TIPs for Effective Virtual Meetings

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Those of us in Continuing Engineering Education, like our colleagues in many fields today, are engaged more and more in virtual meetings.   There are tremendous advantages inherent in collaborating virtually – and there are downsides that can make a virtual meeting feel a bit like a torture chamber! Here are some tips to consider to make your virtual meetings engaging and productive:

- Design your virtual meeting for interactivity and engagement. 50-75% of the time should be involved in interaction and collaboration, not just information sharing. Time together is precious- use it for idea sharing, not information that can be provided easily in other formats

- Facilitation of various agenda items by different participants promotes engagement and helps the "interest" factor by bringing in a variety of voices and perspectives

- Pose a discussion question in advance of the meeting and ask participants to come to the meeting prepared to share their views OR

- Have participants share their views with you in advance and provide a summary of the groups views to kick off a discussion

- Designate roles beyond facilitators: Timekeeper, note-taker, process monitor. The process monitor provides feedback at the end of the meeting on how things went from the point of view of collaboration, engagement, meeting agreed norms, and productivity. This provides for continuous improvement with each meeting

In the case of global teams, with members from different cultures and varying native languages, these practices also assist in supporting active engagement for everyone. "Mindfully" preparing for virtual meetings will help us capitalize on their potential and minimize the downsides.