

Tips for Running Successful Virtual Meetings

As a virtual organization, our leaders will run many virtual committee meetings using our video/conference call technology, Zoom.. MBA CSEA pays a monthly fee for the Zoom service, which is free of charge for all members to participate, regardless of time zone. All committee meetings are set up by the Executive Director using the MBA CSEA Zoom account.



Virtual meetings can sometimes be challenging due to the different type of interaction between participants. The following tips can help minimize challenges and ensure the meetings are as efficient and interactive as possible.

Before the Meeting

1. When setting meeting times, be aware of time zone differences for your committee members. In some cases, some people may need to be asked to participate in a meeting during a time that are not typical for their work day. Be respectful of this, and make sure people are not asked to do that on a regular basis. It may be necessary to conduct calls at different times each month to accommodate all committee members. This resource can be helpful when looking at time zones: www.timeanddate.com. Doodle.com can be a helpful resource for finding a date and time that works well for everyone. The Executive Director will typically assist with this.
2. Send out an agenda at least a week in advance. [Click here for a sample agenda](#). In general, it's best to keep meetings as brief and focused as possible. The following will assist with that:
 - a. Carefully select the agenda items to include items that need full committee feedback or decisions, and schedule smaller meetings (or use email) for discussions that involve a subset of the group.
 - b. Place the most critical or time-consuming items at the top of the agenda.
 - c. If needed, ask people to brainstorm in advance of the meeting and bring their ideas to the call. This is particularly useful in cases where subcommittees are utilized.
 - d. If you want someone to provide a report or lead a discussion at the meeting, be sure to include their name next to that agenda item, as well as give them an individual heads up in advance.
3. Send a reminder to everyone a few days in advance. Even if it's on their calendars, this helps minimize no-shows.

During the Meeting

1. Encourage committee members to use their video when possible. This enhances the level of interaction, helps keep people focused on the meeting and minimizes interruptions when others are speaking. It also provides the added benefit of seeing smiling faces and keeping the conversation light-hearted! If committee members are not comfortable doing so, don't push them. Some may be tired of video meetings and need a break from video.
2. Conduct introductions at the beginning of the first meeting, and use a fun ice breaker at all meetings to set the mood. Keep them short, using Zoom polls, chat, or audio for quick questions

such as “What’s your favorite Netflix binge show?” or “Who are you rooting for at the Super Bowl?”

3. Encourage people to mute their audio when they are not speaking. This minimizes background noise and ensure everyone can be heard.
4. Assign a note taker. It’s best not to try and chair the meeting while taking notes, as it can be distracting. Some committees will ask a volunteer to be the note taker throughout the year; others will rotate for each meeting. Encourage the note taker to send the notes as quickly after the meeting as possible so they can serve as a reminder for action items. [Click here for sample minutes.](#)
5. Start and end on time. This may mean starting the meeting before latecomers arrive, or ending before a decision is made. But, it’s important to set the stage at the beginning to let the volunteers know that you are respect their time and that the meetings will not conflict with other appointments they may have. If discussions seem to be running long, it may be necessary to ask a smaller group of committee members (or even one or two people) to continue the discussion offline and update the group via email.
6. Give everyone a chance to be heard. Sometimes volunteers who are very passionate about a particular subject may unknowingly dominate the conversation. This is understandable, given the strong amount of passion MBA CSEA volunteers have for the work they are doing! In cases like these, the committee chair may need to ask if there is anyone else who hasn’t had a chance to speak about a certain topic.
7. Summarize the action steps at the end of the meeting. This helps remind people what they agreed to do and ensures everyone is on the same page.
8. There may be times when there is conflict during a meeting, such as a disagreement or heated discussion topic. The following tips can help manage this:
 - a. Remain positive.
 - b. Thank the speakers for their input, and acknowledge the importance of their contributions.
 - c. Ask for additional contributions from those you haven’t heard of.
 - d. Take away the personal aspect, and focus the topic and conversation on the issue rather than the person. It may be necessary to rephrase some of the statements to make them sound more objective, positive or focused on the facts.
 - e. Remain objective.
 - f. Take the conversation offline.