

Transcript | How to Run Great Meetings

Hello and welcome to this masterclass event - How to Run Great Meetings! My name is **Ilana Munckton**, I'm the Vice-President of Community Engagement and Growth here at Apolitical.

It would be great to hear from all of you. So, do post in the chat where you're joining us from and what organisation you work for. Today, you're going to hear inspirational examples and best practices from successful public sector teams and get practical tools to build team unity communication and efficiency. For those of you who may be joining us for the first time, a big welcome.

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Apolitical is the world's largest community for government used by over a quarter of a million public servants and policymakers for more than 170 countries around the world. And our mission is to make governments smarter. And we do this by putting the best knowledge and skills at the fingertips of public servants around the world. I can see some introductions starting to come through in the chat. Welcome, Diane from Ontario.

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We've got someone coming from New Brunswick, Toronto, Alberta, Ontario Public Service.

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Joel from Apolitical, my colleague. I can see Linda from Glasgow. Welcome, Linda. I'm over on the other side of Scotland in Edinburgh right now. Lovely to see you.

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Great. Lots of folks introducing themselves in the chat faster than I can keep up with, which is incredible.

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Before we jump into today's session, I'd like to start off by extending a big invitation to all of you to join our Life in Government community on Apolitical. We've created this community to provide a space for public servants from all around the world to connect with peers and ask and answer questions on all aspects of life in government.

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And meetings, I'm sure you'll all agree, are an inevitable, unavoidable aspect of working in the public service. So if you have any of your own tips to share on how to make them better, please do join the community and add your thoughts.

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You should shortly see a link pop up just at the bottom of your screen that should take you to the community or you can find it any time during this webinar by clicking on the resources tab at the bottom of your Zoom screen and you'll find the community link there.

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I'll also just get a few technical notes out of the way before we get into today's session.

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Now, before we introduce our speakers, we're going to run just a few quick polls to get a sense of where you're all coming to today's discussion from.

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So I'm going to just read out the first poll and you should shortly see it on your screen. And the question I'd love to hear from all of you on are how many hours per week do you spend in meetings? Less than five hours, five to 10 hours.

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10 to 20 hours or more than 20 hours. And I can see loads of you jumping in with some votes so far. I can see lots of folks saying five to 10 hours.

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But keep the votes coming.

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Lots of you voting already, which is incredible. Fantastic. I'll just give you a few more seconds to weigh in.

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And that's it. About 57% of you saying five to 10 hours, another 28% saying you spend 10 to 20 hours in meetings.

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And 14% of you spending less than five hours of your week in meetings. Thank you so much. So with that in mind, five to 10 hours in meetings for most of you, how often do you leave a meeting feeling like it was productive. My colleague will shortly launch a new poll on the screen

for you there. How often do you leave a meeting feeling like it was productive? Very often, somewhat often. It's not something I think about.

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Somewhat rarely or very rarely. And again.

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Give you a moment to weigh in. I see a few more folks just introducing themselves in the chat.

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Welcome, everyone. Marlene from Copenhagen. Robert from Halifax. Nice to have you here.

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Okay, great. We've got lots of votes here on the poll. Okay, great. 61% of you saying you leave a meeting feeling like it was productive.

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Somewhat often. And then 25% of you somewhat rarely. So a little bit of a split there. But overall, on the positive side.

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That's great. Okay, I'm going to ask one more question for you. And that is, what is the biggest challenge you face in running meetings? Have a think about that. You'll see it come up on the screen shortly. Keeping participants engaged and focused, managing time effectively.

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Setting clear objectives and agendas, handling conflicts and differing opinions, managing post-meeting actions and follow-ups.

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Technical issues and logistics or something else and feel free to jump in and tell us in the chat lots of options there. As you can see, there's so many things to think about when it comes to meetings and we're going to get into the detail shortly in this session.

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I can see folks jumping in. So far, many of you saying keeping participants engaged and focused, but I'll give you a few more moments.

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A few folks in the chat as well, Ian saying preparation for meetings is lacking, not enough time. Someone's saying a combination of factors. Absolutely. Isn't that the truth?

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Okay, we've got lots of votes here, hundreds of you weighing in. And the biggest theme here, 37% of you saying keeping participants engaged and focused is your biggest challenge.

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Okay, great. Thank you so much for taking part in those polls. I'm now going to introduce our speakers.

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We are so fortunate to have three brilliant guests here today. Richard Nuji, Amy Meng, and Jenny Wu joining us.

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Richard is a former soldier and non-executive director and chief of people in the UK Ministry of Defense.

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Following his 36-year military career, Richard became increasingly involved in climate and sustainability, eventually becoming non-executive director for Net Zero for the Ministry of Defense.

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He currently chairs the board of the Royal Navy, Army, and Air Force Institutes and a number of green energy and sustainability startups.

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Advising on climate change and sustainability. Amy and Jenny both work at the US Digital Response. Jenny is an operations manager within the volunteers team.

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Helping match skilled volunteers to projects that help public servants deliver critical public services.

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And Jenny is program manager, meaning she works with a wide range of governments to identify and respond to needs around strategy, change management, and technical support.

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You can read the full bios by visiting the resources tab at the bottom of your Zoom screen and heading to the speakers section.

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So before we launch into our presentations today, I want to start us off with a very quick icebreaker. Judging by those poll results, you've spent lots of time in meetings, maybe even hundreds of wasted hours in unproductive meetings over the years.

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And if you had to guess, how many hours do you think you have spent in unnecessary meetings over the course of your career? And if you could have that time back.

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What would you do with it? Richard, I'm going to come to you first.

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But I will give you all a moment to think about that question. And if you're joining us online, feel free to let us know your answers in the chat as well. Would love to hear that. Richard What do you think? How many hours do you think you've spent in unnecessary meetings and what would you do with that time if you had it back?

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Well, in a very long career, I think probably hundreds of hours that I've spent in unproductive meetings as I got more senior and started chairing them, I tried to make sure that was kept to a minimum.

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Certainly earlier in my career, I had lots of unproactive meetings. What would I do with it? Well, there's two answers to that. There's the sort of answer that you can do on a day-to-day basis in a sense, which is spend more time with your team.

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Actually spend more time talking to your team and really enjoy the interactions that you get rather than just sitting at your desk.

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But actually, a slightly more flippant answer is I'd go and plant some trees because I really enjoy doing that. It's something I do a lot of in my spare time. And if it gave me more time to plant trees, then I'd really, really value that.

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I love that. And unexpected and beautiful answer. Thank you so much, Richard. Amy, I'll come to you next.

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We've also probably spent many hundreds of hours in unnecessary meetings, although my secret is I actually love meetings. I think that meetings are great. I get a lot done in meetings.

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If I had all the time back, I would join a political and teach more people how to have great meetings.

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Thanks, Amy. For me. It's hard to quantify the number of meetings that I feel like have been spent unnecessarily. But a fun fact everyone On average, this was a research study that happened in the US, on average, the average worker spent about 15 hours a week in meetings.

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And that equates to roughly four years of your life within your career.

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So excited to be here to talk about how we can make those four years of our lives sitting in meetings successful ones.

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What I would do with that time I would be out surfing. I am an avid surfer. And so that's what I'd be doing

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Thank you so much, Jenny, Amy, and Richard. Wonderful, diverse answers. Planting trees, surfing. And Amy, I'm so delighted to hear that you love meetings as much as I'm sure we all do.

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Okay, fantastic. So thanks for indulging us in those responses. Without further ado, I'm going to hand over to Richard for the next 15 minutes for his masterclass segment.

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Take it away whenever you are ready, Richard.

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Thank you very much indeed. And I'll just share my slides if that's all right.

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I hope you can see them. If that works. Has that worked right? Okay.

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So how to set up a good meeting. And I've kept these slides really, really, really simple. There's no logos there's no I spent sort of more time thinking about what's put on the slide and less time thinking about how to make them look pretty. And I hope you'll appreciate that that's part of the sort of deal.

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What are my credentials for my For speaking, I suppose... I have spent a very long time in meetings. Some of them you would call, as I'm a military guy, I'm a soldier, some you would call

orders groups, where they are very direct indeed, and you don't get much chance to question anything. You're just told to go off and do something and that's a

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Very different style of meeting to a sort of board meeting. But I've chaired many at governmental level. I worked for four years at the executive board of the Ministry of Defense, which was basically the board that ran defense below ministerial level.

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And was one of the longest serving on that board. And I'll bring in some sort of thoughts from that.

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But since I've left, I've chaired um i chair four companies. One reasonable size, but some quite small. And of course, the dynamics are very different.

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Depending on the size of the company. The Invictus Games, I don't know whether you've heard of that, but it's a sort of games for It's a bit like Paralympics, but it's not. For wounded veterans from across the world.

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And we've got our next Invictus Games. The last one was in Vancouver and Whistler.

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Just this winter in February, which was a fantastic games. It was the first winter games that Invictus have run. And we're running the next one in Birmingham.

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In the UK in 2027. And I was chair of the board until they appointed somebody who's actually run a games before as the chair. And so I'm now the sort of the deputy chair, which is actually, I'm very, very happy with.

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But I've learned a lot about how to do things and how not to do things along the way. And I hope I'll be able to impart a little bit of that.

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So I would argue that the most important aspect of a meeting is how it is set up in the first place. And in order to do that, you have to have a think, you have to have a sort of sense of why on earth are you meeting?

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What is the purpose of the meeting? And I think this is really, really important. And if you can agree with the sort of the principal people around the table before the meeting that this is what the meeting is going to be about, then that helps. It's not absolutely essential, but it certainly helps. And there's three things that before we actually get to the purpose that

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That you need to think about. And one is the purpose. The second is Who's going to be there? And then the third is if you like, how are you going to run that meeting? So I'll start With the purpose.

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You will often hear, and I put it down the bottom, that there must be a decision or there's no point in having a meeting. And that's a very public sector idea that, you know, every meeting must have a decision out at the end of it. And I would actually disagree with that.

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Because yes, decision making is really important. And there's two reasons I put there as to why you would want to bring a decision to a meeting.

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The first is collective responsibility. That actually once you have an agreement, everybody around that table has agreed it and therefore you would hope that they all will support that decision even if they went into the meeting wanting to disagree.

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But there's a second reason, which I think is actually more important, and that is the discussion and the engagement around those decisions in the meeting. So you have the to actually discuss and any points of difference before making a decision.

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But decision-making is certainly a major part of meetings, but it's not the only part.

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I see nothing wrong every now and again. It would be the wrong thing to do if this was the only reason you were meeting every time.

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To inform, to update, to align everybody on where you are going.

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And what you're trying to achieve. So, for example, something that we used a lot is strategy, trying to work out what the strategy of the Ministry of Defense is and trying to work out in my current role what the strategy of one or two of my companies are, that's more of a, this is the way we're going to go. And yes, you have a chance to discuss it.

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But there's no decision there apart from, I suppose you could have a decision of do you agree the astrology or not? But if the whole meeting's about that, then actually really what you're doing is you're informing, you're aligning, you're trying to understand what is going on. And I see nothing wrong with a meeting that has that as part of it.

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And the third is actually just to have a workshop, have a discussion, agreeing a position to take in the future which may lead to a decision or perhaps exposing differences of understanding and opinion. In other words, allowing people to have a different opinion

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Many meetings, you'll find that people are afraid of speaking because they feel that they'll be made to look stupid by saying something.

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And that comes to how you run the meeting. And I know that Amy and Jenny are going to talk about that a lot.

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But actually, it's about the culture that you bring into that meeting. The culture that you bring into it, which allows people to question what is there on paper, question some of the thoughts of the chair or of the chief executive or whatever it is that you're doing.

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And allowing people to expose their differences in a safe environment is something which I think is really important in a meeting.

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If you don't allow that and you don't allow that sort of information exchange and that difference of opinion to take place in the meeting.

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Then it'll take place outside the meeting. And if it takes place outside the meeting, then it will come with an attitude.

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And the attitude is one of secrecy and all we can't talk about that with that person or we can't talk about that with this person because they'll be afraid of criticism or whatever.

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That's how you get division and that's how meetings fail when you do actually bring everybody together.

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So having the open dialogue in a meeting, a discussion, a workshop on something I think is really, really important.

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And it goes to Another point, which is what is the construct of the meeting?

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Who do you want there? And I will just... You want the people who are in a position of responsibility to be able to decide if decisions have to be taken or in a position to agree that the following is going to happen, which is not really a decision. It's just sort of we'll take it forward this way.

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If you always get deputies, if you always get a proxy coming in, then you've probably failed to get the meeting to be of interest and of value. And we often used to say that if at the end of the day you've only got proxies.

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Then the meeting has failed before it started. Because you're not attracting the key decision makers, the key people of interest to the meeting. Why? Because they have realised that actually their time is more important elsewhere.

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Now, sometimes there will be clashes, but most of the time, actually, you ought to be able to get the people you want to the meeting.

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What does that entail? It means booking those meetings well in advance. If you have the ability to do so.

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I have diary entries all the way through this year now and into next year for board meetings that I am attending. And it's something that I insist on that we should have about a year's notice.

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Now, not all of them stay in the same place at the same time, but at least we've got a marker down where everybody has agreed that they can make that. Now, it may have to change. You may find diary clashes But at the end of the day, if you've tried your best to get something out for a long term, then that is a good thing to do.

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The other thing is we developed two things in the executive committee of Defence. The first was what we call the challenge board. And the second is what we called a reporter.

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And the challenge board was interesting. It was people at, if you like, a much lower level than the meeting who were given all the papers and everything, who were brought in specifically to talk about how they saw what we were trying to do rather than what we saw. So we saw it from the other end. Now, some people call this a shadow board.

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We called it a challenge board because actually their role was to challenge.

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The second thing was the reporter. At the end of every meeting, at the end of every board meeting, we had one member of the board who was asked, so how did we do as a meeting?

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Did we get all our decisions made that we wanted to make?

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Was it an environment where people felt that they could speak out?

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By encouraging and it was a different person each board meeting, you'd be told you're the person who's going to be asked to comment on the conduct of the board at the end. So this person is really important because it keeps you honest, but it also make sure that actually people pay attention because they might be asked next time round. And if you are that person, by goodness, you're going to pay attention.

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So again, before you start the meeting, the chair should be asking themselves before the beginning, how will this meeting end? Not what are the decisions that are going to be taken because that's the role of the meeting.

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But have the decisions been made and what's the so what from those decisions. So there's a lot of thinking before you go into the meeting in the first place.

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Second point, I suppose, is where should you sit? And I've seen both sides of it. Should you sit at the end of a long table with everybody looking at you as a single entity at the end?

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I've seen that so often. Or do you sit in the middle?

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So if you like at the top of the screen. My personal choice is that you should always sit in the middle. It is far more inclusive.

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If you sit at the end and there's sometimes a reason why you'd want to sit at the end if there is a screen that you have to be seen at.

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But if you sit at the end, you are by definition isolating.

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You're by definition putting yourself in a position of authority which is not needed if you're the chair because you are, you have the authority by being the chair in the first place. It shouldn't matter where you sit, actually. If you're the chair, you should still be able to govern the meeting.

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But sitting in the middle is very inclusive. Everybody is looking at everybody else, including you. And I would strongly recommend that's where you go.

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At public sector meetings, you'll always get the principal and you'll get a member of staff, or usually you will, certainly in the Ministry of Defences I've been in, you always get members of staff. Should they sit at the table Or should they sit in chairs outside the table just taking notes? Here, I think it's just a question of choice of what you want to do.

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And I would argue that if you think that there is value in some of those staff being at the table, don't be afraid to bring them to the table.

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Because actually, if they've got something useful to say, they don't need to push it through their principal. But the principle needs to be comfortable with that.

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An agenda. Absolutely essential that you have an agenda which has a number of features.

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This is an agenda from one of my companies that we've just run.

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There are various things which are, if you like, normal in a meeting that will be the same in every meeting. Apologies are people who can't turn up.

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People should be polite enough to tell you they're not going to turn up or if there is a proxy. You shouldn't be waiting for somebody wondering whether they're turning up or not. And if you can instill that discipline, that's very good.

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Welcome and introductions. If there's anybody new around the table, it's worth doing, even if actually you haven't met for a long time and you all know each other, it's worth doing because other people, you know, people will either forget or more importantly, they might have something different to say.

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Agreements and minutes are the last of the last meeting, the previous meeting. That should be a formality because you should have sent out those minutes for everybody to comment on Very shortly after the meeting and then matters arising. That's really important. What are the critical actions that you said you were going to take at the last meeting

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Have they been delivered? And the chair should go through each one of those individually each time and make sure that those actions have been started or have been finished Or at least haven't been forgotten about. Then you'll get a series of reports or a series of papers. I'll come on to that in a second.

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And then any other business Date of next meeting. Always have the date of next meeting on a meeting, I would suggest, and close. Now, the other thing that I would say there is you can see who's responsible for each of those.

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On the right hand side and on the left-hand side, how long has each been given? And you'll see there's different times for each of those things. So the trading report gets 30 minutes in this particular instance, but the CEO report only gets 20 minutes.

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So there's variations that you can draw. It shouldn't all be standard. Everything has to be half an hour.

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And you try and stick to those timings? I'm running out of time. So just a quick thing on papers.

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Or verbal. If you have a verbal uh piece Please be aware that people have a tendency to waffle when they have the stage.

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They have a tendency to want to be saying more than they need to. Please don't allow them the time, but not more than the time.

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Papers in the Ministry of Defense. At the beginning of the paper, we have a bluff, which is the bottom line up front. We nicked it from the Americans. It's a brilliant idea. A one-sentence summary of the paper. What is the paper saying in one sentence? And that one sentence should be one or two lines long. That's all.

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And then what you get is a summary of recommendations. What is the paper actually asking you to do, to consider, to agree, and so on. And then through the paper, you get, does the board meeting agree? Does the board or meeting consider that?

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And then cycle back during the meeting. And again, I'm slightly stealing Amy and Jenny's thunder here, but But have all the questions posed been answered? Have you actually done what you wanted? Has that paper delivered what it should have delivered?

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So that's it from sort of starting. There's tons more I could say, but I've run out of time and I want to try and stick to time because that's a very good meeting thing. I'm 30 seconds over. Apologies for that. But we'll...

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I'm very happy to take any questions.

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Thank you so much, Richard. We're going to have plenty of time for questions shortly, and I'm sure there's going to be loads coming into the Q&A so far, which is great. So keep them coming. Amy and Jenny, before we get to the Q&A, you're up next. I'll give you a second to pull up your slides.

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And then we'll get started. Amy and Jenny, over to you.

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Great. Can you all see the slides I'm sharing? All right. Great. Thank you so much for teeing us up, Richard. I want to really emphasize two points that Richard made in particular, having clear meeting purposes and creating a psychologically safe culture. I fully agree that those are extremely critical foundations.

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To any good meeting. So Jenny and I are going to talk a bit today about facilitating for impact and outcomes.

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And just to share a little bit about our context, we are both members, representatives from US Digital Response, which is a nonprofit nonpartisan organization. We work with US governments at the federal, state, and local levels to provide assistance in areas like user research, agile procurement, language access, and generative

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We've helped over 500 government agencies in the last five years. Which means that we've both been in a lot of meetings in our time at USTR.

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Over the next 15 minutes, we're going to cover some basic tactics you can use during meetings to keep things on track.

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As well as some best practices for wrapping up a meeting and tips for successful virtual meetings.

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So we've got a lot to cover in the next 15. We're just going to dive right in.

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Let's see. Okay, so first I want to shout out Life Labs Learning briefly, which is another great organization. A lot of the practices we'll be talking about today. We learned from LifeLabs in addition to our sometimes painful lived experiences.

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So today we're covering what I'm calling five guiding statements. These are going to sound like very simple, basic tactics.

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But I find that they're extremely effective. They're the foundations of good meetings. If you learn to consistently practice these five statements, I can almost guarantee that you will find your meetings will improve.

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So we're going to start with the summary statement. This is, as it sounds, a facilitator or another participant in a meeting summarizes what someone just said or what the group just covered.

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This is useful because it helps to bring people back to the topic at hand if they got distracted.

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It's the threat of conversation got a little bit complicated. You can also use this tactic to summarize and simplify a participant's comments.

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So I'm going to give you some examples of how each of these tactics works in real meetings.

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Let's say you have a participant who's talking at length. So on the left, we have an example of someone who is talking about feedback on a new website. They're talking about the history of how they haven't gotten enough feedback on the website.

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And they're really expressing a lot of anxiety about going through that process again.

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But what winds up happening is they're repeating themselves a lot. They're going on a lot of tangents.

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Some of this might sound familiar to meetings you've been in.

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If you use a summary statement in this kind of situation.

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It can sound something like, it sounds like feedback is really important to you and your concern will need to rework the website if we don't get the right feedback this time.

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I think that's a great point. I share that concern. I believe Lee can help share more information about the plan feedback process we have.

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So this is a really elegant way to make the participants participant feel heard, acknowledge their anxiety, empathize.

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But also not get stuck in this moment and continue to move the meeting forward.

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Another example is if the overall conversation has jumped to several topics.

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Oftentimes you might move past things, you might lose threads about who's doing what.

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So simple summary statement can also help you re-encapsulate who's owning each task, what the tasks are.

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It also gives you a chance to be corrected if you've miscaptured something, if someone has misstated something.

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So it's a really helpful tool to clarify upfront rather than having more miscommunication down the line.

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So the summary statement was our first statement. Our second is this transition statement.

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As it sounds, after you create a summary statement. A transition statement explicitly moves the conversation on to a new topic or focus area.

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This is useful because it creates a sense of progress in the meeting and it helps to continue to keep clear what the goals are as you're moving through a meeting.

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So one example here is if there's low engagement. This was a common problem that has come up for many of you.

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You can use a transition statement like To summarize, we just talked through the questions everyone had about website design.

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Now we're going to move on to deciding which vendor to engage.

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I will ask each person to give their thoughts. Let's start with Ben.

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This is nice because it helps us set some expectations around the level of engagement you want to see from participants.

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And it gives everyone a moment to sort of mentally and emotionally prepare before you launch in and get their feedback.

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Our third statement is the time statement. This is pretty straightforward. It simply describes how much time you're going to spend on each topic.

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And it's really helpful to maintain a sense of time awareness in a meeting.

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Different people will naturally have a very different sense of time awareness. Some people are very aware when five minutes pass, some people don't realize when five hours have passed.

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So having this continual time awareness really helps to build that muscle for the group.

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It also ensures that people are able to touch on the most important points in a meeting.

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One thing I really want to note here is that successful time statements are not about kind of brutally cutting off a conversation exactly at the point of time.

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It's really about getting better over time at estimating how much time needs to be allocated for a particular topic or decision.

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So an example here, if a group spends too much time on each agenda item.

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You can kind of summarize the overall time you have available, a breakdown of how you're going to use the time that you have.

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And you can also have a contingency plan expressed here where you say.

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If we weren't able to reach a decision, I'll send out a second invite next week and we'll continue the conversation there.

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So time statements are really mostly about getting better at estimating the time you need to reach your meeting goals.

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Our fourth statement is an observation statement. This is one of my favorite of all the statements that we're talking about.

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It's a way to stay in a neutral, non-judgmental way what you see happening.

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And it's really powerful because it allows you to directly address a point of conflict or confusion in a meeting.

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And it also allows you to provide a potential path forward So example here is people are really quiet. There's low engagement.

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Or there's someone in the meeting who's giving really long answers, taking up a lot of space.

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An observation statement here might be something like, I'm noticing we're only getting participation from one or two people.

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I'd love to hear from a few people who haven't spoken yet.

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So the key is to be really neutral and non-judgmental. Another example is if there's no clear decision maker in a meeting.

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You might say something like, it sounds like it's not clear which team is responsible for making this decision.

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Would be helpful for us to clarify roles and responsibilities now, or should we pause the conversation for today and reconvene when we've identified decision makers?

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I really want to emphasize that if you've ever sat in a meeting and just thought about how terrible it is.

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The odds are that something like this observation statement could help you break through and find a path forward. So I think this is one of the most powerful of the statements.

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And finally, we have a parking statement. This helps to address an issue that's come up for a lot of people when a meeting goes off topic.

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Or irrelevant points come up. So parking statement is the process of identifying when something is off topic.

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It's helpful because it keeps everything on topic helps you move towards your meeting goals.

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I typically recommend creating a separate parking lot document that you talk about at the beginning of the meeting. You just say, you know, if any extraneous topics or questions come up, we're going to put it in this parking lot document.

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Two things I want to call out here is that culturally in a live context, interruptions can be seen as taboo or rude.

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But I do think it can be an essential tool for facilitation if a meeting goes off topic.

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So it's worth considering. Another thing I'll note here is that it is important to be aware of who is getting interrupted.

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And if you find that there is a specific member of the team who's continually getting interrupted.

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Such as the most junior member or someone with a particular demographic.

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It's worth noting and addressing that too. So an example here, if a group is going off topic, you can make a observation statement and parking statement. You can combine these statements however you want.

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You can say something like, seems like we're getting off topic. Let's write down the concerns that are coming up in the parking lot document so we can discuss later.

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In the meantime, let's refocus on getting to a decision on the budget.

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So in summary we have these five statements, summary, time, transition, observation, and parking. Again, they seem extremely simple and straightforward, but they're very powerful statements.

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I also really want to emphasize that you can use these statements whether you're a facilitator or a participant in a meeting. You don't need permission to use any of these statements anytime a meeting is going off track, you should feel empowered to try to use one of these statements.

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Thanks so much, Amy. So now I'm going to discuss how to end a meeting well.

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There's two important things to do to do that, which is help the group feel a sense of progress and end with energy. So what I mean by that is at the end of the meeting, make sure to do a final summary. Briefly use one of those summary statements to remind the group of

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Everything that was accomplished in that meeting. And another thing that you want to do is make sure that there's someone who's capturing those action items, whether it be a note taker and the decisions that were made during the meeting.

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And help identify those at the end of the meetings and close those loops on those commitments by sharing it out after the meeting as well.

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And finally, you want to end with energy. There was a research study that showed that humans have something called recency bias. That means we're most likely to remember the last thing that happened. So maybe you sat through an awful meeting, but at the end of the meeting.

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It was all laughs and there was high energy. That's what people are going to remember. So end with some energy there.

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Next slide, please. Okay, so, and I'll cover a couple of examples of ending with energy in these meeting tips section, but a couple of tips I wanted to go over is Richard mentioned that there's a couple of different types of meetings.

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And for each of these meetings, there are some pro tips. So let's say you're in an update meeting where you're just sharing information. Maybe it's a project update.

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A tip here is to assign roles, like Richard mentioned, like a shadow board. Love that idea. Assign roles to members of the meeting and have those roles rotate. So maybe that's a facilitator, a note taker, a timekeeper. If you have these roles rotate, you're going to have folks have different responsibilities in the meeting and that investment in the meeting goes up.

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I think this is particularly important because these update meetings can sometimes be standing meetings that happen recurringly. And that's when you might see engagement go down or attendance go down.

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Another type of meeting is that brainstorm meeting, right? Richard talked about generating those ideas.

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A pro tip here is sometimes it can be hard when you're in a brainstorm meeting and someone says, okay, so what do y'all think? And now you have to on the spot, come up with ideas.

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So a tip is to carve out some time for solo brainstorming. That can be as short as a minute. Maybe that's as long as five minutes.

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Let folks know they're going to have that time to think on their own. And then we're going to come together as a group to do a round robin where everyone has a chance to share their idea.

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Another type of meeting is that narrow making decisions kind of meeting.

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A tip here is to declare the decision-making process at the start of the meeting.

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I personally have been in meetings where I'm investing a lot in getting a decision out and I'm helping the meeting go forward and only to find out at the end that everyone who spoke in the meeting, these are all just going to be

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Considerations that a final decision maker is going to make. And that can sometimes feel demotivating. So just be clear with folks how that decision is ultimately going to be made at the beginning of that meeting.

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And a couple other pro tips here is that, next slide, please.

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That it's ideal to try to have one purpose per meeting. Or if you're going to have multiple purposes in one meeting, be really clear what part of the meeting we're in.

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Maybe you've noticed that sometimes you're in meetings and an entangling starts to happen. And I think this is where folks can feel like we're going off topic. So for example, I have, you know.

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Maybe sat through many brainstorm meetings. I'm in the narrowing meeting and we think that we're finally coming to a decision on something and someone raises their hand and says.

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What if we considered this idea? That has felt very, oh gosh, we're in this conversation again. We've already had this meeting. We're not making any progress.

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So notice when those meeting purposes get tangled up and help course correct.

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So an example of that might be at the start of the meeting, really being clear about what the purpose of this meeting is. You might say something like.

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This meeting is purely for brainstorming. We're not going to get into the nuances of why something would or wouldn't work. This meeting is purely to generate ideas. Next week, we'll have a narrowing meeting to get to the specific next steps with what we produce from today's meeting.

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Another example is let's say it's happening during the meeting. Someone starts getting into brainstorming when it's actually making decisions meeting.

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You might say, I'm hearing some interesting new ideas being generated. The purpose of this meeting is to make a final decision and get crisp on next steps.

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Let's take a vote on whether we're ready to make a final decision or whether we need to pivot the purpose of this meeting back to generating additional ideas.

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Next slide, please. And let's talk about those virtual meetings because we're in one right now and the world is more and more becoming that way.

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I think some really good tips for virtual meetings is to set expectations and use virtual tools to guide the meeting. I think this is important for in-person and virtual meetings, but in a virtual meeting, you have some unique virtual tools to do this.

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So at the start of the meeting, be sure to set communication norms. And I think this goes to what both Richard and Amy were talking about, about creating a culture of meeting spaces where dialogue is encouraged or creating psychologically safe spaces.

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Let folks know how they're going to be expected to contribute to the conversation and let them know, should they expect to contribute at the end? Should they be able to interrupt whenever? Maybe if you're in a virtual meeting like Zoom, you can use the raise hand feature. Let folks know that there's going to be a parking lot of where additional ideas will go so that we can make sure that the meetings stay on topic. Let folks know, is it expected for them to have their cameras on or to be on mute at the start of the meeting?

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And really lean into that facilitator role. Make sure that if you are a facilitator of a meeting, let folks know what to expect from you.

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Maybe it's like, you know, Alana might be like, Jenny, you're going off topic. I'm going to make sure that I'm going to jump in and interrupt so that we're keeping on topic or I'm going to share a timer on my screen so that folks know where we are.

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And to increase engagement, because I know I heard a lot of folks saying that this was one of the biggest challenges in meetings.

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Consider an icebreaker. And another thing to increase engagement, whether it's in an icebreaker or to just generate ideas and have folks talk is utilize those breakout rooms So that folks have smaller group spaces to talk and it feels a little more psychologically safe. And you can also do waterfall style.

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Waterfall style is when you ask folks to enter into the chat, but don't press enter yet, you know, an answer to something. And then you go three, two, one, everyone press enter so that there's a waterfall of answers.

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Like I mentioned, do a round robin. You might launch a poll.

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Help share your screen so that folks can follow along, stop the screen during discussion times And again, when you start and end a meeting, invite folks to maybe come on camera, unmute, say hello. A trick I like to do is

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I'll have folks come off camera and look kind of around them and I'll say, make sure you wave to the people.

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Above you and below you and to the sides. And that's another tip for increasing engagement.

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And so what we've covered today is making those guiding statements.

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Ending a meeting with progress and energy and some in-person and virtual meeting tips.

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So much progress, y'all. We accomplished so much. If you want to get in touch, that's our contact information, but I will pass it over to Alana.

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That was absolutely perfect. Thank you so much, Amy and Jenny. Those were fantastic presentations.

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Remember to keep sharing any questions that you have for today's speakers. We have a lot of questions already with pre-submitted and in the Zoom Q&A. To ensure your question gets seen and not lost in the chat, do use the Q&A function, although I've been scanning for some questions in the chat as well, but you should see the Q&A function at the bottom of your Zoom screen. We'll head into that section now.

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I'll give you a minute or two to type any final questions while you're doing that. I thought I would just share a nice resource that we've created at Apolitical that might dovetail with some of the skills and behaviors we've just been hearing about. And a lot of you might be chairing or leading meetings yourselves. And with that comes the responsibility of public speaking.

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We know that this doesn't always come naturally to everybody, self included. And if it does to you, even if it does to you, there are always ways of making your verbal communication and leadership in public settings even better. So I wanted to let you know about our free course on an introduction to public speaking, which is designed to help you find your inner public speaker. My colleague is going to post a link to the course in the chat now. And once again, it's completely free and we hope you find it useful if you do take it.

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Great. I am going to now jump into some of the questions that we have received. I'm going to start with some of the pre-submitted questions that you asked when you registered for this event.

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First question, and I'm going to come to you, Amy. How do I gain confidence running meetings when I lack confidence or experience nerves and anxiety?

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Great question. I think a lot of it is just practice. It's practice and also knowing that There are a lot of people who will always be nervous when they're leading meetings, no matter how many they've led.

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That doesn't mean that you can't be good at it and doesn't mean that you can't be It can't be a field of expertise. Just know that The worst thing that can happen is it's maybe just a bad meeting and

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How many bad meetings do you remember from the last year of your life? No one will remember, just keep practicing, have your goals.

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Ahead of time. And it can also be helpful to have a little post-it note for yourself where it's you have a little if-then statement Where if you know you typically freeze up in the middle of a meeting or something like that.

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You write in advance, if I freeze up, I'm going to take three seconds I'm going, in my head, I'm going to take some deep breaths.

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So you have those kind of emergency protocols already set. You don't have to worry about it in the moment.

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That's wonderful. Practice truly does make perfect. Thank you so much, Amy. Okay, next presentation.

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Ilana, could I sorry I'm interrupting, but could I just add one thing?

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Yeah.

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Because what Amy's just said is absolutely brilliant. I would add just one thing. If you're really nervous.

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Try and give yourself a goal in the meeting that you think will be really easy to achieve.

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So halfway through the meeting or a little bit earlier in the meeting, you think, oh, I've just achieved that. It may be something really simple like.

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I've kept that piece to time. And you could get, yeah.

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Great. And it just gives you a little boost of confidence in the meeting that you've set a goal and you've achieved it in the meeting. And then you can go on and set more goals later in the meeting or whatever it is.

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Just giving yourself the confidence to say, oh, I've set something and I've achieved it in the middle of the meeting. Nobody else needs to know what it is, but it's a self-conscious thing that actually you can benefit from.

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That's fantastic. Thank you, Richard. So practice emergency protocols and achievable goals. Fantastic. Okay. Next question pre-submitted by one of the attendees.

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Do you have any tips on how to handle difficult conversations in an open meeting?

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Jenny, I'm going to come to you.

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Yeah, Alana. You know, difficult conversations are hard. Folks generally want to avoid conflict. And yet, like Richard said earlier, right, it's important to have open dialogue, like Amy said, psychologically safe spaces are important.

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And so I think the first step is to make sure that PrEP is happening and let folks know. You know, you can even do some norm setting on what happens if conversations are going to come up that are difficult, what should people expect or when.

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There's disagreement of voices. How are we going to come to a final decision?

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So I think that's the first step. And then the second step is I think, like Amy said, making those observation statements.

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Just calling out if there feels like there's tension in a meeting can really go a long way so that folks aren't just you know, sitting there being like, oh, I'm feeling that tension is everyone else.

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And so those are some tips that I might give.

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Thank you, Jenny. Norm setting and observation setting statements, really good tips there. Thank you.

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I'm going to come now to some of the questions that have been asked in the Q&A.

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Christina asked, how do you balance the need for thorough discussion with the need to make timely decisions? Richard, you talked a lot about agenda keeping. Do you want to come to that question?

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Yeah, I think, and of course, as I think Amy said, I think it was Amy who said it, you know, don't cut somebody off just as because the time finishes But I actually, I love the idea of summarizing statements, of trying to, and what I do a lot as the chair

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Is find an opportunity where something's going on for quite a long time. And we've gone slightly over the allotted time is to say, right, and I say this really quite often as a chair, my sense of what we have just said is the following.

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Well, my sense of where we've got to is the following.

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And try and summarize it in a way that allows, if a decision has to be made, allows for a decision to be made.

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And it's a skill which I've developed over time rather than something that you learn immediately. But actually, the real skill is trying to incorporate in your summary, in your very short summary, trying to incorporate everybody's point of view and say, so this is where we've got to, I think this is what we need to decide. This is how we're going to make the decision.

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And so as the facilitator, you take an opportunity without rudely interrupting somebody, but you take the opportunity to say.

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I think this is the way what we are thinking and do the summary and it brings it to a halt immediately. Nobody feels that they have to add more.

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Because they've heard all the comments and then you go into a decision.

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Fantastic. That sounds like a real art, Richard. Thank you for sharing that. Perfect. Another question on hybrid and remote meetings that came in through the Q&A.

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And this person asked many times, I realize not all participants are engaged in contributing during a meeting. They might sit muted behind the camera or off camera.

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Is it important to have them all engaged? And if so, how do you achieve that?

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Anyone like to take that question on hybrid and remote meetings?

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I'll start. I think it is generally important to have everyone gauge. If someone is in a meeting, there should be a reason for them to be in that meeting.

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It's very possible that someone's disengaged because it's not clear why they're there.

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And if that's the case, then I would say it's not really their fault. It's something to reconsider the next time you have a meeting.

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Are these the right groups of participants? But if people don't know how they're supposed to participate, what you're asking of them.

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That is often the underlying issue around low engagement. I also think that not everyone's going to be at 100% every day and that is also completely fine.

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So there's also allowances that should be made for just kind of hard personal days and things like that.

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If I can add to that. I will sometimes like to, when I send out the agenda ahead of time.

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Also, let participants know what their personal benefit to that meeting is. So I'll just literally write it out and say.

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You know, Amy. You're being asked to be in this meeting and here's how it's going to personally benefit you. You need this decision or the information from this to run your department, et cetera.

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And I find that that's helpful. Another thing I'll mention is in a hybrid meeting where you have both folks in person and remote, sometimes the remote folks, if the majority are in person or The facilitator is in person.

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May end up being forgotten about. They're just like kind of on the screen. So really making sure that we're being inclusive Making sure that the folks you know?

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Online can hear what the folks in the room are saying, because I think that's when engagement goes down too. Maybe the mic isn't in front of every single person when they're speaking. It's hard to hear.

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And when you're asking for engagement, doing things like round robing, you can start with the people online.

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Fantastic.

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And if I could add, I think hybrid meetings with some in the room and some remote are the most difficult meetings to try and engage everybody.

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Because it is very easy to forget people on the screen because you're engaged with the people around the table.

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So a trick that I do, I say right up front, for those of you who are on the screen or on a telephone, because that also happens so you can't even see them.

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I say, you had my complete permission to interrupt anybody at any time to get your point across.

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And what that allows is everybody expects an interruption from somebody on the screen because we may not be looking at them trying to wave or something like that.

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And because you've allowed permission for somebody to interrupt, nobody takes it as an insult.

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Nobody takes it the wrong way. And so actually in most of my meetings like that, it works really, really well. If somebody wants to say something.

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Actually, they just on the screen, they just stand up and say, and everybody just accepts it. And it works well in my area.

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Fantastic. Thank you so much. We have lots of questions that we have not gotten to today. I'd like to invite you all to join me in continuing the conversation in the life and government community.

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After this event. But what I'm going to do is ask you all to now join me in just giving Amy, Jenny, and Richard a real virtual round of applause, a virtual round of applause.

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And most importantly, thank you to everyone who's joined us today, the attendees in investing and learning and being so engaged in this topic. Wow, the amount of Zoom reactions there is heartwarming. The team is going to pull up a quick poll to find out how you felt about today, which will help us continue improving our content.

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And we really do appreciate your response. So you should shortly see a poll there on a scale of one to 10 if you could rank your agreement with the statement, this event was a valuable use of my time.

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As I mentioned, the conversation isn't over today. We will keep sharing ideas and challenges and questions in the life and government community. And speaking of which, as a special thank you to everyone who attended today, we're giving you all access to one of apolitical's most popular resources.

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Public Servant's Guide to Better Meetings. It contains more tips, a meeting checklist you can use before, during, and after meetings, as well as a really handy meeting prep guide. So to get your link to the Guide to Better Meetings, if you just go to the Life and Government community and leave a comment, there's a post that I have made in that community pinned at the top of the community page and we will send you a link to the guide right after the event. My colleague just posting that link in the chat so you can go directly there.

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Okay, thank you so much, everyone. That is all we have time for today. We hope you found it really helpful.

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We want to say a huge thank you once again to everyone who's made today happen. And thank you so much for taking time out of your busy days. If you keep an eye out for the email coming your way with today's recording and resources, that'll be with you shortly.

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And we hope to see you at another apolitical event very soon. Have a great day.

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Goodbye