

## **Tips for creating and using questions to facilitate conversation**

- Excerpt from [Planning and Leading Exceptionally Engaging Virtual Meetings tips guide](#) by *Guided Insights*

### **#40**

Use open-ended questions when you want to probe more deeply or invite the active participation of someone who has been reticent to speak. However, keep a close eye on the clock, as open-ended questions can be construed as an invitation to talk, and talk, and talk. If you don't have time for everyone to answer, then be clear up front that you will be seeking responses from just a few.

### **#41**

Use close-ended questions to shift energy, re-engage participants, or move the conversation on. Examples: Fill in the blank to this statement with a single word. What top 2 things....? If you had just one wish, it would be ????. Close-ended questions can be answered more quickly. (You can also use an online conference area to capture responses to close-ended questions.)

### **#42**

Vary the way you ask questions, call on people in a different way, or use a different order each time to keep people alert and engaged. Always start the question with a person's name to get his/her attention first. That way, you won't have to waste valuable meeting time repeating the question, which can also embarrass the participant who may have tending to another task.

### **#43**

If you sense that people are disengaged or restless, pause for a temperature check. This can be as simple as asking everyone to offer one adjective to describe how they're feeling. Some virtual meeting tools make it easy to take a quick vote. You might set up a simple 1-5 scale, asking people to rate their energy level, provide feedback as to how well the meeting is meeting objectives, or to gauge their relative sense of excitement for the topic at hand.

### **#47**

Keep people engaged with interesting and relevant topics and a chance for real discussion. This means having a well-orchestrated agenda, complete with open-ended questions, in advance. Anticipate the length of each response, and make sure you have enough time to hear from everyone.

### **#52**

If someone appears distracted, gently let that person know how important their perspectives and ideas are. (This can also be a good time to remind everyone about the ground rules.) Let the person know how their active participation will enable the group to reach its goals within the allotted time. Once you have that person's attention, ask a question that reflects your understanding of his/her background and experiences to draw that busy person into the conversation and away from their distractions. (Example: "Peter, I am sure that others would love to hear about your lessons learned while working in China recently. Did you experience some of those same scenarios that Miranda just described?")