



Meetings • 4 mins read

10 (Realistic) Ways to Make Your Virtual Meetings More Interactive



Melissa Chua • May 14, 2020

You've been talking into a laptop camera for 10 minutes straight. You look over the faces of your fellow attendees on screen and they look bored, disengaged, or distracted. You ask a question and silence reigns, so you grit your teeth and barrel through your presentation, hoping to get things over as quickly as possible.

As **remote work** becomes the new normal, virtual meetings are now an integral part of employee engagement and interaction.

But virtual meetings have a prevailing pain point – without in-person interaction, it's harder to create a communal atmosphere and easier for people to get distracted and tune out.

In one [study](#) of in-person meetings, 91% of respondents admitted to daydreaming while 39% have even fallen asleep! Can you imagine the results for virtual meetings?

So how do you make virtual meetings more interactive?

First, make sure you [actually need](#) to hold a virtual meeting.

To get your attendees to interact, you need to ensure their voices and opinions are actually being solicited.

This means: cut the monologues. If you're making an announcement or sharing information that only requires your audience to listen, consider simply sending out an email.

Once a virtual meeting has been deemed necessary, try implementing these 10 realistic tips (read: does not require fancy new software or expensive meeting tools) to banish boredom, keep things interactive, and encourage participation.

1. Set expectations

Before the meeting even starts, allow attendees to get into the right mindset by setting expectations for their participation.

Present a problem in the agenda and ask everyone prepare and present ideas for solutions; request that all attendees be on video mode and in a quiet (or at least a

private) space during the meeting; and set ground rules for conduct, such as “thou shalt put away phones and not work on other tasks”.

2. Dedicate time to checking in

Remote work can get lonely and isolating, so take some time before the meeting proper to let everyone share what they've been up to. Ask them about the highlights of their week or what challenges they're currently facing. Better yet, get everyone to **show appreciation to their fellow colleagues**.

Social bonding keeps team members engaged and encourages creativity, teamwork, and collaboration, so be sure to cultivate it even when on virtual platforms.

3. Let people take ownership

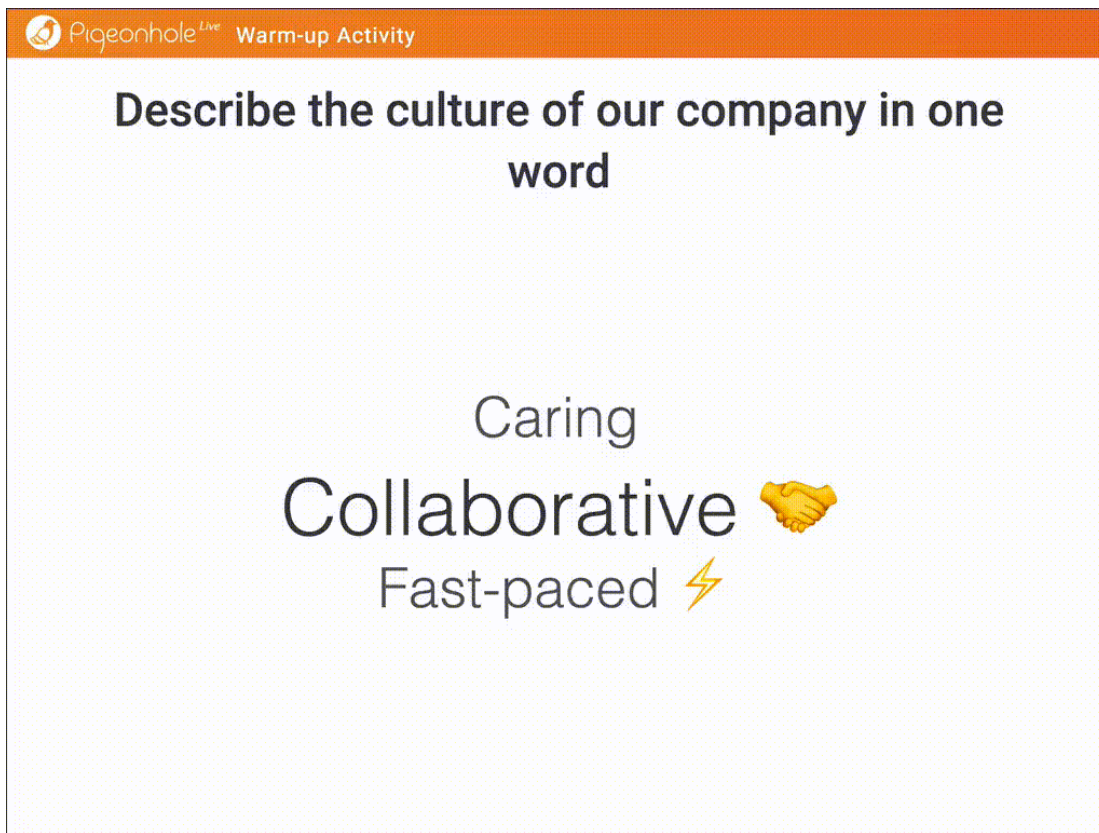
Assign people with tasks like time keeping, facilitating, and note taking. If you're running an ice breaker or conducting a warm up (see below), you can assign one of the attendees to be in charge.

Also, ensuring that **every attendee has a role** – whether it's decision maker, adviser, recommender, or executor – helps you keep meetings small, which is great because **the more people at a meeting, the less engaged each person will be**.

4. Start with an ice breaker

Jumpstart communication and break through awkwardness with **ice breakers!**

Conducting a fun ice breaker will help **activate the right brain**, set the stage for creativity and participation, and get your attendees comfortable with speaking and interacting with each other – the perfect conditions for an effective virtual meeting.



5. Jazz up your material

Did you know that visuals increase engagement by as much as **94%**? They also help increase audience attention and memory, boost feelings of inclusiveness, and encourage interaction.

Try using visuals throughout your meeting to give context, illustrate a point, or provide levity. If you have a presentation deck, here are some ideas on how to **leverage videos and photos to drive engagement** and capture your audience's attention.

6. Get physical

Simple warm up exercises are a great way to break through sluggishness and get people comfortable with interaction.

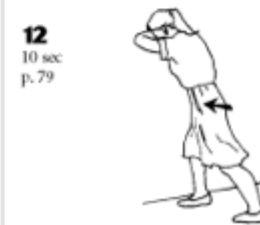
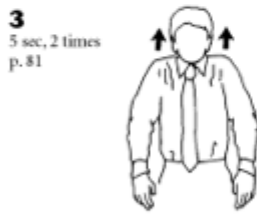
At the start of the meeting, try a unique **vocal warm up exercise** that will (literally) loosen up your attendees. Or take a break half way through and have everyone do some stretches for 2-3 minutes to relieve muscle tension and give the brain a jolt.

The University of California Irvine has a Guide to Healthy Meetings & Events that outlines some easy desk stretches.

DESK STRETCHES

These are stretches to do at your desk.
This program will take 2 1/2 – 3 min.

- Breathe easily
- No bouncing or forcing
- No pain!
- Feel the stretch
- Relax
- See Stretching Instructions, pp. 77-84



Source: UCI

Treat your virtual meetings like panel discussions and appoint a moderator to facilitate interaction and keep attendees engaged.

Like at a conference, the moderator's responsibilities in a virtual meeting can include calling on individual attendees to share their opinions; asking questions that provoke discussion; and managing everyone's talk time by keeping discussions on track.

8. Conduct fun interactive polls

Break the monotony with **live polls** and **surveys** and show off your results in real time. Beyond being a fun activity to keep your attendees engaged, polls and surveys can serve as a decision-making tool in virtual meetings, where attendees can vote on follow-up actions and next steps.

Try this out with Pigeonhole Live, which offers a huge range of polling and survey formats that are beautiful, fun, and interactive. Our platform even integrates seamlessly with many video conferencing tools, including **Zoom**, **Microsoft Teams**, **Cisco Webex**, and **BlueJeans**, which means added convenience for you.

9. Collate and collaborate

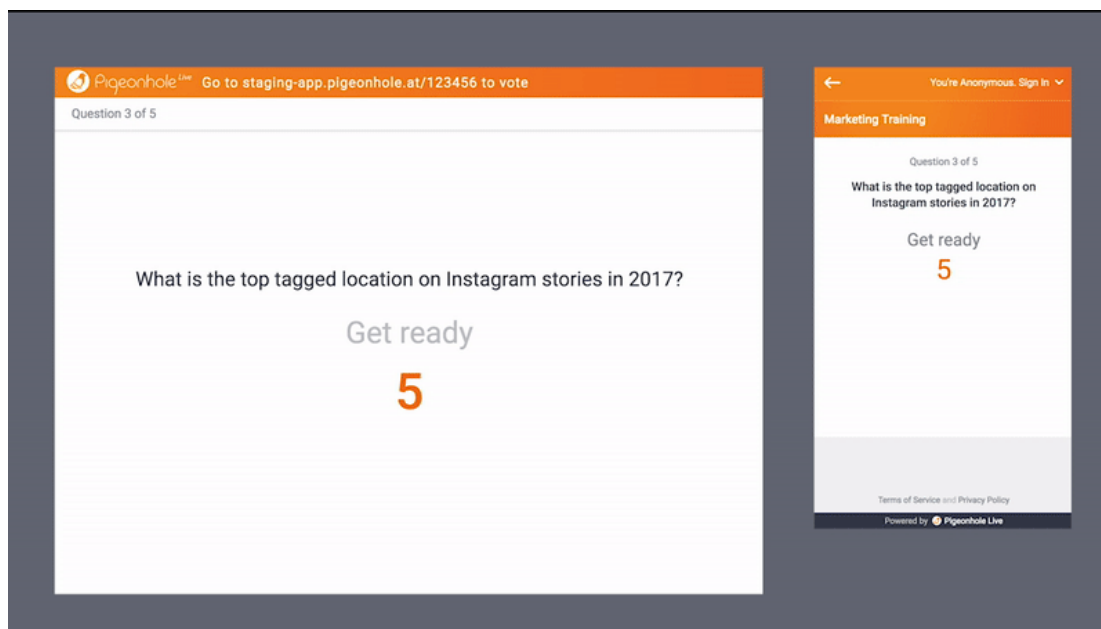
Actively soliciting ideas and getting people to collaborate is a sure-fire way to keep your virtual meetings interactive. There are lots of free digital tools to help you with this.

Conduct brainstorming on free virtual whiteboard apps or sticky note tools like [Miro](#) and [IdeaBoardz](#). Implement collective note-taking on Google Docs or [Confluence](#) so that everyone gets involved (and invested) in meeting outcomes.

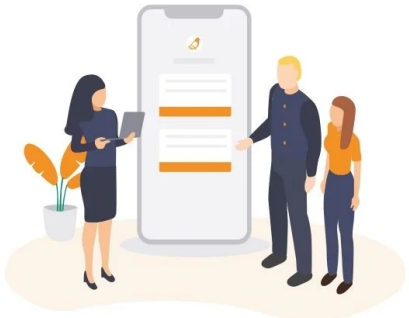
10. Use gamification

Gamification techniques are a good way to [embed two-way communication](#), [boost participation](#), and [incentivise active listening](#) in meetings, and it can be supremely easy to implement. Here are some ideas:

- Randomly insert Wally in your presentation slides and ask how many times he appeared at the end of the meeting
- Collect quotes from attendees throughout the meeting and conduct a “who said this?” quiz at the end
- Throw in some misspelled or incorrectly used words and phrases, and get people to list them down; the one(s) with the most correctly identified errors win(s)



Have fun and keep your energy up, and be sure to follow these other [simple tips for more effective virtual meetings!](#)



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