

5 SKILLS OF MASTER VIRTUAL FACILITATORS

HOW DO YOU MEASURE UP?

**Set
Expectations**

**Start
Strong**

**Create a
Shared
Experience**

**Show Up
Well**

**Seamless
Tech**

How To Create an Interactive & Engaging Experience

1 **Set Expectations** (before & at the start). Let learners know the expectations in advance. Remind them of these expectations at the start. Get creative with ways to communicate and set the stage for an interactive program.

2 **Start Strong.** Have something on screen that captures attention and gets everyone looking at the virtual platform. Use a “soft” opening in virtual events to get remote learners engaged right away. If you must use a title slide, include a “call to action” on it. Then start with immediate interaction. Ask a simple question and invite reactions to it. Or use a poll question to gather learner input. Focus on the learners within the first 2-3 minutes, even before sharing too many administrative details.

3 **Create a Shared Experience** Every participant in the event needs to learn and apply the content. Create an inclusive online environment by continually inviting everyone to participate. Use phrases like “raise hand if you have a question, click on the smile reaction if not.” and “there are 10 of you, so lets get 10 responses in chat.” Help everyone have a voice in the virtual learning experience.

4 **Show up Well** (audio + video). Present yourself with professional confidence and poise. Research shows that your credibility can be affected by your audio quality, so make the most of your voice. Increase trust and improve accessibility by staying visible on webcam with clear lighting and positioning.

5 **Seamlessly use the Tech.** Make frequent use of the robust virtual classroom tools, including chat, polling, reactions, whiteboards, and breakouts. Invite interaction every few minutes with quick, simple, and meaningful touchpoints. Have ‘tool tip’ instructions available as needed. If/when the tech doesn’t work as expected, adapt and modify by going to Plan B or C.

COMMON FACILITATION MISTAKES

#1: Using “I” or “me” statements instead of “we” or “us” words:

- “Give me a ‘raise hand’ if...” VS
- “Click on ‘raise hand’

#2: Speaking too quickly after asking a question:

- Participants need time to think and then respond. Give them silence and space to do so.

Creating Inclusive Dialogue

Effective virtual training engages learners, creates a comfortable space for dialogue, and allows for collaboration. Use these tips to create space for participant input:

- Start a conversation by asking a pointed question, with specific instructions on how to respond (i.e. *"If you have a question, click on 'raise hand.' If not, just click on 'no.'"* or *"On a scale from 1-10, with 10 being the highest, how comfortable are you with this decision? Type your number in chat."*) Then ask relevant follow on questions.
- Frequently use attendee names throughout the session. Use names in examples, refer back to something said or typed earlier, and say names when talking.

How to Show up Well on Webcam

Use live video to build trust and create community, anytime there's enough bandwidth available. Ensure the following:

- A (angle) Place camera at eye level
- B (background) Use a non-distracting background (virtual, natural, or blurred)
- C (clarity) Put light in front of you (not behind) for a clearly seen video
- D (distance) Center yourself in the video frame, remembering the "rule of thirds"
- E (eye contact) Use the camera lens as your primary focal point.

A Sample Audience-Focused Opening

"Hello my name is Layla. It's great to see everyone today!"

"Let's find out more about each other, click on 'raise hand' if you've been with our company for more than 12 months. (acknowledge responses). Keep them raised if you've been here more than 24 months. (acknowledge & invite to lower hands.)"

We have many locations represented today. Please share in Chat: your name, your role and location.

{invite participants to use the chat reactions on each others' comments. Also invite 2 or 3 to speak & elaborate on their comments, creating conversation & dialogue...}

"As you know, we'll be focused on topic XYZ today. Here's a poll question to discover which of these topics you are most interested in exploring..."

TIPS TO CREATE YOUR BEST VOICE

- Use the right volume
- Stand up or sit with your best posture
- Exude enthusiasm and energy
- Exaggerate your voice
- End strong, don't trail off
- Drink room temperature water
- Record yourself and listen: how do you sound?

ABOUT CINDY HUGGETT:

Cindy is the author of six books on virtual training, including *Virtual Training Tools & Templates, 2nd ed*, *Designing Virtual Learning for Application and Impact*, and *The Facilitator's Guide to Immersive, Blended & Hybrid Learning*.

She helps trainers, designers, and organizations create engaging online learning through workshops and expert consultations.

Email her to request help with your virtual programs: cindy@cindyhuggett.com

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