

Eleven Ways to Maximize Your Next Web Meeting

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***Are your web
meetings at risk?***



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We mean at risk of *missing the mark*?

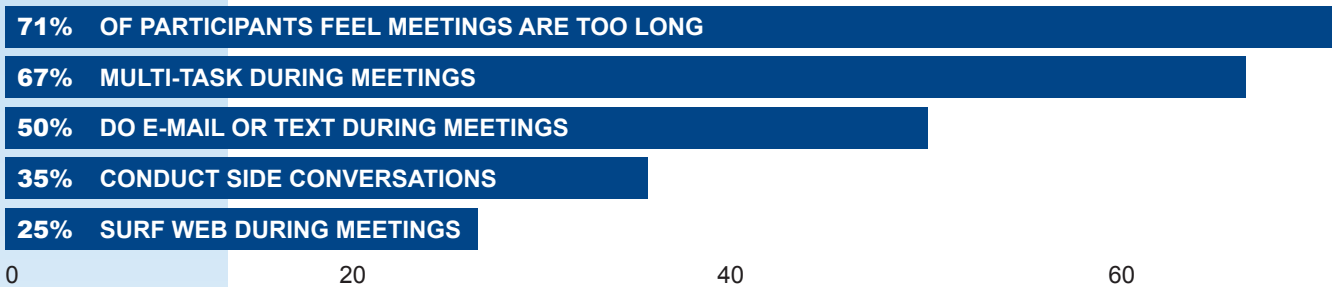
Are they at risk of *losing participants' interest*?

Are YOU at risk of *losing professional credibility, confidence or commitment of your performers*?

All scary stuff isn't it? Not a great way to build a successful career. How about some ways to take these meetings to the MAX!

On-line meetings are mushrooming—as much as 25% this year alone. Travel is heading south (and we don't mean “of the border”). A recent Forbes survey indicated executives are traveling 58% less this year than a year ago.

That being said, here's the problem with virtual meetings, online webcasts, and the like:



This has to be a major reason for concern—even if you only present occasionally in web meetings. So how can you fix it?

Here are some pragmatic steps you can take to mitigate risk:

- 1 High level of participant involvement**—Attention management is the most difficult challenge presenters face. It's easy to goof off when you're remote in Skokie. Solution: have them respond frequently to Q&A, polls, mini quiz, etc. The greater the participant involvement the more compelling the webcast. Don't you agree?
- 2 Set expectations clearly for Q & A**—Advise attendees on how they can ask questions and how these questions will be addressed—both written and verbal. If you are working solo, you might want to address questions several times, such as once in the middle and again at the end. If you have an assistant, let your attendees know that questions will be managed throughout the meeting. Q & A is a great tool. It facilitates discussion and raises the level of involvement.

3 Educate inexperienced audiences—If webcasting (or delivery system) is new to the participants, ensure that instructions are clear for joining the meeting and meeting participation. You might best cover this with pre-meeting announcements and registration information. You can also review these basics early in the meeting to allay fears.

4 Send out an agenda for each meeting—Include subject areas, goals and objectives, time frames and preparation required. This is good business for any meeting, but especially with webcast multi-taskers who might try to skip or skate through the meeting. Also remember, that a good meeting presenter sticks to his/her agenda and time frame.

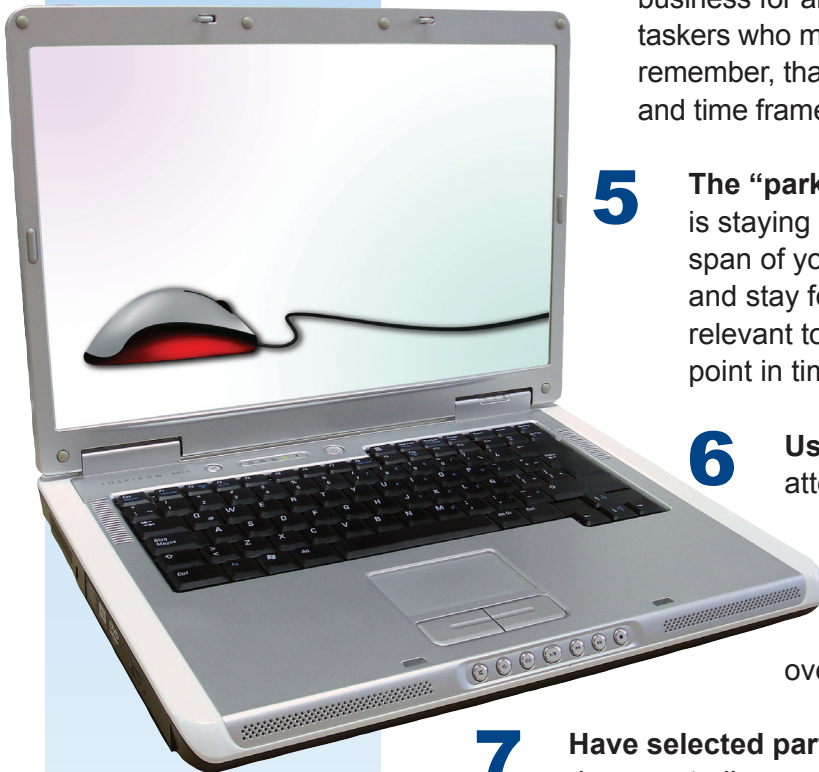
5 The “parking lot” is your friend—Effective virtual-facilitation is staying on-point and on-message. Remember, the attention span of your audience is razor thin, so stick to your agenda and stay focused. If participants ask questions that are not relevant to the topic, “park” them for a response at a later point in time. You can always follow up after the event.

6 Use participants’ name throughout—Another attention management tool that is effective when working with medium-sized audiences (6-18). First names bring us to attention for at least 20-30 seconds, and help to personalize the meeting and warm the group. Be careful not to overuse this tool and pick your spots.

7 Have selected participants co-present—It can be a few slides, word document, diagram, etc. Plus, it takes the ongoing task of presentation off your shoulders and places it on a “designated content expert.” Be sure they practice and know their stuff! Advise presenters well in advance and use a “dry run” with them if needed.

8 Smaller group sizes—Anytime your group size exceeds 25 persons, you run the risk of getting lost in the shuffle. You may need to have extra help fielding questions and managing the technology. Often, “less is more” when web conferencing. Smaller groups (6-25) promote interaction and helps to enhance participation.

9 8-5 broadcast times—This might not always be possible with international audiences, but try to take into consideration your audience’s personal life and their professional life. You’ll get greater commitment and buy-in by being sensitive to both of these worlds. Stick to business hours whenever you can and you’ll have a more engaged and positive audience.



10 **Eliminate excessive ums, ahs and OKs**—These terms are often “fillers” while you search for your next thought. They can be irritating and turn off even your best fans. It might even breed anger and resentment if you overdo it. Try recording your presentation or asking for objective feedback from participants. Your audience will appreciate it and you’ll sound more professional as a result.

11 **Pauses last an eternity online**—Dramatic pauses, or even pauses while you queue up your next slide, can last an eternity online. The best practice is to clearly inform attendees of what you are doing while you are doing it. If you choose to read a few questions, let the attendees know what you are doing. If not, they might assume that the audio has gone down. Consider getting help with the facilitation of your event to help avoid undue pauses in the action.

About LAWRENCE GROUP



LAWRENCE GROUP has designed and delivered high impact learning systems for managers and salespersons for over 25 years, including clients such as Farmers Insurance, AT&T, Microsoft and CB Richard Ellis. Larry Sleep, winner of 15 Presidents Clubs at Xerox, is a nationally recognized speaker and has a graduate degree in communication from UCSB. Visit us at www.salesuccess.com

About Virtual Junction



Virtual Junction provides companies with knowledge and skills to improve their virtual communications strategies. Led by Lori Dearman, Virtual Junction partners with organizations to develop and deliver high-impact webinars, online trainings and virtual meetings. Learn more about Virtual Junction at www.virtualjunction.com.