Elements of a Successful Online Event

Converting an in-person event to online is challenging and requires a lot of creativity. One important note is to consider the rationale behind components of your event. For example, if you normally start with an icebreaker or game, think about the 'why' behind that (generally, to make people feel more comfortable), and get creative about how you can accomplish that why without an in-person activity.

Furthermore, it is recommended that you follow this simple rule: **never show the backstage**. A staff gathering or one-on-one meeting can be more casual. However, for presentations and classes, it is important to maintain a professional look and style: practice beforehand (especially with polls and playing videos); have a neutral background; use a wired internet connection; use appropriate language; and most important of all, avoid over explaining just to fill empty space.

Upon logging in, make sure your name is listed correctly. If several people are sharing an account, this may automatically default to an office name. In Zoom, you can change your screen name in the Participant Window.

Welcome screen

- PowerPoint/Apple Keynote/Google Slides slide with "welcome" and any housekeeping information you would like participants to know, such as how to participate during the session (e.g., raising hands, using chat, etc.). If using Zoom, consider sharing the audio from your computer to provide background/gathering music. If recording the session, you can start it after the music is turned off to avoid copyright infringements.

Opening prayer

- Keep participants muted for this; encourage people to pray on their own.

Introductions

- Unmute participants one at a time to allow them to introduce themselves and share some kind of information, either fun or relevant (for example, "share your name, your parish, your position, and your favorite ice cream flavor"). You can also activate the individual webcams at this time.

Content

- Introduce your main speaker or content.
- Keep participants on mute during this time.
- You can encourage them to either use the chat window to ask questions or raise their hands to indicate that they have a question.

Small groups/breakout sessions

- The host/facilitator can break people into small groups randomly or manually.
- Give participants a specific time period that they will be in small groups so they can plan their time accordingly (for example: 15 minutes).
- Participants will also receive a notification that they have a set amount of time left (or you can change the default time) until they are returned to the main room.
- Prepare questions for discussion for the small groups and share these in the chat window before starting the small group sessions.
- If the breakout sessions are using the whiteboard, a screenshot of the work can be shared in the main room.

Polling

- If the facilitator would like to poll the participants, you can set it up during the meeting or ahead of the meeting. Then, when the poll is initiated, the facilitator sees the real-time data as it comes in and can share the results with everyone.

Q&A Sessions

- You can set these up to work through the chat window, through participants raising their hands, or through participants unmuting themselves to ask a question. (Recommended method: one of the first two options, unless you have a group of less than 10.)
- Remember to tell people how much time there is for the Q&A session and give the participants a reminder that "time is running out and this is the last question" on the last question.

Videos

- GoToMeeting is not able to share audio when playing videos, but it is something they are working on for a future version. If using this platform, paste the link (YouTube, etc.) in the chat window and invite participants to click on it at the same time. (GoToWebinar has the option of showing videos with audio.)
- Zoom and Google Meet allow playing videos with audio. In the Share Screen button, be sure that the "share computer audio" box is checked.

Handouts

- Handouts may be posted on your website, your shared drive, or emailed to them before the event (be careful with file size!).
- A link to the website or shared drive folder can be included in the registration confirmation. If you have enabled it in the Zoom settings, there is an option to

send the file within the chat window. However, it is recommended that the handouts be available for participants beforehand.

Closing prayer

- Wrap up the call with a closing prayer. Again, keep participants muted. If recording the session, you can stop after the prayer.

Wrapping up an online event

The facilitator/organizer should be the last person to leave an online event. Or, the facilitator could choose to end the event for all.

If you have an evaluation for the event, remember to post that in the chat window before the end of the event so that participants have a chance to fill it out directly after the meeting. It's also a good idea to send it in a follow-up email, along with additional handouts and resources.

Consider saving the chat conversation before closing the room for your records, to review any missed questions/comments, or to share with others.

Extra considerations

- Online events with youth and vulnerable populations
- Helping those who may not be comfortable on video platforms (both participants and presenters)