Making the Most of Your Virtual Meeting

As the university starts the process of returning to campus for work, part of our new normal will be the need to continue to virtually meet in order to maintain social distancing expectations. Even if most of your employees and colleagues are on campus, meetings of more than 10 employees will not likely occur for a while. This document is created to help share some tips and tricks to help make your meetings more productive.

Acquaint Yourself with Microsoft Teams and its features.
As many of us have learned while working remotely, Microsoft Teams is a wonderful tool to chat, send messages with colleagues, share files with employees in groups, trainings, video calls and conferencing. Take some time to review the “Microsoft Teams Help & Learning” online (https://support.office.com/en-us/teams) which offers a wealth of information to help you get started with Microsoft Teams. LinkedIn Learning also provides several classes which you can quickly complete (Microsoft Teams Tips and Tricks) which can get you ready to master the meeting tool.

Plan for the Video Meeting.
Think about everything you will need to have for your meeting. Do you have all of the documents ready? Do you have your notes and writing set-up ready if you’re not at a desk or table? Are you presentable for your video meeting? Do you need to use the Microsoft “blur” function on the Teams menu bar to avoid distracting others watching you in your meeting? Think about not just what you need for the meeting, but what others might see from you.

Make Sure to Arrive (Login) Early.
Plan to arrive at least five minutes early to make sure you have no connection issues and make your meeting on time. Many of us learned while working remotely, that sometime there can be connection issues when lots of people are trying to use the same internet. Better to be a little early than joining the meeting once everything has already started.

Determine the Perfect Camera Angle. Where is Your Lighting?
Whether or not you are using your laptop, iPad, or phone, you need to determine the best camera angle for the meeting so everyone sees you, not the top of your head or chin. Try to make sure you look at the camera and not at yourself on the screen, which helps keep you looking up. When it doubt, it is okay to ask others in your meeting what they see of you. Another tip, make sure you are not sitting directly in front of any bright lights or in front of bright windows, which may make it hard for others to see you on the camera. Try to position any lights in front of you and not behind.
Ensure You Have a Working Microphone and Camera.
Double-check to make sure you have a working camera and microphone on the device you plan to use for the meeting. Everyone might not like to use the camera, but for some of your colleagues being able to see you in the meeting makes it more enjoyable.

Master the Mute.
We just shared you need to make sure you have a working microphone, but you need to know when to use it and when not. Virtual meeting protocol suggests that unless you are speaking to keep your microphone on mute. While it may be amusing to hear dogs barking in the background, neighbors cutting their grass outside, or the cuckoo clock at the top or bottom of the hour, for others it might distract them from the meeting. Please be kind and use your mute.

Use the Chat Appropriately.
Microsoft Teams does have a chat function, but don’t let the chat distract from the meeting. The chat should be used to share comments and ask questions, but not for person chats with others during a group meeting. Make sure to keep chat comments related to the subject being discussed, clear, and concise. Remember, chat comments do not disappear after the meeting is over as they may be saved as part of the meeting call record, so do not put anything in a chat that you would not read.

Learn the Virtual Etiquette Rule of When to Speak.
This is a very difficult thing to learn at first, as we are used to receiving immediate feedback from the person we are communicating. In video meetings, there may be a lag in the video, people may try to talk over each other (which is more difficult to decipher on video calls), or some may just charge ahead and not allow others to speak. Just as you would in a regular meeting, realize it may take some time for everyone to feel comfortable in the virtual meeting setting.

Make Sure You End or Disconnect the Meeting at the End.
Be careful if you are using your phone, tablet, or iPad in your meeting. Make sure you have disconnected at the end of your meeting. We have all seen the stories or heard of someone forgetting to end their meeting before going to change clothes or visit the restroom.