

# How to Host Better Virtual Meetings

Since the onset of COVID-19, traditional in-person meetings have shifted to virtual platforms with individuals and organizations adapting the way they prepare for, host, participate in, and follow up from meetings.

Prior to COVID-19, the Berlineaton team had been delivering virtually in approximately 20% of our engagements. Since mid-March 2020, we have been delivering workshops almost exclusively in this virtual environment.

Like all meetings, there are good ones and bad ones. Here are 10 tips you might find helpful when hosting or attending a virtual meeting.

On page 50, we provide a checklist you can use to ensure your virtual meetings are a success. Take a look and let us know what you think!

Learn more at [www.berlineaton.com](http://www.berlineaton.com)



## BEFORE

- 1 Connect in Advance
- 2 Develop and Share an Agenda
- 3 Help Participants Test Their Tech
- 4 Set Up for Optimal Video Presentation

- 5 Set Expectations for Video, Audio, Dialogue, and Disruptions
- 6 Identify Who is Taking Notes
- 7 Build More Breaks Into the Agenda
- 8 Use Techniques So Everyone Participates



## DURING

- 9 Follow-up with Next Steps
- 10 Ask for Feedback and Use it to Improve Your Next Meeting



## AFTER



# How to Host Better Virtual Meetings

Below is a checklist to use as you prepare for, host and follow-up on your next virtual meetings.

## BEFORE

- 1. Connect with session participants in advance**  
to ensure everyone is on the same page about expectations and the purpose of the meeting. Design the agenda to meet collective needs and manage expectations accordingly.
- 2. Develop and share an agenda and prepare materials**  
well in advance of the meeting, including technology links and downloads. Sending relevant meeting information in advance gives participants time to digest and enables productive in-session time.
- 3. Help participants test their technology**  
Schedule “tech check” meetings in advance of the meeting (even if it’s just a few minutes before the official start time) to allow participants to test their technology. This ensures your meeting will start on time without interruptions.
- 4. Set yourself up for optimal video presentation**  
Use these best practices for video conferencing to put your best foot forward:
  - Use an organized bookcase or a solid, neutral coloured wall as a background
  - Wear solid, neutral coloured clothing
  - Keep your webcam slightly above or at eye level
  - Ensure your light source is in front of or slightly to the side of you to prevent shadows.

## DURING

- 5. Set expectations for video, audio, dialogue, and disruptions**  
Ask participants to leave their cameras on throughout the meeting and mute their audio when they are not speaking. Set out how participants can signal that they wish to speak if this is not a built-in feature of the platform you are using for the meeting. Ask participants to turn off their cameras if they need to attend to a disruption.
- 6. Identify who is taking notes**  
Ideally, a note-taker for the meeting should be identified in advance of the meeting. If no one has been assigned, ask one of the participants to capture key discussion points, feedback, decisions, actions, and next steps.
- 7. Build breaks into the agenda**  
Ensure that you build in breaks throughout the meeting. Our rule of thumb is to schedule 15-minute breaks for every 2 hours of virtual meeting time. Check-in regularly with participants about engagement and fatigue.
- 8. Use techniques so everyone participates**  
To ensure that everyone’s voice is heard, balance the agenda with time for individual reflection, small group work, and large group discussion. Capture key feedback via polls, votes, chat box comments, whiteboard notes, and report-outs.

## AFTER

- 9. Follow-up each meeting with next steps**  
Distribute meeting notes with next steps – including accountabilities and timelines – after each meeting.
- 10. Ask for feedback and use it to improve your next meeting**  
Distribute a brief online survey of participants and ask: what worked well, what didn’t, and what should be done differently the next time. Summarize this feedback and include it in the session notes.