



Ascension

Ascension WI EAP

Making the Best of Remote Meetings

Whether by choice or necessity, meetings have moved to phone or video conferencing. This short article outlines some tips that can help you make the best of those meeting times.

Prioritize

As we adjust to working remotely, and with many priorities quickly shifting, review standing meetings and new meeting invites. Managers or meeting facilitators should consider cancelling those that are not in direct line with immediate goals or priority projects.

Give the attendee list consideration

Phone meetings can become ineffective if too many people are on the line. It can make it difficult to know when to jump into a conversation. Attendees either don't speak up or crosstalk occurs. Consider focusing on inviting key decision makers who can bring concerns from the rest of the team to the meeting and then share the meeting outcomes with the broader group afterwards.

Get to know your telework platform

Prepare for meetings ahead of time by getting to know the software program the group will be using. Know how to mute, unmute, call in, share documents, etc.

Be vigilant about technology

When speaking by phone, it's a good idea to identify yourself by name first, and then share

with the group. Remember to express nonverbals that might be missed without video presence, such as stating, "I agree" versus a simple head nod. Those using video conferencing should not lose sight of the fact that they're on video, as this is easy to forget when in your actual physical space you feel alone.

Send out an agenda

Appoint someone who coworkers can send agenda items to. That person can keep track of what needs to be discussed, and then send out an agenda to the team prior to the meeting. Another option is to post the agenda in a place (such as the meeting invite) that everyone can access. People can add items and see what others have added in real time.

Give attachments

Attach documents to meetings if done online, or send by email in advance so people have access to them before the meeting.

Consider a moderator

Assign a moderator the task of keeping conversation focused on the goal and to make sure all team members get the chance to

contribute. Facilitation tips: leave longer than comfortable pauses to allow space for people to speak up, or call on people.

Team introductions

If the teleconference is a unique grouping rather than an established team, consider building in time for introductions. By doing so, group members learn who's on the call and that will help the meeting run more efficiently. It also builds in a cushion time for individuals to regroup if they're jumping from one meeting to the next.

Recap

Reserve 10 minutes at the end of the meeting to recap and review next steps. Recap who's responsible for what and any deadlines that might be attached to the task. Afterwards, the moderator can send a group email that captures the highlights of the meeting.

Evaluate, Revamp, Regroup

Telework is new to many of us and there will be a learning curve. Some things will go well, others will go poorly. Those moments are not failures, but rather growth opportunities. This is a time to evaluate, revamp, and regroup with a new plan in place. Remember to be patient with yourself, each other, and technology.

Connect during this time of isolation

Working remotely can feel lonely. Managers can think about dedicating time in a meeting for connectivity unrelated to work for a sense of normalcy. Possibly encouraging some small talk topics to start a meeting off, similar to what you might talk about in an in-person meeting. Emphasizing personal interactions among remote workers is key to addressing feelings of isolation.

Acknowledge and accept different home working environments

Working remotely means each employee will have a unique work environment. Inquire with your employees what distractions they might face in their personal work environment and determine if they need assistance or ideas to minimize those distractions. Be accepting versus judgemental of the work environments of your employees or coworkers. Maintain a mindset that all team members are committed to their work and their level of focus.

Keep an open mind

The change to telework came up quickly and unexpectedly, which left many to scramble. Work processes have been disrupted and it will take time to generate a new routine and work processes. Utilize this time to explore new ways of working, recognizing that although change can be scary, it can also lead to growth.