



CUTTINGS...

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Compiled and edited by Geof Cox

In the 'new normal' when we are all transitioning to working from home, learning from home, teaching our kids and where even our social communication is virtual, I thought it would be helpful to produce Cuttings monthly so that the relevant messages from the trade press get shared quickly...

The last edition summarised some of the content on remote management and helping newly created home workers. This time, some tips on presenting and running virtual classrooms, some of the drawbacks of too many online meetings, and how to make them more effective.

Enjoy...

Geof Cox

In this edition

Tips for virtual classrooms - some ideas from long term associate Ben Johnson and his colleagues who have been thrust into remote workshop delivery

Zoom drains your energy - some insights about why online meetings are tiring

Effective virtual meetings - timely tips from the MindTools team

Plus details of **Public Courses, Book Sales**, and a collection of **Snippets** to further provoke your thinking and reflection.

A Guide to Managing Your (Newly) Remote Workers

My long-time friend and associate Ben Johnson and his colleagues have, like many others, found that the Covid-19 pandemic has closed all the physical training and conference rooms, leaving them suddenly classless. Luckily, the same global trends that enabled the rapid spread of the virus also enable extensive use of virtual communications with worldwide reach. However, being an effective facilitator of multi-day events in the physical classroom is no guarantee of the same success in the virtual world. What do you need to change in order to come across as a competent and engaging professional?

Ben's article we look firstly at the 3 Cs: the fundamental differences between the physical and the virtual classroom, then the 4 Ps, for resolving them and finally some specific tips gathered from a selection of professional instructors and facilitators who have recently had to make the transition themselves.

Here is a summary of the 3 Cs: the fundamental differences*

1. Commitment In order to be present at the start of a physical class the participant has already done a lot to be there in terms of booking the event, travel and accommodation, travelled to the course location, found a suitable table, finally connected to the WiFi. So it is very unlikely that after all this effort they will stand up and walk out after the first few minutes. Not so in the virtual classroom, the effort is minimal: book the event, block the time, put on headset, log in. Disconnecting after a few minutes would be no great hardship.

2. Concentration Your own live presence, the size of the display screen, your natural charisma all add up to make the focal point of a physical event very

Snippets

A collection of thought provokers and quotations...

"Greatness and nearsightedness are incompatible. Meaningful achievement depends on lifting one's sights and pushing toward the horizon."

Daniel Pink

"Nothing is so permanent as a temporary government program"

Milton Friedman

"The achievement of one goal should be the starting point of another."

Alexander Graham Bell

"When we seek to discover the best in others, we somehow bring out the best in ourselves."

William Arthur Ward

clear. Distractions can be kept to a minimum. The presence of the other participants contributes to a "group concentration" effect. When the participants are alone at their respective desks concentration become much harder, especially maintaining it over a long period.

3. Comparison Invariably your virtual class will be via a computer screen. Unconsciously, and maybe unfairly, the participants will be comparing your performance with other things they see on a screen: which include thrilling TV series, blockbuster movies and award-winning adverts where even during the most erudite show the scene changes every 10 seconds in order to keep the viewer's attention on that screen. By comparison, your talking head does not compare favourably, nor does a slide that remains static for many minutes.

The 3Cs highlight the scope of the challenge, the 4 Ps show how to resolve the differences:

Preparation You probably prepare your physical classes meticulously, so this is not new. However, you do have the option in the physical classroom of running a very interactive, impromptu session to dig into a topic and you can see instantly who wants to contribute, who wants to object, who has doubts. This kind of spontaneous, focused interaction is highly appreciated by the participants and often shows your knowledge and experience being brought to bear on a subject. Unfortunately, this is almost impossible in the virtual classroom, especially if most of the participants are not using their mother tongue. To get all the information you normally pick up about the participants during informal discussions, you need to plan to capture early in the materials so the participants can instantly recognise that this is event about them.

Practice You must have an adequate knowledge of the platform you'll be using to deliver the virtual class, so be prepared to put in the time required. You can practice the basic functions, like using the drawing tools, on your own but enlist the help of a friend for other functions like muting and turning on mikes, screen sharing, switching delivery modes (presentation, video, document sharing) etc. Some platforms require the presence of a VCA, Virtual Classroom Assistant, to handle the participants, put them into breakout groups, organise content, retrieve output from the breakout sessions, set up polls and often much more besides. Teamwork with this person is a critical success factor. And, critically, have a complete run-through of all the different steps, and get an accurate estimation of the time you will need.

Participation The more the participants contribute the more it will be "their" event and the higher their attention level will be. Whatever the platform there will be multiple means of interaction, get to know them and find which one is best for any particular aspect of your course. CHAT is very good for getting multiple inputs in parallel, ticks and crosses can be used to agree or disagree, raised hand for someone who wants to make a comment.

In the physical classroom you can run an interactive lecture for maybe 30-40 minutes and then set an exercise or send the participants into breakout rooms for another 30 minutes. Cut all these into smaller sections 15-20 minutes interactive lecture and 10-15 minutes in the breakouts. This does require a lot more preparation: double the number of exercises/breakouts and the instructions that go with them. And these also need to be very precise.

Process Participants need to trust the process you are using to lead them towards their targets. If timekeeping is usually important in any training event it is critical in the VC. Start and end on the dot. This will quickly set up a pattern that the participants can and will fit into. Since you don't have walls on which to hang papers then review the agenda as a progress point, ask for ticks if everyone is happy or a raised hand if anyone has a question. If the process you are using builds steadily towards achieving the participants'

"Change comes more from managing the journey than from announcing the destination."

William Bridges

"To believe in something and not live it is dishonest. "

Mahatma Gandhi

"If I were to wish for anything, I should not wish for wealth and power, but for the passionate sense of the potential, for the eye which, ever young and ardent, sees the possible."

Soren Kierkegaard

"Who looks outside, dreams. Who looks inside, awakens."

Carl Jung

"The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and science. He to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer pause to wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead: his eyes are closed."

Albert Einstein

"Art is either plagiarism or revolution."

Paul Gauguin

"Rationality of thought imposes a limit on a person's concept of his relation to the cosmos."

John Forbes Nash

"If we listened to our intellect, we'd never have a love affair. We'd never have a friendship. We'd never go into business, because we'd be cynical. Well, that's nonsense. You've got to jump off cliffs all the time and build your wings on the way down."

Ray Bradbury

"Ideas are the factors that lift civilization. There is more dynamite in an idea than in many bombs. "

John Heyl Vincent

"A person is not a thing or a process but an opening through which the Absolute can manifest."

Heidegger

objectives, then the interest and attention will likewise build throughout the event. Case studies are a convenient way building links between topics and give a stronger focus to the course.

Conclusion

The 4 Ps are not new, these are things that any experienced facilitator will recognise. What we want to illustrate in this article is how to sharpen up your use of them to resolve the 3 Cs, the major differences between physical and virtual events.

**The 3 Cs were developed with the European Society of Cardiology in 2012 to help cardiologists understand and respond to the challenges of delivering a webinar as opposed to a live event.*

USEFUL LINKS

[Click here](#) to read the complete article by Ben Johnson

"It's the possibility of having a dream come true that makes life interesting."
Paul Coelho

"Maximising shareholder value [is] an ugly catch-all phrase that can be wheeled out as an excuse for doing absolutely anything."
Ben Lurance

"You must do the thing you think you cannot do."
Eleanor Roosevelt

"In a world of change, either you make history or you are history."
Douglas Atkin

Zoom Drains Your Energy

What makes video calling so tiring? And how can we reduce 'Zoom fatigue'? The BBC has contacted Gianpiero Petriglieri at Insead and Marissa Shuffler at Clemson University to hear their views.

Is video chat harder?

Being on a video call requires more focus than a face-to-face chat, because we need to work harder to process non-verbal cues like facial expressions, the tone and pitch of the voice, and body language; paying more attention to these consumes a lot of energy. Delays on phone or conferencing systems of 1.2 seconds made people perceive the responder as less friendly or focused. Silences - a natural rhythm in a real-life conversation creates anxiety about the technology. We are also very aware of being watched; it's very hard to not look at your own face on screen and be more conscious of how you behave.

How are the current circumstances contributing?

Our current circumstances – whether lockdown, quarantine, working from home or otherwise – provide extra stressors. The video call is a reminder of the freedom we have lost and the people we don't have contact with. Then there's the fact that aspects of our lives that used to be separate – work, friends, family – are all now happening in the same space. When these aspects are reduced, we become more vulnerable to negative feelings - we are confined in our own space, in the context of a very anxiety-provoking crisis, and our only space for interaction is a computer window. And it leads to overload - you are 'on duty' even when you are getting a social break. It doesn't matter whether you call it a virtual happy hour, it's a meeting, because we are using a 'work' tool.

So how can we alleviate Zoom fatigue?

Experts suggest limiting video calls to those that are necessary. Turning on the camera should be optional and not on all the time. Sharing work files with clear notes can be a better option than a video call. Spend time during meetings to catch up and check into people's wellbeing before diving into business. Build breaks and transition periods in between video meetings to exercise and to create buffers which allow us to put one identity aside and then go to another

Effective Virtual Meetings

Some basic tips collated by MindTools:

1. Use the Right Technology The best platform for a quick "check-in" can differ from the right one for decision-making. Keep in mind that video conferencing can provide participants with important nonverbal cues, but it can make some people feel uncomfortable.

2. Work on Specific Skills A virtual meeting's success often depends on the facilitator's, skills and their ability to use the tools in the virtual meeting software.

3. Spend Time Preparing Virtual meetings need more preparation than regular face-to-face ones. For example, how will you deal with conflict? What if software difficulties prevent team members from attending? Organise your information into 10-15 minute segments to keep everyone engaged. Try to limit the number of participants attending virtual meetings - this helps everyone to get involved.

4. Set Ground Rules to guide the behaviour of everyone attending. E.g., log in five minutes early; mute microphones to cut down on background noise; on an audio only calls state names before speaking.

5. Communicate with Virtual Reality in Mind Important cues from facial expressions and tone of voice are lost in virtual meetings. So, strengthen active listening skills: focus entirely on the person who is speaking' summarise

USEFUL LINKS

[Click here](#) to read the full article from BBC Worklife

more, communicate feelings through choice of words; give more process direction, e.g., "...introductions: Jan, you go first, followed by Bill".

USEFUL LINKS

[Click here](#) to see the full article from MindTools

Public Courses in SE Asia

New Directions runs a small number of public training programmes in Kuala Lumpur in association with petroEDGE. Click on the course date for further details. Hopefully we will be back in some form of 'normality' by then!

Human Competency & Capability Development 13-16 October

A 4 day course in human resource development strategy for the oil and gas sector.

Moving from Engineer to Manager 19-21 October

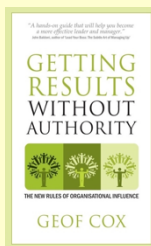
A 3 day programme to help engineers and those from a technical background take the first steps into management.

Cuttings

Cuttings is a bi-monthly collection of ideas and comments published elsewhere which have attracted my attention over the past couple of months. It is designed for readers who are interested in individual, organisation and management development and is free.

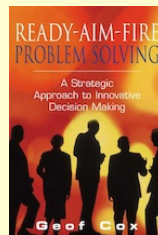
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