

Managing successful MS Teams meetings

Whether you are joining a MS Teams meeting as the meeting lead or as a participant, there are things you can do to help ensure that the meeting runs smoothly for everyone involved.

Meeting lead

Minimise meetings where possible

Consider the number and length of the meetings you plan, potentially reducing them to prevent your team being caught in what can feel like a cycle of endless meetings.

Use two presenters

Buddy up with someone and share the responsibility of leading the meeting, particularly when running a training or information-sharing session. When you share your screen or present a slide show it limits your view of the participants, so having a second person makes it easier to follow the comments and see when people are putting their hands up to speak.

Plan your meeting content

Have an agenda so that everyone knows what to prepare and what the expectations are of them during the meeting

Set expectations

Let people know at the outset how you would like them to ask questions: do you want them to jump in, put their hand up or ask them in the chat function? Will you answer them as you go along or at the end? Will you ask people to put themselves on mute to avoid audio feedback?

Have a 'safe' environment

There is an additional level of insecurity when working over a virtual platform, and you can help this by setting up some meeting rules at the start. This could be anything from reminding people that the meeting is confidential to ensuring that everyone who logs in is invited to share.

Engage with your participants

Include a check-in as part of your meeting where everyone gets the opportunity to speak, so participants feel engaged and part of the session, and have a chance to share how they are and the work they are doing. You may also want to increase the amount of engagement during your session to help keep everyone interested.

Vary your methods

Consider using a poll or the white board function to capture your participants' ideas and responses and to break up extended periods of speech and slide sharing.

Take time out

Build breaks in to longer meetings to allow participants comfort breaks and the chance to refresh themselves.

Refresh yourself

Take time between meetings to ready yourself for the next session.

Be prepared

Log in prior to the start of the session so that you can have everything open and ready to go. It's likely at some point that the technical side of things won't go to plan and the extra time will help you resolve any issues that come up.

Use the Chat function

The chat function can be a useful tool during group discussions to help people focus. Try using it to post any questions you are posing to your audience.

Keep presentation materials simple

It's likely that your audience will be viewing your slides or other materials on a small screen, making them harder to read. Consider using less information on each slide, keeping colour schemes simple and making sure that you give people plenty of time to read, watch or listen.

Participants

Be present

Although it's tempting, avoid multi-tasking during meetings and focus on the conversation at hand. Try to keep your camera on so that you are visible to the meeting lead and your colleagues, as this will help you engage with others and be as present as possible.

Be considerate of others

Behave as you would 'in-person' and try not to do anything that may be distracting for others. For example, having a drink is fine but eating your breakfast may cause others to lose focus.

Let people know when you are available

Keep your availability up to date in your diary. In a shared and virtual environment we are often drawn in to ad hoc, unplanned meetings to discuss things as they occur. By keeping your diary updated, your colleagues will know when is a good time to contact you to discuss issues as they arise.

Reduce audio distractions

Stay muted until it is your time to contribute. Audio feedback and background noise can make it very difficult to follow what is going on. Consider doing things like silencing your mobile and turning off your emails so that you and others on the call are not distracted by them 'pinging in' during the session.

Maintain your professionalism

Continue to do all the things that you normally would, such as dressing in suitable work-wear and joining the meeting on time.

Use headsets or earphones

Using a headset or earphones can help reduce audio distractions but also improve the confidentiality of your meeting if you are in a shared space.

Do you have any further tips on how to manage successful MS Teams meetings? If so, please email them to: culture@ouh.nhs.uk