

VIRTUAL TEAMS

Are team members spread-out around the country - or even the globe - making face-to-face (F2F) meetings **rare and expensive**?

Are you fighting to keep up team performance despite meeting virtually by **audio/video** conference, or using tools like **net meeting** or **WebEx**?

Are the essentials in place like agendas and pre-work?

Then you are ready for this 2-pager enabling people not just to make the best of a difficult situation, but to **thrive on working together as a virtual team**.

TIPS & TECHNIQUES IN THIS 2-PAGER

MINDSET	The secret to great virtual meetings
LOCATION	3 options and a bit of virtual fun!
POST-ITS	Facilitation essentials
COFFEE	A virtual equivalent even for this!
LANGUAGE	Speeding up virtual decision-making
ADVANCED	Next steps for critical teams

GAINING A VIRTUAL MINDSET

To gain the right mindset for a virtual meeting, the **first question** is "What makes a great F2F meeting?"

The chances are that you will answer this question with statements like "Quick chats in the breaks", "Highly interactive problem-solving" or "Sessions to get to know each other personally".

If I then asked you, "What is your experience of virtual meetings", the chances are that you would answer "They are **dull**...we just watch/listen to PowerPoint presentations with little time to talk" or "We spend most of our time doing email rather than focusing on the meeting".



Whilst you can't beat a F2F meeting, to launch a new team or for watching body language during sensitive topics, the **secret** to great virtual meetings is simply to:

- Expect it to be as good as the best face-to-face meeting
- Find techniques that are the **virtual equivalent** of the best way you could find to lead it if you were F2F

When it comes down to it, there is no reason why a virtual meeting can't be highly interactive, and be so full of discussion, decision and problem-solving that people can't do their email instead.

CHOOSING YOUR VIRTUAL LOCATION

Mode	Description	Pros
Clusters	Same meeting room if located on same site Audio/VC links rooms	Increases relationships within cluster Easy to use location-based break-out groups
Own Desks	Everyone using own phone and computer, even if they are sat next to each other	Technology accelerates decision speed Demonstrates every team member is equal Easy to use any mix of people in break-outs
Mixed-Mode	Clusters, but with own computer and phone	Allows team to flex between modes

The physical location of a F2F meeting helps set the **right climate** and frame of mind, e.g. using a different place for a strategy day.

Similarly, teams can have different virtual arrangements depending on the agenda topics.

It is counter-intuitive, but outstanding virtual teams use the 'own desk' mode more than anything else, and invest in headsets to improve sound quality and free up hands for typing.

As a bit of fun, some virtual teams pick an exotic location for each meeting, placing a picture on the desktop and finding ways to use the exotic location as a creative theme!

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USING VIRTUAL POST-IT NOTES AND FLIPCHARTS

Facilitation tools like post-it notes and flipcharts have become the norm for **interactive** F2F meetings.

Virtual Post-It Notes = Chat Room

e.g. "As we go through this presentation, please give your feedback and questions in the chat-room."

We'll scan through them all at the end"

Given limited meeting time, post-it notes enable all team members to share ideas at the same time.

Some people express their ideas through drawing...a good picture is better than a 1,000 words.

Outstanding teams use chat-rooms and sharing technology as the virtual equivalent to F2F techniques.

Virtual Flipcharts = Sharing PowerPoint

e.g. "I'm going to share my PowerPoint...can you see the diagram...?"

e.g. "Can I take control and add some extra bits to the diagram?"

VIRTUAL CONVERSATIONS AT THE COFFEE MACHINE

Have you noticed how a lot of **ideas happen** during breaks at the coffee machine?

Whilst it is bad manners to have these chats during the meeting in whispers, wouldn't it be great to pass ideas between people in real-time if they could multi-task and it didn't disturb the others in the meeting?

Outstanding teams break convention to **encourage** private conversations in chat rooms between team members *at any time* that do not disturb the main meeting and allow instant ideas to flow.



VIRTUAL POWER LANGUAGE

Power Language

"Are there any objections to this proposal?"

"Let's get people's views round the room..."

"My proposal is..."

"How supportive would people be of this proposal on a 0-5?"

Outstanding teams have a set of phrases that ensures that everyone is alert when they are spoken as they know there is a **decision-point** coming up.

These phrases not only speed up a F2F meeting, but are invaluable in a Virtual Meeting as they create clear ways of working that replace not being able to see people, e.g. being able to see people 'nodding their heads' in agreement.

The phrases can be used so that answers are given in the chat-room to further increase the speed of the meeting.



NEXT STEPS FOR VIRTUAL TEAMS

There is a high **return on investment** in increasing the effectiveness of Virtual Teams, through:

- Asking Will Sudworth to lead a workshop in Virtual Team Effectiveness...best achieved as a virtual workshop allowing people to experience the mindset and techniques first-hand
- Asking Will Sudworth to increase the effectiveness of your critical teams through observing their current approach and coaching them on using the advanced techniques on their real business agenda

ABOUT INSPIRING OUTCOMES

- ✓ Coached over 100 project, line & virtual teams at **all levels** across 6 countries
- ✓ **Track record** of helping teams achieve 'the extra 30%'. See www.InspiringOutcomes.com