

Guidance for Employees

Meeting/Training Etiquette (when working in an agile way)

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Version control

This document is subject to regular review due to legislative and policy changes. The latest versions of all our publications can be found on our website. Before contacting us about the content of this document, we recommend that you refer to the most recent version on the website and any relevant guidance.

Version	Date approved	Approved by	Notes / changes
v1.0	23/05/2023	Cabinet	New guide

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Guidance – Meeting Etiquette (when working in an agile way)

Introduction

Agile working has become the new way of working with virtual meetings and training becoming an essential part of how the council maintains productivity and continuity. While virtual meetings/training has likely been a part the daily work routine for some time now, it's still easy to fall victim to some major meeting/training faux pas.

Like any other medium, there are differences between face-to-face meetings/training and online video meetings. As a result, virtual meeting and training etiquette differs slightly from standard business etiquette.

Employees need to pay attention to the etiquette that is expected of them, ensuring that the meeting is always productive, professional and effective at all times. Virtual space can be a distraction and employees need to be aware of this as they continue to work in an agile way.

This guide can be used to remind employees of the standards expected and will include some hints and tips and also the do's and don'ts. It is also useful for meeting hosts or trainers as they also have meeting etiquette responsibility.

Plan and Prepare

It is essential that you plan and prepare for your meeting/training in advance. This will mean ensuring that you have a quiet and appropriate place to be able to take part. Think about the location, and whether this is free from distraction and noise.

Ensure that the software and technology is up to date and that it has been loaded correctly, in readiness for the start of the meeting/training. Employees must also ensure they apply the corporate background images, stored with Microsoft Teams, when attending online external meetings.

Employees should also be conversant in how to use the software that is being used, including how to use the variety of functions. If employees are unaware of how to use the

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software, User guides are available on the ICT training hub on Linc. Employees should also seek additional guidance from their manager or colleagues.

Employees should ensure that they arrive at the virtual meeting/training on time as they would with any normal face to face meeting. Allowing enough time for them to be able to join and iron out any technological issues. It is also essential that employees are ready to take part in that meeting/training, ensuring that they read any pre-meeting papers or complete any pre-course work that may have been required.

Meeting hosts or trainers should also ensure that they send out the agenda or information in a timely manner and that the participants have had enough time to prepare.

Physical preparation

If face to face meeting/training was taking place employees would prepare physically, but getting up and moving so that they made their way to the meeting room/space. Employees would ensure that they take what they needed with them and got themselves ready. This same approach should be taken with any virtual meeting/training. Think about the area and the distractions – find a space where distractions are at a minimum so that everyone within that meeting/training can focus.

It may be that employees need to prepare physically by getting up from their normal workstation, stretched, get a drink, or log in from a different room. These examples may help to re-focus and get the mind to fully engage with the next meeting/training, and leaving behind the previous piece of work that they have been working on.

Dress Code

The council have a dress code which can be found in the Agile Working Policy, the Employee Handbook and details are contained within the terms and conditions of employment. Employees must ensure they dress appropriately for the meeting and the audience. Employees are representing the council during external meetings and therefore the corporate image must be upheld.

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Time Keeping

As with face-to-face sessions, please be on time and be respectful of other people's time. Don't log into the virtual meeting/training at the last moment, this is not professional and can be distracting for all.

It is also important that meetings/training does not go beyond the allocated time set aside. Meetings need to be well managed. Even the most focused attendees can find themselves tuning out when virtual meetings/training take too long.

Be Present

This means that the camera function is switched on. Employees need to be present at the meeting or training and ensure that they switch camera's on, unless there is a requirement to have them off.

It is also good practice that when a meeting/training is taking place that jabber system is turned to 'Meeting' or 'Do not disturb' mode, and that employees are present in that meeting/training and not instant messaging other attendees or colleagues. The same practice needs to be adhered to in relation to answering/checking emails and completing other pieces of work. This can be distracting for all attendees and employees might miss a crucial bit of information or an opportunity to give input.

Employees should avoid having meetings where possible in shared, open office spaces where possible as background noises can be off putting for all attendees. All employees should keep their microphones on mute when not speaking / participating in a conversation to avoid any additional background noise for the host and other attendees.

Leaving your seat during an online meeting and eating food should also be avoided.

Top 10 tips for effective online meetings

1. Embrace video calling. Being present and seeing each other is an important part of keeping connected. Don't hide away or do other work during the meeting.

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2. Use headsets or earphones. This will give better sound quality. Speak directly into the mic and remember to mute it when not speaking to limit background noise.
3. Speak clearly and steadily. This will help ensure everyone can understand you. And try to modulate your voice, to keep people interested and engaged.
4. Establish etiquette guidelines. Agree a system to give everyone a voice. Arrange 'hands up' signals to agree who speaks next and use chat functions to allow everyone to contribute.
5. Repeat the question. The chair or presenter should repeat questions they ask or before answering them, to ensure all participants are aware of the original question. Repeating the question in writing within a chat box could provide additional clarity.
6. Use names and give context. When responding to chat comments, repeat the relevant remarks and make clear who you're responding to. Don't just say 'yes, Jane that's right' because others may not have seen Jane's comment and it won't make sense to them.
7. Keep slides simple. Keep to a single thought per slide to help participants understand and focus on what's being discussed. It's better to have more slides with fewer things on them.
8. Keep slides visual. Your participants may be joining from a mobile device and wordy slides will be tough to read. Anchor your presentation on relevant, image-based slides.
9. Engage participants regularly. It's hard to simply listen online for a long time. Invite participants to give comments or ask questions, and use tools like chat or polls.
10. Be explicit about actions and summarise. Spell out clearly any actions that need to be taken and by whom. Summarise meeting takeaways and circulate notes promptly.