Don't make your meeting
a snoozer: How to engage
colleagues and clients

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Are meetings a "soul sucking waste of time," as a columnist for the British newspaper *The Guardian* suggests?[1] They could be if they're unproductive, boring, too many of them, or all of the above. The solution may lie in technology, if used properly.

"Technology is essential to innovating the conference call and boosting staff engagement," according to a Harvard Business Review column.[2] Video, for instance, may enhance "connectedness between participants" and help them see reactions to one another's ideas.[3]

Specific online or video conferencing features that may improve overall engagement include the ability to view multiple video feeds, screen sharing capabilities, document editing, or whiteboard tools and mobile accessibility.

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[1] The Guardian, "Meetings: even more of a soul-sucking waste of time than you thought," May 1, 2014.

[2,3] Harvard Business Review, "4 Ways to Make Conference Calls Less Terrible," Jan. 28, 2015

Video keeps participants focused

It's easy to become distracted during conference calls. Participants may use the time to check email, visit websites, or send text messages. The ability to see other participants via video not only discourages such behavior, it also enhances the online meeting experience. Face-to-face interaction helps participants understand through body language, develop workplace relationships, and resolve conflicts more effectively.[4]

The latest conferencing tools optimize the face-to-face experience by allowing users to view multiple video feeds simultaneously or in a full- or split-screen format.

Share applications or documents

Organizations typically favor in-person meetings when they need to share important documents or presentation materials. However, technology has brought participants closer to meeting materials than ever before. That's because screen sharing tools allow users to see the documents up close on their computer or mobile-device screens. Participants can view a media file such as a slide presentation or video without the need to launch special software or hardware. In addition, the host can transition control of the screen to another participant by using the share-the-presenter feature.

Mark up documents in real time

Another advantage that online meetings have over in-person meetings or teleconferences is document markup capabilities. Inviting participants to annotate a document in a large conference room isn't always practical. With advanced online meeting platforms, hosts can grant privileges to annotate, save, print, and display different views of the shared content. In addition, whiteboard sharing allows meeting hosts to draw objects and type text that all participants can see in their content viewers. They also can use a pointer to emphasize text or graphics on the whiteboard.

[4] Memphis Business Journal, "Face-to-face communication can help you accomplish business objectives," Aug. 29, 2013.

Make meetings mobile

Today's workforce is mobile. Many people feel a stronger connection to their mobile devices than any other method of communication. Organizations can make meetings more appealing to the mobile workforce by adopting meeting solutions that are available via mobile apps. Users can download apps that include "call-me" features, so instead of dialing-in to the meeting, they receive a call directly to their phone.

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