



Online Meeting Best Practices

How to Host Successful Online Meetings

A detailed guide on the three online meeting stages:

1. Pre-Meeting Actions - Preparation
2. The Online Meeting - Execution
3. Post-Meeting Actions - Follow Up



Executive Summary

The purpose of this white paper is to equip businesses with the correct know-how on executing successful online meetings. Online meetings bring great benefits to companies including increased productivity, closing sales more efficiently, and significant savings in travel expenses. Unfortunately many businesses approach online meetings in the same manner as in-person meetings which can have drastic results.

Who is this White Paper for?

This white paper is intended for companies who have just introduced online meetings into their communication processes and are looking to realize the benefits to ensure the maximum ROI. The following best practices will help anyone who has just started (or is about to start) using online meetings for their business.

What to Expect in this White Paper?

You are well-versed in face-to-face business meetings but the workplace is a rapidly changing environment – you now have team members in different cities and your business is expanding to distant markets. It's necessary to adapt accordingly and improve how you interact with others at a distance.

But the question you find yourself asking is, **how....?** How do you execute an effective and interesting meeting with people who are not sitting in the same room facing you?

In this white paper we address the best practices for how to host successful online meetings the first time, every time.





Pre-Meeting Actions

Preparation

Conduct a Test Meeting

Practice makes perfect. If you've just set up your new online meeting software and are about to use it for an important client meeting, you should do a test run with a colleague beforehand. This will allow you to familiarize yourself with the user interface, the features, test your microphone and speaker settings, and eradicate any chance of surprises on the day of the meeting.

Bonus Tip: Upload Your Logo

If your chosen online meeting solution provides such a feature, you should upload your company logo so it is displayed in the software interface for all your participants to see.

Schedule the Meeting and Invite Participants

An online meeting scheduling function allows you to set the meeting details in advance, such as the topic, date, time, etc. All these details are then saved and ready in your software.

You can send an email invitation containing the meeting information to all your participants. The invitation should include a custom URL, which they can click on to join your meeting or at least a quick guide with steps on how to join.

The benefit is that you and your meeting participants know in advance exactly what they have to do to join your online meeting.



 **Bonus Tip: Send an Agenda**

When sending the meeting invite you can also attach or include the meeting agenda.

Prepare Extra Meeting Notes

This is a great benefit of online meetings! In a face-to-face meeting, it might seem unprofessional to read from any notes in your hand. But in an online meeting you can prepare such notes and keep them near you at your desk which will ensure you don't miss any important points.

 **Bonus Tip: Use a Second Monitor**

If you have more than one monitor connected to your computer, some online meeting solutions let you choose from which monitor you would like to present. Move all applications that you would like to share to the monitor you present from but keep your meeting agenda and minutes on the other monitor which is invisible to participants.

Find a Quiet Location

Start your meeting from a location or room which is going to have minimal background noise. Furthermore, if your meeting agenda includes topics that are confidential, you may prefer to sit in a private room.

Clean Up Your Desktop

It's an online meeting so those dirty coffee mugs on your desk can stay! However, you should clean up all the application and file icons on your computer desktop. They are distracting for your participants and could include something which is confidential.

Create a new folder and move all the icons from your desktop into the new folder. After the meeting you can simply cut and paste them back to your desktop.



 **Bonus Tip: Clean Up Your Browser**

If at any point in the meeting you are going to present your Web browser, hide any unnecessary toolbars. This can include your Favorites Bar (Internet Explorer), your Bookmarks Toolbar (Mozilla Firefox) or your Bookmarks Bar (Google Chrome).

Turn Off Messaging Applications

If you are logged into any instant messaging services on your computer, it is advisable to log out completely or set your status to “do not disturb”. Your participants could potentially see any instant messages you receive during the meeting, which could contain private data.

Customize the Presentation Display for Participants

Some online meeting solutions offer a feature to select which windows and applications you present and which ones you keep hidden (i.e. “Application Selection” feature). If this is available, hide any applications open on your computer which are private e.g. your email client. It is also advisable to hide your taskbar and system tray especially if you have an array of icons there.

Open Your Meeting Files

As your participants join your meeting, they will be able to see your computer desktop live – so be ready! Have your meeting presentation file open so it’s the first thing they see. A nice touch would be if you have written a welcome note on the first slide, for example: “Welcome to the meeting! Topic:”

If you intend to share multiple files during the presentation, you should open them all before the meeting begins so they are just a click away in your taskbar.

 **Bonus Tip: Less is More**

Four bullet-points per slide and no more than 7 words per point – this is our recommendation for PowerPoint slides. Writing more than this tends to distract the viewers from the presenter’s speech. Too much reading, not enough listening!





The Online Meeting Execution

Greet and Introduce All Participants

Just like any meeting, there will be a few participants who arrive on time and a few who arrive 1-2 minutes late. It's advisable to wait until everyone has joined so you can greet each participant as they join the meeting. This also gives you the chance to introduce participants to each other who have not previously met.

Mute Participants

If you have many participants together in a teleconference, there could potentially be a lot of background noise coming through their microphones, which can be very distracting for everyone. To avoid this, mute all of your participants while you are talking. If someone has a question during the meeting, your meeting software should have a function for the participant to virtually "raise their hand" and then you can address their question.

Be Positive and Maintain a Pace

Just as in any meeting, you need to ensure your participants are engaged. While the participants are listening to you and watching the meeting content on their screens, they cannot see your body language. To help keep them engaged, keep your tone of voice friendly, be positive and sound energetic. At the same time, move through the content with enough pace so you don't lose their interest.



Don't Forget Your Participants!

As you move through your meeting content, your participants might have comments or questions. They can draw your attention by writing a chat message to you, updating their status with an emoticon or “question” icon, or they can ask directly via the teleconference. Be sure to keep an eye on all channels so nothing is missed.

Bonus Tip: Identify Oneself

Ask your participants to identify themselves before speaking and asking a question. This is especially important when the meeting includes participants who have not previously met.

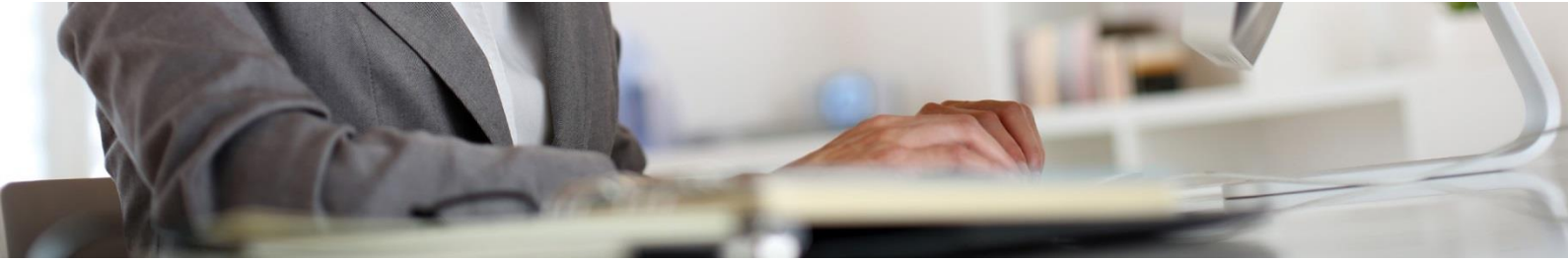
Bonus Tip: Don't Get Distracted

If people have long / specific questions tell them you will answer those at the end of the meeting. This ensures that you deliver the important meeting content as your number one priority. If you go off on a tangent due to a participant's question, other participants may lose interest and even leave your meeting early.

Provide Contact Info

As you approach the end, provide your meeting participants with your contact information. One way to do this is to have a “Thank You” slide at the end of your presentation with your name, email address, phone number, Twitter handle, etc.





Post-Meeting Actions

Follow-Up

Questions and Answers

Just because everyone has been listening quietly during your presentation, doesn't mean they don't have any questions or interesting points to share. Once you have finished showing your slides and still have everyone in the presentation, be sure to open up the "virtual floor" for questions and discussions!

Bonus Tip: Save Even More Time

A Q&A period is more time-effective than offering them to send questions to you later because multiple people might email the same questions. Moreover, an open period of discussion at the end gives everyone a chance to learn from the opinions, comments and questions of their fellow participants.

Transfer Meeting Files

As a last action before you thank everyone and close the meeting, you can use the meeting software's file transfer feature to send a copy of the meeting slides, along with any other relevant documents, to some or all of your participants.

Thank Everyone for Their Attendance

When finishing an in-person meeting, you will probably walk your client to the front door, shake hands, smile and wish them a nice day. Closing an online meeting involves just one mouse-click which can be quick and even abrupt. Before you close the meeting, thank everyone for their time as well as any



questions or comments which they have contributed.

A great advantage of online meetings is that nobody had to drive far! However, some might have joined from different cities or countries and due to time zone differences might have dealt with strange hours so be sure to express your appreciation.

Send a Thank You Email for Feedback

Sending a thank you email might seem unnecessary considering you already said thanks a moment earlier but your participants will appreciate it. It also gives you a chance to ask for feedback. Simply ask the following:

- Did the meeting meet your expectations?
- Is there anything you would like to see in a future meeting?

And add questions which are specific to your meeting topic. However not too many – we advise 5 questions at the most to keep it short so you receive maximum feedback from more participants.





That's a Wrap!

What's Next?

You would have noticed that we wrote about several online meeting features which are required in order to execute a successful online meeting.

To see these recommended features in action, we suggest that you visit the [Mikogo website](#) and download the software.





About Mikogo

Mikogo incorporates innovative desktop sharing technology to provide an easy-to-use online meeting solution for high-quality online collaboration.

Used by more than 1 million registered users in over 180 countries, Mikogo's customers consist primarily of small- to medium-sized businesses that use the software for online meetings, web conferencing, remote support and online trainings.

At present, more than 3,000 corporate customers are using the Mikogo technology and benefiting from significantly reduced travel time and travel expenses.

www.mikogo.com