

TIPS FOR STELLAR MEETINGS

FROM THE KUMQUAT TEAM AND CLIENTS



THE PANDEMIC CHALLENGED EVERYONE TO RUN MEETINGS DIFFERENTLY

So we invited our valued clients and partners to share what they learned in 2020–21, and what their biggest challenges were.

This short briefing answers their pressing facilitation challenges. We hope these tips, tools and techniques will help take your gatherings to the next level in this new era.

Beyond these – necessarily generic – tips, if you have any question about a specific event, ask us at hello@kumquat.eu! As passionate facilitators we genuinely care about making your gatherings purposeful, so that they bring you the outcomes you need.

Happy gatherings!

Bruno and Stephanie
Your facilitators

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BEAT ZOOM FATIGUE



We notice online meeting fatigue and a general sense of overwhelm, leading to low participation. How can we make meeting online easier and more engaging for our members, while still reaching our objectives?

Online meetings can drain everyone's energy. Research says* our brains aren't wired for them. Without physical presence, we can't get non-verbal cues, perceive subtle undertones, tune out as we wish, sense others' reactions to a point... So if you really must meet online, you should:

CHECK IT'S RIGHT TO MEET (THE PURPOSE CHECK)

Be critical: do you genuinely need a virtual meeting? If your purpose is content-focused (e.g. 'share information', 'review', 'comment'...), this could probably be done outside a meeting, for example by sharing a document in advance for written comments. If your purpose is discussion-focused (e.g. 'compare', 'discuss', 'decide', 'vote'...), a meeting is usually right.

SEND AN ADVANCE SURVEY

Gauge your participants' objectives, requests or desired outcomes to help make the meeting worth everyone's time. This can be as simple as an email: 'What do you need to be decided by the end of this meeting?'

TURN OFF SELF-VIEW

With self-view on, you and your participants will always subconsciously check your appearance, which is taxing. Invite your participants to turn this off at the start, and make this a habit yourself. We promise you'll notice a difference.

INVITE CAMERAS ON, ALLOW CAMERAS OFF

Cameras on give a sense of who's in the room. But you should also let your participants off the hook: not being seen can increase people's attention, allowing them to pace or doodle, whatever is best for them.

ADDRESS THE FATIGUE

This commonly-shared work pain also makes a great bonding point. Ask your participants how they deal with this personally or in their teams.

*: Jeremy N. Bailenson, [Nonverbal Overload: A Theoretical Argument for the Causes of Zoom Fatigue](#) [Technology, Mind, and Behavior](#) 2, no. 1 (2021)

BUILD MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS ONLINE



We won't be doing international gatherings in person soon, but still need to build relationships. What kind of online gatherings and techniques best work to do this?

Online meetings allow effectively sharing information, checking progress, or reaching agreement together. But they aren't great to build relationships. We normally bond when we share personal stories, interests or perspectives, or experience something new together. We can try recreating this online, but be careful about overdoing it, or you'll come across as inauthentic.

TAKE A VIRTUAL WALK

Set up one-on-one calls and allow people to connect with one another while walking in a room or in a quiet park. No video, just audio. This helps reduce Zoom fatigue, drives engagement, and helps people connect with each other.

START WITH A (GENUINELY) THOUGHT-PROVOKING PROMPT

Invite people to share, in groups of 2–4 people, their answers to a prompt that's genuinely thought-provoking. We like those suggested by psychologist Esther Perel, such as 'Few people know I could talk for hours about...', 'I wish I had spoken up when...', or 'Lately, I've been getting better at...'. *

SET UP A SHARING MOMENT

For example, invite those who wish to share their favourite podcast, book, or piece of poetry/literature/music on a shared board or platform by a deadline. Start a meeting by perusing that. Request different items next time.

BYOP: BRING YOUR OWN PROBLEM

Helping each other creates close bonds. Invite participants to present a problem to one another in groups of 4–5. After a short round of clarifying questions, have them share suggestions for each problem, orally or in writing. This can be a 30-minute warm-up, or a deeper 90-minute clinic.

*: Esther Perel's simple advice for finding meaning at work, [Quartz](#), 30 August 2021

HOLD DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS ONLINE



I find it hard to constructively disagree in online meetings. It's very difficult to express contrary opinions and still have generative disagreement.

When we interact in person, we (mostly) build social and relational capital with other people. The greater this capital, the more proximity and trust there can be between you and these people. (Think of it as a 'trust account'.*)

But online meetings do little to build this capital. Instead, they mostly withdraw from your 'trust accounts', and eat into capital you previously created with others. In short: online meetings don't build trust; they rely on, and can eat into, pre-existing trust.

With that in mind, what can you do to hold difficult conversations online?

MAKE IT OBJECTIVE

If that's possible, try using a mental model to help you and others see an issue more clearly or objectively. We like using models for system-thinking, decision-making or problem-solving ([UnTools](#) offers a terrific list).

MAKE IT SMALL(ER)

It's usually possible to hold deep, constructive discussions in groups of 2–5 people. This group size enables nuanced positions and possible compromises. If your conversation takes place in a larger group, consider delegating the search for a compromise to 2–5 members from all sides of the argument, who will then revert to the group (possibly days or weeks later) with proposals for a way forward.

MAKE IT IN PERSON

If your contentious issue really must be discussed in a large group, this is genuinely best done in person. Organise a dedicated conversation at your next event or meeting, and take the time to work through the group's various views. If time dries up, delegate it to a smaller consensus-finding group.

*: Stephen Covey and Rebecca Merrill, [The Speed of Trust: The One Thing That Changes Everything](#) (Free Press, 2018)

RUN HYBRID MEETINGS



I often chair hybrid meetings. How can I ensure a balance of contributions from those present in person, and those present online?

Hybrid meetings are double the work: you need to prepare, run, and troubleshoot your meeting for two different audiences. That's why creating the perfect experience for both can be very challenging.

IN HYBRID MEETINGS, KEEP COUNT TO KEEP IT BALANCED

Just like you would remain aware of gender balance among speakers in any meeting, loosely keep count of how many people interact in person, how many do online, and keep an overall balance. Proactively invite those less heard: 'I wonder if we could hear one or two people connected online?'

IN HYBRID MEETINGS, USE THE SAME TECHNOLOGY

Create common touch points with the same tool(s) for all. For example, ask all participants one question and collect their answers in a Mentimeter or Slido poll. Or invite all participants to ask questions via the meeting chat; the chair then selects the questions and answers them.

ONE ONLINE, ALL ONLINE

For at least some of your meetings, establish that if at least one person connects online, all will connect online – even if from the same building. This evens out the playing field.

PREFER HYBRID PROCESSES TO HYBRID MEETINGS

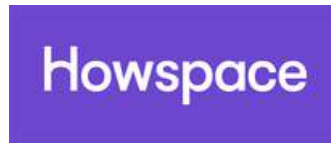
For example, share information in advance (a shared document, a video speech) and invite participants to post questions on a shared platform. At your physical meeting, allow no dialling-in but ask participants to discuss all the comments received in advance.

Whatever format you decide, clearly tell both groups how they can expect to contribute.

TOOLS

WE USE TO:

ALLOW DISCUSSIONS BEFORE, DURING
AND AFTER AN EVENT
(SUITABLE FOR HYBRID)



ASK QUESTIONS OR LAUNCH A
POLL VIA A SMARTPHONE
(SUITABLE FOR HYBRID)



DOCUMENT OR TRANSCRIBE
WHAT'S BEEN SAID



OUR CLIENTS LOVE:



WE'RE CURIOUS ABOUT:





YOUR BRUSSELS-BASED FACILITATION CONSULTANCY

OUR SERVICES

Kumquat helps groups collaborate to effect change.

We do this by designing, delivering and evaluating, online or in person:

- Strategy and decision-making meetings
- Events and conferences
- Training and capacity-building events
- Board meetings
- Workshops
- Retreats
- And unique, out-of-the-box projects

HOW WE WORK

We take great pride in designing and delivering fully bespoke solutions for your needs, and your needs only.

Together with you we:

- Rigorously define your gathering's purpose and desired outcomes
- Design your gathering from the purpose up
- Hold the stage with talent, playfulness and flexibility

... so you'll know your gathering is in a safe pair of hands, and will deliver the outcomes you want.

SOME OF OUR CLIENTS



Examples of past projects and glowing references are available upon request.

BOOK A CALL

As passionate facilitators, we truly care about your meetings and will gladly answer any question you have without a sales pitch.

Reach out to us via hello@kumquat.eu
or [book a call with us directly!](#)