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Using asynchronous meetings to boost performance, accelerate results

Benefits

- ▶ Boost participation rate by making it easier to gather opinions and ideas from people any time, anywhere
- ▶ Sharpen the focus of real-time meetings
- ▶ Shorten time needed for synchronous meetings
- ▶ Enable members to learn about each other in advance
- ▶ Allow for anonymous contributions
- ▶ Summarize team responses so all can review quickly and move on to conversation

Success guidelines

- ▶ Use a tool that's widely accessible and easy to use. Avoid software that must be downloaded, especially if you're including people from outside of your own organization
- ▶ Send your invitation to participate at least four business days in advance. Make sure to include url, username, password and other important information
 - Offer an email address and phone number in your email invitation in case people have difficulty accessing or navigating
- ▶ Consider what kind of responses you need as you set up your asynch meeting
 - For example, if you're looking for a ranking or another type of quantifiable response, consider making a survey at least part of the asynch meeting. If you want to probe about certain issues, asking open-ended questions is more appropriate
- ▶ Ask questions clearly. In most cases, open-ended questions will yield richer results. Avoid compound questions. Test the wording in advance, especially if you're including non-native English speakers in your conference
- ▶ Determine which questions/segments will be anonymous, if any. A general rule of thumb: If a question or issue is likely to be contentious or sensitive, err on the side of anonymity. Some tools allow only the facilitator to see who says what
 - Be sure to let participants know which responses will be attributed and which will not

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- ▶ Limit the time needed to respond to no more than five questions and a total of 15 minutes to encourage participation. Though it may be tempting to solicit input on a whole host of topics, too many questions may scare people away
- ▶ Invite people to make introductions as part of the first question, and encourage them to attach photos of themselves in non-work situations. This will help create social capital, build relationships, and develop trust more quickly. Even when most people know each other, asking a question that will reveal something about themselves will help members to connect in new ways
 - Ask a different question as part of the intro section each time the group meets asynchronously, even when most or all already know each other
 - Examples: Ask participants to describe a favorite vacation spot, pastime, sport or a particularly memorable meal
- ▶ If you are using an asynchronous meeting prior to a face-to-face or same-time audio- or videoconference, include the relevant logistics in your virtual asynchronous meeting room
- ▶ Consider whether how you want to make the summary of responses available after the asynch meeting. For example, you may want to send the summary via email or post in a shared team site, or you may want to review a subset of the responses during a face-to-face meeting or a team phone conference

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