



ENGAGING A VIRTUAL AUDIENCE

As host of a virtual session, you might think you've got the most stressful role in the 'room'. But unlike your audience, you control the format. Unclear rules of engagement, risk causing anxiety, as attendees try to navigate what, for them, is an uncertain environment. What's obvious to you, might not be to them. By remembering to answer these 5 questions that the audience is likely to be thinking, you can reassure them. Meaning they'll spend more time on the content & less time worrying.



WHY AM I HERE?

Don't assume your virtual audience understands why you've invited them, or why the subject you're covering is relevant to them. Provide a practical, rather than theoretical explanation for why they're there & why the content is important to their work and role, in a very personal context. Avoid presenter-centric explanations ("*to learn a regulation*") & find audience-friendly ones ("*to make sure you don't inadvertently pay a bribe*").



WHY IS THIS 'LIVE'?

Not all virtual sessions need to be 'live'. If you're asking your audience to tune in for a 'virtual interaction' at a specific time, instead of making it 'on demand', explain why. If the only reason is to allow Q&A, then there may be other options (eg. 'on demand' training & 'live' Q&A)



WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW?

Be crystal clear with your audience about the level of understanding you'll expect them to have by the end of the session & how they'll know they've achieved it. Remember, they may be 'back to back,' with no gaps between their previous & next virtual meeting, so help them transition to and from your session.



DO I NEED MY CAMERA ON?

Cameras are great for building rapport. They can also be highly distracting and cause 'Zoom fatigue'. Be clear with attendees when they need to have their cameras on to engage with each other and when they should switch them off to allow them to focus on your content. Giving people the option to switch their camera off, doesn't mean they will; so enforce this to normalize it.



HOW DO I ASK QUESTIONS?

Asking questions is much harder in a virtual setting, because the rules of engagement aren't obvious. Be clear up front about how & when attendees can ask them. When answering, remember that Q&A 'boxes' often rank questions in chronological order; so you may find more thoughtful questions at the end of the list, from later in the session.