The Virtual Presenter's

102 Tips

for

Online Meetings

GoToMeeting® Edition

This ebook compliments of

GoToMeeting

www.gotomeeting.com

102 Tips for Online Meetings

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CONTENTS

A Note from Roger

To suggest that online meetings should replace in-person meetings would be irresponsible.

If we observe the history of media, however, we find that any new medium of communication inevitably finds unique advantages in that new medium.

In other words, online-versus-offline isn't the correct argument.

Online meetings aren't a second-rate alternative to in-person meetings. Both are important to a competitive 21st contemporary leadership, management, and communication strategy.

This book has no anecdotes, blooper stories, theory, or conjecture. It's just a collection of quick tips to accelerate your success.

And I trust that this is true: If even one idea improves your online meetings (multiplied times all the meeting participants and multiplied times all the meetings you'll ever be part of), it'll have paid for itself many times over.

To your successes,

Roger & the 1080 Group team
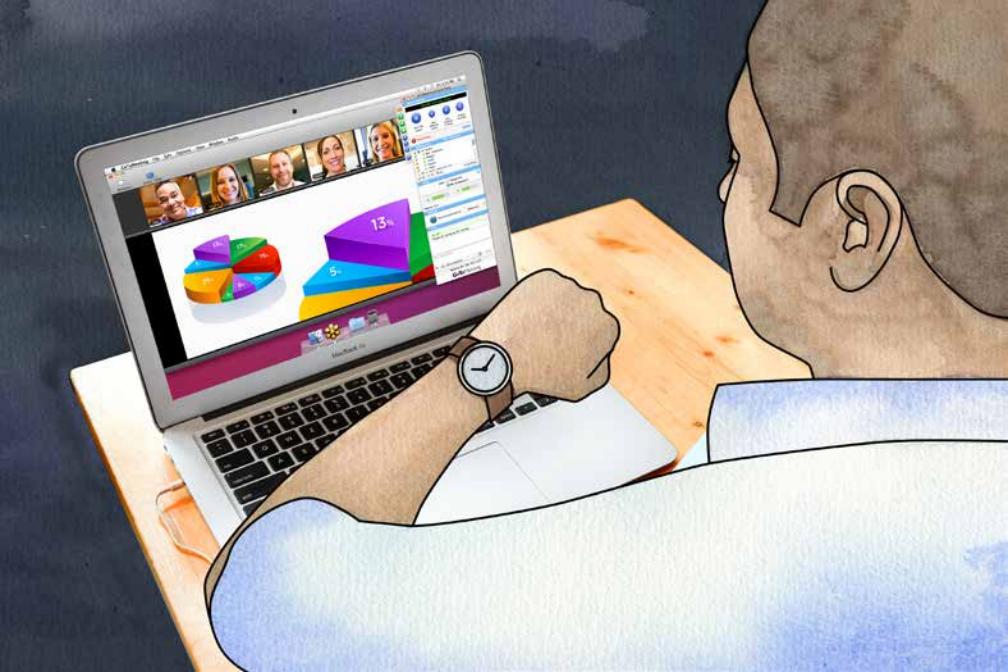
6 | Ways to Improve Stakeholder Value Beyond Saving Travel Expenses

It may be a no-brainer, but it needs to be said. I don't advocate giving up face-to-face connections, but many leadership, management, and execution activities can be accomplished virtually.

1. Save travel time

Yes, time is money. But for many, time is the more precious commodity.

2. Increase attentiveness

Video creates a sense of presence, and web conferencing tools improve interaction.

3. Include a remote executive or subject matter expert

Increase the team's access to knowledge sharing, vision, and leadership.

4. Increase sensory richness beyond a phone call

Many people's learning and communicating preferences are visual and interactive.

5. Use VoIP to save audio conferencing bills

Most organizations have long distance and conference calling bills that they wish were lower. GoToMeeting is priced with one simple, use-it-all-you-want flat fee. Nice.

6. Improve interpersonal connectedness

Video is an obvious value, but GoToMeeting has multiple "speaker indicators" that show you who is speaking, making it much easier to interact and collaborate.

COLLABORATE AT
THE SAME TABLE

3 | Unexpected Ways to Use Web Conferencing

Before you used a mobile phone, you probably got along without it just fine. Now could you? In time, you may find that web or video conferencing ends up serving you in unexpected ways, too.

7.   Save travel across campus or town

Need to just knock something down in 15 minutes? Sometimes you double your expended time for a local appearance.

8.   Collaborate at the same table

Conference room meetings often include passing around the cable to the room's projector, transcribing handwritten or whiteboard notes and/or taking phone pics of them. Use web conferencing to save all that even when you're in the same room.

9.   Use a recurring meeting for your daily "stand up" meeting

Many teams have daily stand up meetings that only last 5 or 10 minutes. Use the recurring meeting function to create a standing meeting so you don't have to set up a new one each week.

8 | Ideas for Better Meeting Invitations

System-generated invitations are convenient, but they usually only include generic stuff about the mechanics of the meeting (e.g., the phone number, login URL, etc.). If you stop there, you're often leaving money on the table.

10. Change the subject line of a system-generated meeting invite

People make an "open this/don't open this" decision from the subject line of an email. Make sure your subject line is more informative than the system-generated one.

11. Put the most important action item first

Someone who's busy may miss something added at the bottom of the email.

12. Include WIIFM in the invite

"What's in it for me?" is a common reminder that people are motivated, in part, by self-interest. For example, instead of "New benefits plan," consider communicating, "Learn how to save money with the new benefits plan."

13. Add explicit instructions to the body of the email

Edit the body of the GoToMeeting system-generated invite to include the appropriate instructions. For example, "Action Required: This meeting will start and end on time. Please log in a few minutes early to ensure you are ready. <include the link>"

14. POWER TIP: Let people know in advance that they'll be on camera

Remember that many people will think of the online meeting like a conference call…and give themselves permission to not brush their hair (or whatever they're inclined to do or not do).

15. Send a reminder email so invitees don't have to look for it

Don't assume invitees saved the original meeting invitation to their calendar. Right-click the GoToMeeting 🏵 icon in the system tray, log in (if you haven't already), select the meeting you want to (re-)invite attendees to and choose which way to send them another invitation.

16. Be mindful of time zone differences when you schedule the meeting

Remember that many people do not regularly deal with other time zones, and those who do are often used to their email or calendar program adjusting for those differences.

17. Include a link to a time zone converter

Nevermind how simple it'd be for someone to search for a time zone conversion website (like http://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/converter.html),you will get the occasional email asking.

3 | Ways to Get Other Presenters Ready

Comfort levels vary from person to person. Just because someone has participated in a significant quantity of online meetings doesn't mean that they know how to use the technology to be more productive.

18. Prep presenters in advance

Remember that often people will avoid something if they fear looking foolish. Consider using **Meet Now** to host a brief session ahead of time. Let them know what to expect and do.

19. Teach new users only what they need to know

Unless the meeting's objective is to train users on GoToMeeting, don't make the meeting a class on conferencing. Save the training for another time.

20. Teach as you go

Don't spend time at the beginning of the meeting teaching people how to use the many tools of GoToMeeting. Explain what to do as part of the meeting.

GET THINGS DONE
BY JOINING A
MEETING INSTANTLY.

5 | Tips to Improve Managing Meeting Technology and Processes

Technology is never the end; it's a means to an end. That said, it's useful to think about what we can do to make it work for us more effectively.

21. Schedule the meeting via Outlook (or equivalent) to save clicks

Windows-based users have quick and easy access to GoToMeeting functions right from Microsoft Outlook (add or remove this ability from the **Preferences** menu). Schedule the meeting in your calendar to avoid doing it in two different places.

22. Know what attendees are seeing

The easiest way to help others is to be confident that you know what they're seeing through screen sharing. Do a brief session with a friend and be sure to practice taking an attendee's perspective.

23. Learn how to use your Meet Now functionality

Life isn't always scheduled on a calendar. Collaborating in on-the-fly virtual meetings will help online meetings feel more like "the way we get things done."

24. POWER TIP: Use Edit Countries to offer local or closer telephone numbers

Besides (possibly) saving money on a direct-dial call, attendees will benefit from dialing a number in a format that is familiar to them.

25. POWER TIP: Use the same meeting ID and audio conference number for recurring meetings

Not only does this save you a lot of scheduling time, but it also won't take long for regular attendees to memorize the meeting ID and/or phone number. The result: They'll find it easy to hop in on the meeting or join while they're on the road.

6 | Tips for Meetings with Mixed Offline and Online Participants

Meetings that blend in-person gatherings with online meeting participants are the hardest to manage: You have meeting participants who are having different psychosocial experiences (what they see, what and how they hear, how they interact, how they get documents).

26. Try online only: Ask participants to join from their own computers

It is easier for presenters to engage meeting participants when all are "co-equal." For example, the ability to co-equally type something into chat is impossible unless everyone has access to the tools.

27. Use an extra computer to see the room

Ideally, each participant has individual computer access and each participant's camera points at them. Position one additional computer to view the whole room of in-person participants.

28. Point a camera at the whiteboard

Are you going to collaborate or take notes on a whiteboard? Set up your meeting so that virtual participants can see.

29. Appoint a group moderator

For the in-person audience, appoint one person to monitor and manage chat/Q&A.

30. Plan how to deal with documents

What is distributed to participants now will have to accommodate both online and offline participants.

31. Plan how you will collaborate

If someone draws on a whiteboard in the conference room, how will online participants see it?
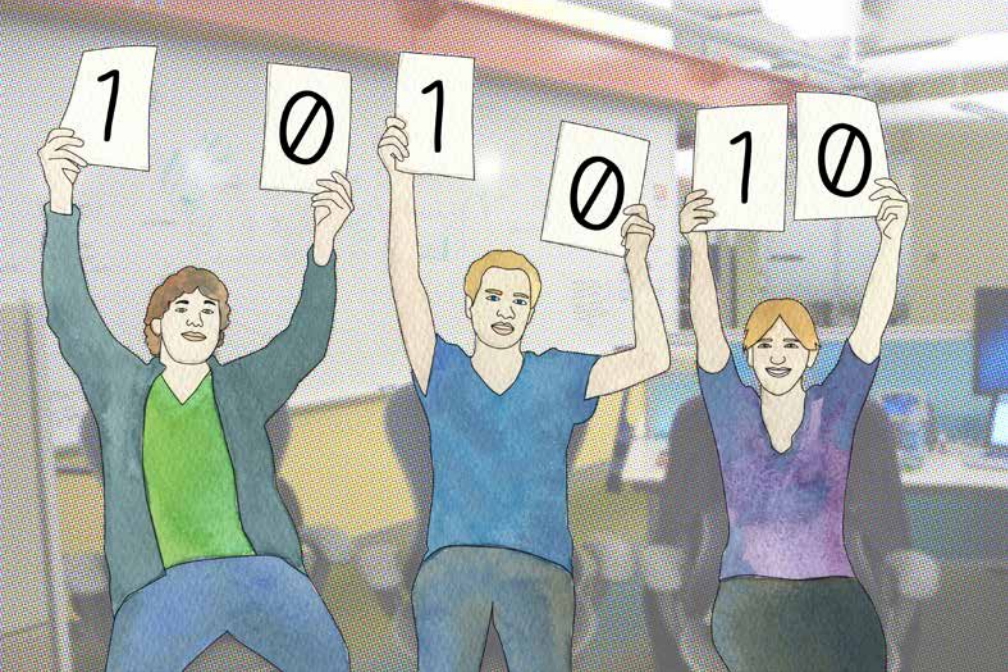
7 | Things to Do to Improve Satisfaction with Online Meetings

You will never hear me or my team argue that online meetings should entirely replace in-person meetings—that'd be irresponsible. Turning online meetings into an additional strategic asset in your organization, however, has a lot to do with whether or not you can help others find online meetings to be a satisfactory way to get work done.

32. Plan to start late

Starting a meeting late isn't generally a good custom. What doesn't feel like "late" for an in-person meeting, however, does feel late online. One potential solution: Tell everybody the meeting will commence at "5 minutes past."

33. Ask people to login early to ensure readiness

Fortunately, technical issues are rare, but when they do occur it's not only frustrating for the participant having problems, it's frustrating for everyone else who is kept waiting.

34. Put up a welcome slide that tells people they're in the right place

Remember, just because someone connects their computer early doesn't mean they have to sit there and chitchat. Using a welcome slide is not only reassuring for those who have less experience with online meetings, but you can also use it to give additional instructions such as, "We appreciate your courtesy in being ready for this meeting. Refill your coffee and get that last email done. We'll start promptly at 10:05 AM!"

35. Share a web-based countdown timer

Taking a break? Purposefully starting at a few minutes past the top of the hour to let participants get settled in? Try screen-sharing a countdown timer like http://www.online-stopwatch.com/countdown-timer (and be sure to start promptly thereafter!).

36. Teach attendees how to mute/ unmute themselves

Background noise is especially distracting in online meetings. Empower participants with the knowledge and responsibility to be good online-meeting citizens.

37. Let participants know how to be present and participatory

Some meeting participants will find adaptation to online meetings to be second nature … and others won't. Guide their experience.

38. Let participants know you're recording

In some cases this is actually a legal requirement, and I'm not an expert on the subject. If you knew you were being recorded, it very well might change the tone you use when talking about someone or something, right? Give your participants the courtesy of letting them know.

4 | Tips for Improving Mobile Meetings

The sale of web-enabled mobile devices now exceeds the number of PCs being sold. GoToMeeting easily accommodates users of iPhones, iPads and Android devices (the mobile app is free for them). The question isn't if you will need to accommodate them for online meetings, it is *when*.

39. Ensure invitees are aware of mobile requirements

GoToMeeting requires mobile participants (e.g., those on Android or iOS devices) to download a free app from the appropriate app store. If you may have mobile participants, consider adding this link to their invitation: http://m.gotomeeting.com/fec/online_meeting_support?type=attend

40. Give additional attention to muting/unmuting

Mobile users are more likely to be in environments that have higher levels of background noise.

41. Design the "user experience" of your meeting with mobile in mind

Mobile participants may or may not have the same features (e.g., ability to see HDFaces video). Plan accordingly.

42. Design slides with mobile in mind

GoToMeeting mobile users can pinch and zoom to change the size of what they are viewing. Even so, presentation design choices such as font size are worth taking into account.
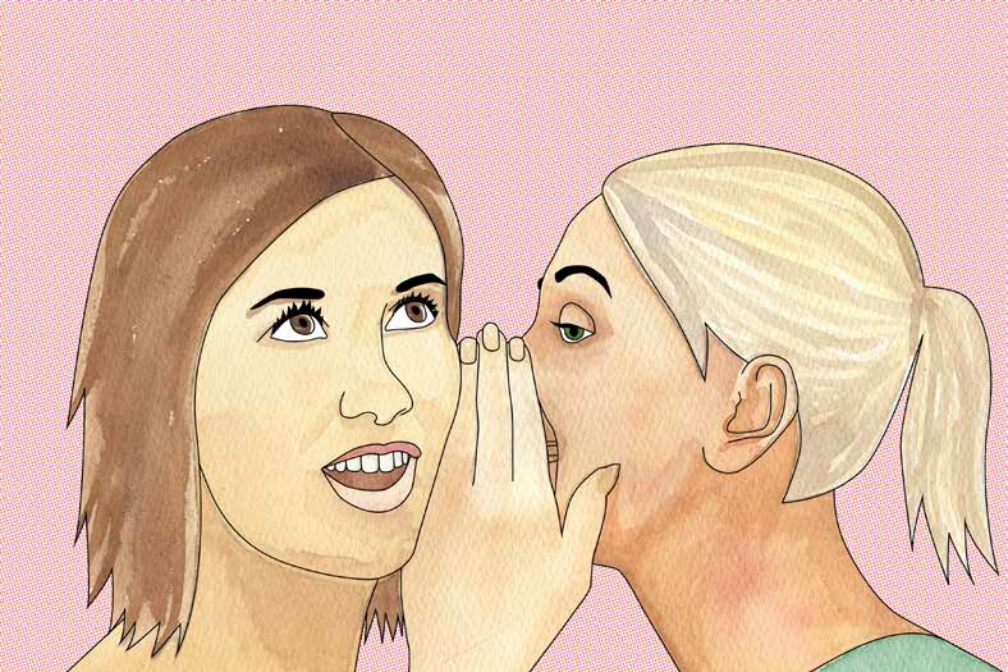
4 | Ideas for Adapting In-Person Activities to Online Meetings

Changing the medium of communication does one of three things: The offline activity translates perfectly, it doesn't translate at all, or it works with a little adaptation. Here are a few ideas for taking what you do offline and making it work online.

43. Use chat as a tool for brainstorming ideas

Brainstorming often takes the form of everyone using sticky notes, capturing ideas on a whiteboard or a note-taker writing down ideas as they're shared. Using GoToMeeting chat means everyone can see clearly, and it's easier for one participant to comment on another participant's submission.

44. Save chat digitally to save re-typing notes

GoToMeeting automatically saves (PC) or makes it easy to save (Mac) your meeting's Chat contents. Either way, you save a lot of transcription (and handwriting interpretation).

45. Use chat like whispering to the person sitting next to you

Normal meeting behavior includes making comments to the person sitting next to you (that aren't intended for the whole room). It's even easier online, because now you can chat privately with anyone.

46. Pass screen sharing to a different presenter

In a conference room, having a second presenter involves either 1) coordinating in advance to get all presentations onto a single computer or 2) unplugging the projector from one person's computer and plugging in another person's computer. Online? Click **Change Presenter** and you're done.

7 | Ways to Improve Meeting Management

Much of meeting management is a function of people skills, and what we're NOT going to do here is tell you what to do about that one know-it-all who won't shut up (we've got those problems online or off!). When meeting management relates to audio/web/video conferencing, here are a few ideas.

47. Use features when most appropriate

Just because a feature exists doesn't mean it should be on all the time. Professional conferencing solutions like GoToMeeting let you choose. For instance, maybe HDFaces video is just used at the beginning of the meeting, or you wait to turn on chat until after introducing attendees to each other.

48. Change your name to improve conversation

Once in the meeting, under **File** you can **Edit Your Name and Email**. If your name is Vijaykumar, but you're happy to be called Vijay, change it there.

49. Open up chat so you can keep an eye on it (rather than hunting for it)

The GoToMeeting chat pane is great for facilitating conversation, but it feels less-than-natural if that conversation isn't real time. Keep the chat pane open.

50. Use Mute All in the Attendee List to avoid background noise

Sometimes the presenter just needs to make a point for a few minutes (rather than have an open discussion). **Mute All** saves you the time and hassle of asking every attendee to mute themselves.

51. Pause your screen

Need to go search for something on your hard drive? Pausing your screen not only improves privacy, it saves a lot of distraction.

52. Use chat to share a hot link

If you want to share a video or enlighten participants to a web-based resource, sharing a URL in chat is fastest for both you and participants. GoToMeeting preserves this link as "hot" (clickable), which is easier for attendees than trying to type the URL into a browser while looking at your PowerPoint slide.

53. POWER TIP: Use an extra monitor or computer

An extra monitor or computer gives you additional real estate for viewing attendees' video feeds, monitoring/responding to chat, etc.

13 | Ways to
Improve Attention

It's easy to think that we have shorter attention spans in online meetings, but many people are multitasking their way through in-person meetings, too. Nevertheless, there are things we can do to improve how we get and keep attention.

54. Keep the webcams on

Video provides a measure of accountability when attendees realize you can see them.

55. Direct attention verbally by telling them what to focus on

Giving someone directions (a command) naturally triggers the brain. "Look at the upper right-hand corner of this chart and you will see…"

56. Verbally instruct attendees how to use a tool or feature

In addition to the value of a command (in the previous tip), calling someone to action creates engagement. "We need to capture ideas for giveaways in the tradeshow booth. Use the chat pane that you'll find on the right-hand side of your attendee pane to…"

57. Direct attention visually with a drawing or annotation tool

In the words of cognitive psychologist Daniel Willingham, "Change gets attention." We're wired to look at the pen, highlighter, spotlight, or arrow that is moving. Use the screen annotation tools in GoToMeeting to highlight or point to the visuals on screen.

58. Draw on a slide with PowerPoint's pen

Here's a tip you may not know about. When PowerPoint is in full-screen mode, you can use Control-P (Command-P on a Mac) to turn your pointer into a pen and Control/Command-U to turn it back into a pointer.

59. Change attendees' pen colors

Give each meeting attendee a uniquely colored pen to help them identify each other's contribution when collaborating. Turn on Attendees can draw in the Drawing Tools menu. (Look for the icon of a highlighter on the Grab Tab.)

60. POWER TIP: Start a meeting with a pen-based introduction

Help attendees learn which pen color belongs to each participant. As you introduce each person in the meeting, have that person write something (like an X) with their pen.

61. Keep presentation or lecture segments shorter than in-person

In a shorter-attention span environment (the online meeting), err on the side of interacting more frequently.

62. Ask people explicitly to avoid multitasking

Appeal to participants' sense of honor—ask them to focus on the meeting. It usually helps to start on time, end on time, and avoid going off topic, of course…

63. Announce a break up front as a "release valve"

A break is like a release valve. If you start the meeting and explicitly note that you'll give them a break to get to pressing email or calls, you'll have more luck with them paying attention.

64. Use speaking indicators to call on attendees by name

GoToMeeting does something telephones don't do: gives you an indication of who's speaking. It does this both at the bottom of the Viewer (e.g., "Speaking: Roger Courville") and by illuminating the outside edge of an attendee's video feed. Everybody loves to hear his or her name used. This feature keeps you from guessing, "Was that Gina or Janine who just said that?" like you often experience in conference calls.

65. Ask participants to stand up and stretch

Crazy idea, right? We do it in face-to-face meetings, and it works "in online meetings.

66. Use other tools, *any of them*, for engagement

GoToMeeting boasts a plethora of feature variations (e.g., chat, drawing tools, keyboard and mouse control, change presenters, etc.). Using variations of the ideas above is useful if you guide participants to adapt their offline behavior into the online environment.
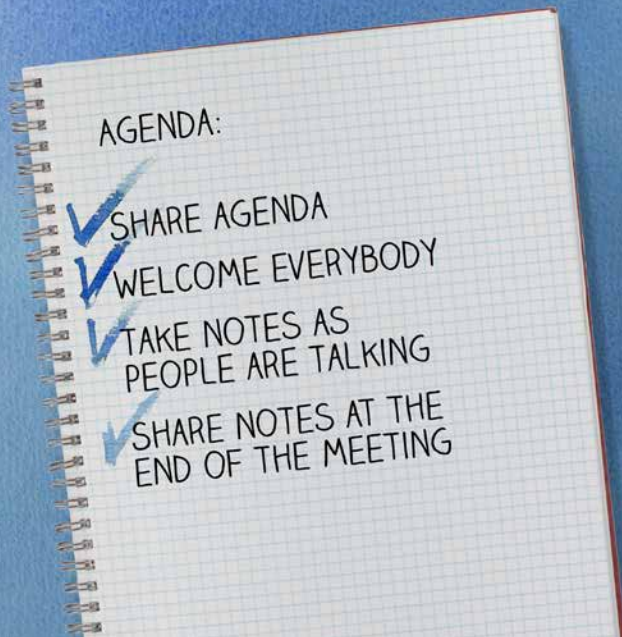
4 | Ways to Use an Agenda Better than a PowerPoint Slide

PowerPoint is often the de facto place we put an agenda. The trouble is that once we get past it, it's not editable or able to be referenced.

67. Use a Word (or equivalent) document as an "active" working agenda

Use screen sharing to show the Word document. Update it on-the-fly and capture additional action items or parking lot ideas that are outside the meeting's scope.

68. Use your working agenda as an ongoing record

Some types of meetings (e.g., a weekly team meeting) will reference things discussed in previous meetings. Pick up where you left off last week with the same document..

69. Combine the active agenda with other collaboration tools

Did you brainstorm or capture ideas in chat? Copy/paste those into your working agenda.

70. Send the document with "file/share" (or equivalent)

Microsoft Word and other word processing solutions let you email a file right from within the document. In Word this is **File/Save & Send**. However it works for you, it saves steps in sharing meeting notes and action items.

SMILE, AND PAY ATTENTION TO WHAT'S BEHIND YOU

SHARE THIS

6 | Ideas for Getting More Out of Your Camera

Video conferencing is a powerful part of feeling connected in a virtual meeting. Here are a few ideas for getting the most out it (and avoiding a few "oops" along the way).

71. Adjust gestures and expressions for the camera's eye

In a 1200-person study I conducted in 2011, the number one complaint about video conferencing leaders (by video conferencing attendees) was "distracting mannerisms or gestures."

72. Balance the lighting

Poor lighting can wash out your forehead, make it look like you've got bags under your eyes and otherwise contribute to a lousy experience. You don't need to look like you're in a television studio, but you do need to look appropriate.

73. Don't get too close to the camera

Webcams are "near field" cameras. In other words, the depth of field is designed for you sitting at the computer, but this also means that small differences in distance make a big difference in how you look. Too close and your gestures and expressions become even more exaggerated.

74. Be aware of what's behind you

Study participants commented that they're often distracted by trying to read what's on your bookshelf or whiteboard, someone walking by in the hall behind you, etc. Minimize background distractions to improve focus.

75. POWER TIP: Make direct eye contact

Think about how a newscaster "draws you in." They make eye contact with the camera. This is often unnatural in an online meeting, since we're used to looking at our computer screen, not the camera—which means participants are looking at your forehead. You don't have to hold eye contact for the entire meeting, but it's useful when you want to get attention and make a key point.

76. Show a physical object

Study participants actually noted this as one of their top benefits of video conferencing—showing something that's not otherwise on the computer screen.

ASSIGN THE RIGHT PRIVILEGES
WORK ON A SINGLE DOCUMENT
USE A POLL AS A VOTING MECHANISM
USE A POLL TO TAKE THE PULSE OF THE ROOM
USE A POLL AS A LIKERT SCALE
SAVE A WHITEBOARD WITH A SCREENSHOT FOR FUTURE REFERENCE
CONSIDER THE BEST PLACE TO SHARE OTHER DOCUMENTS
KEEP PARTICIPANTS "IN THE
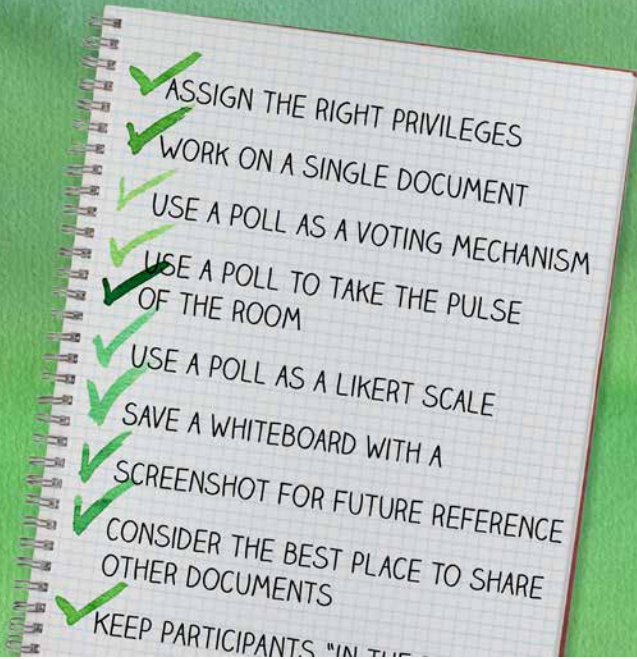
8 | Ways to Work more Effectively

Tools are useless unless you know the context in which they're used. What follows are a few ideas for getting beyond the feature to maximize productivity.

77. Have an attendee write in his/her own words

Often collaboration includes getting words just right. Give keyboard and mouse control in GoToMeeting to let a fellow attendee think and share more freely.

78. Blend using real-time meetings and recordings

Sometimes you need to make a presentation in full before discussing it. If schedules are tight, record the presentation, send it to everyone and reserve the real-time meeting for discussion.
their words.

79. Turn on Usage tips in Preferences > Meetings

Informal learning occurs when we're in the flow of activity

80. Assign the right privileges

You may or may not want every meeting participant to have access to every button or control. Managing access is key to keeping things flowing smoothly.

81. Work on a single document by sharing keyboard/mouse control

Common practice is to email documents back and forth, perhaps using Track Changes to manage changes. Screen sharing (alone) is wonderful, but if collaborating on a document, it may be faster to turn over control of the document and let someone type out their words.

82. Use Chat to take the pulse of the room

"Should we focus on X, Y, or Z this quarter?" If there are four people in the meeting, you just ask them verbally. If there are many more, that starts to be problematic… but it doesn't have to be.

83. Screenshot collaboration documents

If you brainstorm on a blank PowerPoint slide (see that tip in 13 Ways to Improve Attention) during the meeting, take a screenshot of it to reference it later.

84. Consider the best place to share other documents

Handing out something during the meeting is going to leave out those who missed the meeting. You could avoid playing email tag by simply using cloud-based file storage such as ShareFile.

5 | Tips for Hearing and Being Heard

For 100 years we've used the telephone for live, at-a-distance interactions. Even though we've added web and video conferencing to it, hearing and being heard still tends to be the backbone of virtual meetings.

85. Speak to the room

Sometimes using a headset or sitting at your desk changes how you hear yourself, and it's common to speak more softly. Don't worry about belting it out; just speak clearly.

86. Offer attendees a choice of both telephone and VoIP

VoIP (voice over internet protocol) is better than it has ever been, but some participants may not be fully prepared to utilize it. A choice of both is fine. GoToMeeting comes with built-in dial-in numbers too, and offers international toll-free and toll-based numbers in over 40 countries worldwide.

87. Use USB headsets instead of computer microphone and speakers

The quality of the microphone and speakers in computers varies widely. USB headsets will help you sound better, hear better and avoid feedback.

88. Use your mobile phone earbuds if no headset is available

Using your mobile phone earbuds helps you hear more effectively, and it prevents a feedback loop from occurring between the mic and speakers.

89. Avoid speakerphone

Speakerphones might be convenient (relative to the handset), but they are designed to pick up sound omni-directionally (from all directions). This introduces extra noise (every rattled paper, the air conditioning when it comes on, etc.). If someone is listening via their (lousy) computer speakers, it compounds the problem of poor sound.

9 | Ideas for Troubleshooting

Most of the time online meetings are trouble-free. Something going wrong is never convenient, and often it's painful. There are so many variables that it's impossible to have a complete "if this, then do this" list. You have to think on your feet. Here's what I recommend.

90. Give yourself a little grace

Remember there are two categories of problems: Things you can do something about, and things you can't do something about. In an offline analogy, if the light bulb in the conference room projector goes out, you learn to dance.

91. Start a "what if" notebook

If the electricity goes out, what are you going to do? Capture those ideas into your own "what to do if…" document. You won't have every answer nailed instantly, but it will guide you thinking through what steps you'll take.

92. Start with "Who?"

If someone lets you know they're experiencing a difficulty, start with "Who?" Is it just that person? Is it everybody? What action you decide to take will depend on the overall impact to your meeting. For instance, if Joe is all alone in not being able to log into the web conference but can still hear on the telephone, you might just move on instead of spending everybody's time helping Joe figure it out.

93. Ensure correct permissions

A few organizations block employees from downloading or installing any software. If unsure, there is an easy solution: Include the following link in your invitation asking invitees to test their connection in advance. http://support.citrixonline.com/en_US/gotomeeting/help_files/GTM140010

94. POWER TIP: Deal with audio feedback

Audio feedback happens when there's a "closed loop" (the output of a speaker feeds into the input—for instance, a microphone). If it's bad, mute everyone. Then unmute them one-by-one. If it's tolerable, ask participants to mute/unmute themselves. If you can't isolate whose connection is causing the feedback, manage it by asking people to stay on mute except when speaking. If you can figure out who it is, ask them to use the telephone to dial in.

95. Make sure you have enough "chairs"

Conferencing solutions have an upper limit of how many people can be in the meeting at one time. Five minutes into the meeting is not a good time to discover this.

96. Beware what you show via screen sharing

Sharing your computer screen is an invitation for all participants to see your popups and notifications (e.g., Outlook, Twitter, instant message, et al). Spare yourself the embarrassment of having your friend instant message you with, "Hey dude, you SO shoulda kept your pants on last night."
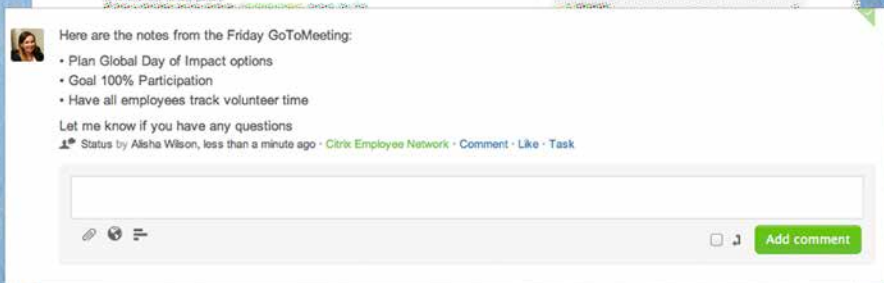
97. POWER TIP: Use screen sharing for specific application or document

GoToMeeting allows you to share only a specific application or document (instead of your entire desktop). The benefit is that you may save an embarrassing mistake. The downside is that it will take longer to switch between different things you want to show and share.

98. Test outside resources in advance

If pointing people to a video outside GoToMeeting (e.g., YouTube), let them know in advance. The last thing you want is to say, "Let's watch this video" only to discover that their firewall blocks YouTube.

SHARE THIS

4 | Ideas for Improving Post-Meeting Management

Congratulations! By using online meetings, you're a part of transforming the world of work. Here are a few additional things to keep in mind.

99. Choose the recording format that best suits your needs

GoToMeeting allows you to choose one of two different formats for recording (**File > Preferences > Recording**).

100. Decide if you need to save the recording

If it's important to preserve the recording, save it to a place you'll remember.

101. POWER TIP: Combine the follow up email with an invitation for the next meeting

As you distribute the meeting notes, link to the recording, etc., include the attendance details for the next meeting.

102. Use a simple, anonymous survey to get feedback

Free solutions such as SurveyMonkey.com make it easy and, if you desire, anonymous for respondents to share ideas for how to improve. The key to improving response is to communicate clearly that it will only take a moment of their time.

Appendix

10 things I like about GoToMeeting

If you were looking to buy a new automobile, what you wanted to do with it would have a lot to do with what you decided to buy, right?

At risk of sounding silly, if your only point of evaluation is "gets me to the store and keeps the rain off my head in the process," they're all about the same. If you know what you're trying to accomplish, though, it makes a lot of sense to look a bit more deeply.

If you know whether you're usually hauling children or gravel, buying a mini-van or pickup might technically get the job done in either situation, but the elegance of one solution over the other readily emerges.

As an independent analyst, consultant, and trainer in the world of live, remote communications, I see a lot of conferencing platforms... audio, web and video. They are not all the same, and there is no one-size-fits-all solution.

What follows is the unvarnished opinion of 1080 Group, LLC. If you want to know more about this Appendix and why it's here, see the footer at the end of this section.

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1. Intgrated phone and VoIP

When I worked at Microsoft I didn't think about how much it cost to pick up the phone and call another country. Now as a small business owner with a completely global customer base, I very much think about it. In fact, I've even blogged about why I think it would be useful to use web conferencing to replace audio conferences… even if the intent isn't to show slides or video.

One conference call alone can save me more money than the total cost of the service, but I think there's a bigger benefit: I save time that is worth more (to me) than the money.

Save money, save time with integrated audio. No brainer.

2.   Video quality

The power of seeing someone's face should be obvious, but what might not be as readily apparent is the impact of the quality of that experience. Why? We tend not to notice when something is working the way that it should.

By analogy, many video conferencing experiences are like having a mobile phone conversation interrupted by static. Annoying. Even if the disturbance is slight, you miss nuances that are critical to human communication.

Quality, personal connections demand quality video.

3.   Video format

The GoToMeeting default display format for your webcam has a 4:3 aspect ratio. No news there. What is simply awesome is the ability to select a 16:9 (widescreen) format if you want. Here's why:

As much as I like full-featured interactions with audiences, I've also been invited to deliver a keynote speech from half a world away. With a widescreen view, I've got more real estate to work with for my physical gestures (talking with my hands!).

Little differences in pro solutions make big differences in impact.

4.   Audio controls

The old paradigm of using the telephone for audio conferencing has two challenges I'm happy to eliminate.

One, the controls are arcane and unmemorable. (Was that #6 or *6 to mute everybody?)

Two, managing individuals is difficult or impossible. (Everything stops while you ask, "Who has the leaf blower going on outside their office?" And then you discover, later, that the culprit snuck away, and that's why nobody responded.)

Whether your meeting participants use the telephone or VoIP, being in total control of the audio (in the Attendee List) is a boon to productivity. With GoToMeeting you can mute/unmute everybody or an individual easily and naturally.

Be an online meeting rock star: manage audio professionally.

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5.   Instant meetings

Imagine how often you'd use the telephone if you had to schedule your use of it. True enough, most meetings are something you put on the calendar for some time in the future, but if you transform your paradigm of web conferencing to something more akin to how you use the telephone, you'll see a spike in productivity.

Why? It might be a cliché, but sometimes a picture is literally worth a thousand words.

It'll save you the time that might have been spent emailing that spreadsheet and saying, "If you'll look in cell J76 of the spreadsheet..." It'll accelerate your sales cycle when you eliminate the Word document project plan or contract in real time instead of emailing a messy document back and forth with Track Changes turned on.

Instant meetings transform productivity.

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6.   Integration with Microsoft Outlook or IBM Lotus Notes

There's a reason Amazon.com went and patented a one-click purchasing process: They figured out early that the world is getting impatient with clicking on things.

Instant meetings are potent, but they aren't the only use case for how we manage productivity. We also manage work and life in email and calendaring. Outlook or Notes integration is where these individual components come together in a whole that is greater than the sum of the parts.

Scheduling your online meeting right from within your calendar saves clicks, but I think it gets better than that. Have you ever had a meeting

date or time change? And then you have to go reschedule your audio conference? And then you have to reschedule your web conference? Ouch.

Convenience isn't a buzzword… it's a necessity.

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7.   Usability

When I conducted a study in summer 2009, I gave respondents 17 different success factors for online presentations and asked them to rank importance. Their top choice? "Ease of use of the web conferencing solution."

In hindsight, do you know one question I wish I had asked the 620 respondents? "How much does fear or discomfort factor into whether or not you use web conferencing for sales, marketing, training, etc.?"

Here's what I've observed (after having spoken to more than 40,000 people in the last few years): Nobody wants to look stupid in front of prospects, customers or peers.

If conferencing is a pain, confusing or unnatural to use, you and your organization are not going to use it regularly, which means you are leaving money on the table.

I radically appreciate the commitment to usability adopted by Citrix.

The goal is better communication, not inhibited communication.

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8.   The right tool at the right time

Novice buyers often start—and stop—by evaluating feature lists. Unfortunately, this means they often miss out on the ability to grow into more advanced skills in managing their online meetings.

Here's an example:

Imagine you're rolling out a new policy, and you need people to focus on a 15- or 20-minute presentation before you open it up to discussion.

You leave chat off until you're done presenting, then you turn it on for all attendees so you can answer questions, monitor their responses and "manage the room."

Using the right tool is also a function of the right time.

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9. Save the chat log

How many times have you transcribed notes from a whiteboard and tried to get everyone to send you their notes so you could get them all in the project document, or attempted one of 100 other meeting challenges?

I might be a freak, but in my company we use web conferencing while sitting in a physical conference room because, once you get used to using chat, you save time. A lot of it.

Another little thing that pays off big: GoToMeeting saves the attendee's name with what they shared in chat, which is great for future reference (and accountability).

Collaborating isn't just about the meeting… it's also about taking action thereafter.

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10. Save this startup layout (and a bunch of other options)

When you just start out, using GoToMeeting is usually occasional. But then you get hooked on live, online collaboration and don't want to go back to how you used to do things.

That's when you want to customize things the way you like them. Which features show up when you start your meeting? Do you want notifications when someone arrives or leaves the meeting? And on and on.

One mark of advanced solutions (in nearly all facets of life) is that you can make it your own.

Give yourself room to grow. Trust me. You'll appreciate it.

Final Thought

This editorial is "things I like." Some of the distinguishing characteristics that you begin to notice, which quickly turn into preferences, are the little things that are really cool.

GoToMeeting has many nice features, and you're likely to find that your favorite isn't even on my list.

That's the cool part of working with great software.

Said another way, however, it's not really about software. It's about creating value in your day, with your team, for the benefit of your organization. Little stuff quickly starts adding up to real, positive impact.

About GoToMeeting

GoToMeeting

Online Meetings Made Easy.

GoToMeeting is the extremely simple, extraordinarily powerful web conferencing service from Citrix. It integrates HD video conferencing, screen sharing and audio conferencing, allowing you to collaborate effectively online in a face-to-face environment. Hold unlimited meetings for one low flat fee and attend meetings from a Mac, PC and mobile devices. GoToMeeting will change the way you work – and perhaps a whole lot more.

To learn more, visit www.gotomeeting.com.

To contact customer support, call +1 800 263 6317 or visit global customer support.

To contact sales, call +1 888 646 0014 or schedule a demo.

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