

Rules for Remote Engagement - a 5-part short article series



Part 1. Creating Virtual Connection

Co-located meetings, although tedious, offered us something more than the relay of information. On occasion, it offered us a much-needed change of scenery or a few extra steps in our day but, most importantly it offered us an opportunity to connect. Virtual meetings in comparison, appear to be all work no play zones - we get in, get to business, and get out and on to the next. It's no wonder why remote working has in many cases presented an increase in productivity. However, this new found efficiency has come at the cost of connection.

Why is connection important? The impact of real and meaningful connection was never given much notice in the co-located environment, where gathering, face-to-face and side-by-side, was innate and unavoidable. Only now that we find ourselves in this socially-distanced and isolated place do we recognize connection as a critical element of both the individual and organizational experience of fulfilment.

At an individual level, we have a need to connect, to belong to a community, advance ourselves through its ranks and ultimately contribute as a leader. At organizational level, a culture that prioritizes connection also fosters collaboration and creativity, which in turn fuels innovation, that is the source of our staying power.

Here are just 3 tips to help create virtual connection:

1. Consider meeting capacity. When the intention is to relay information, a large virtual gathering will do but, one could argue that, unless urgent, this would better be delivered via email for readers to digest at their leisure. Ideally, opt for meetings of max 5-6 people where possible.
2. Check-in and check-out. Don't get straight to business! Include a check-in and check-out buffer as part

of your meeting structure. Take the time to acknowledge each person, ask how they are or how their day is going.

3. Limit your meetings to 45-minute intervals, making an allowance for sufficient breathers. Also, be realistic about how much can be covered during a meeting with the input and participation of all your attendees. Make sure everyone is given the chance to contribute.

The next article will cover more practical tips to increase engagement and participation in virtual meetings.