will allow others to come to play their part too.

Here are a few tips to make sure your online meetings stay on track, include every person and are productive.

1. **Get professional.** By asking a graphic designer to make an assortment of Zoom backgrounds, attendees can block out the background dishes, linen or untidy lounge and feel more professional and as if they are at work. It's fun to see who chooses which background to use and this tool can be used to communicate the theme for the month or the meeting or an important message. By keeping the company branding present, the business culture is subtly injected into the meeting.
2. **Make sure the invitation is inviting.** Even a weekly check-in meeting can be a bit more inspiring if a clear, properly designed invitation is sent out. Themes and topics can be easily communicated in this way.
3. **Ask people to prepare** for the meeting by stating the problem that needs solving, asking a question or inviting them to present a case. Sending a document that needs to be read or a questionnaire that must be completed also creates a sense of importance.
4. **Have a time limit** and a clearly defined outcome and stick to both.
5. **Avoid it turning into a moaning session.** This is done from the outset and can be directed by opening the meeting with an uplifting, positive question.
6. **Ask that everyone has their camera on.** If this is really not possible, due to dodgy bandwidths, at least with the check in, as people speak, they should be required to be seen.

7. **Make use** of some of the amazing **tools** on platforms like ZOOM. Learn to use breakout rooms- with these you can send people into separate, private rooms to discuss a problem and report back- this way you will get much more creative ideas and engagement.
8. **Make sure people don't hide.** By doing a check in round, you purposefully bring each voice into the room. A check in can be a simple question like: On a scale of 1 -10 how are you feeling today? Is there anything about this you would like to share with us?
Starting off with a positive question, as mentioned above, adds a positive spin on the meeting and sends out a message to 'keep it upbeat.'
- A few positive questions that work well are:**
 - What are you most grateful for today?
 - What is your favourite thing about lockdown?
 - Who do you miss the most about coming into the office and why?
This can be light or serious, depending on the agenda of the day.
9. **Make sure the desired outcome is achieved** and people are held accountable for the commitments they have made during the meeting. They can each, in closing, capture their respective tasks and commitments on the chat.
10. **Occasionally make some time for online fun:** a quiz, getting employees to do presentations on their personal hobbies, skits of your most difficult clients or even Friday pizzas and drinks online. These keep the moral up and keep people engaged.
11. If you are really getting tired of thinking up new themes consider getting an outside consultant or coach, from the industry or other to provide some external stimulation and add value to your team.

I do regular group sessions such as one called **BRAVING** based on the work of Brene Brown, focused on building trust in a team. My latest online short, team intervention, **From Gatvol to Grateful** can lift the spirits in the team. I can assist with tailor-made sessions to add variety, inspire creative problem solving or teach techniques for more engaging meetings.

On a more serious note, interventions can be designed to deal with specific team needs such as trust, communication and time management.

Many things we took for granted and had working well at the office, just do not flow as well in this new, online office space. There is always one-to-one coaching for individuals needing extra assistance to navigate these challenging times.

More about the Author...

Mel Tomlinson is a Professional Consciousness Coach and has been practising in the business sector, both SMME and Corporate for the past 13 years. Her passion for growth, development and transformation is expressed in all she does, from coaching to the Performance Booster program she has co-developed with her husband and has been licensed and facilitated throughout South Africa to thousands of individuals.

Mel's special gift is one of facilitating big breakthroughs in a short space of time, enabling her clients to move to the next level efficiently and effortlessly.

Mel is currently in the process of attaining her COMENSA Master Coach status as well as co-authoring a book with Enneagram Specialist and development coach, Kate Jordan, on *Self Leadership*, a topic Mel feels passionate about and sees as the only way we are able to navigate our way out of the current collective, negative state of affairs into a higher and more conscious state of being.

Join Mel's Inspiring & Supportive Group on Facebook : <http://bit.ly/RebootYourLifeGroup>
or contact her at : mel@performancebooster.co.za

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