



Get Energized! Create Energy in Your Virtual Meetings

Engage people and spur them to action even if you aren't connecting in person.

By Angela DeFinis

Whether you're new to working remotely or have been doing it for years, you know one thing is true: Meeting via Zoom and other online platforms can be a challenge. Many professionals feel that online meetings lack the excitement and passion that comes naturally during face-to-face communication. And they're right!

Energy is contagious. When you're speaking to a live audience, your adrenaline is high and your words reflect that excitement. Unfortunately, it's difficult to mimic that feeling when you're speaking on Zoom in your bedroom with your snoozing cat stretched out on your bed. In that instance

you might feel "sleepy" too. While stillness and calm are great skills to use for your meditation practice, they won't win the hearts of your listener on any virtual platform.

So, what's the secret to high-impact virtual meetings? Use more energy! Create a stimulating virtual meeting by infusing excitement into both your content and your delivery. Here are a few energy-boosting tips to keep in mind:

Make time to prepare your content.

Develop your virtual-meeting content the same way you would for a live meeting – well in advance. Don't let the casual physical environment of home dictate a laissez-faire attitude. If you don't plan, you and your message may sound disorganized and unconvincing. Structure your virtual presentation in three distinct parts:

Plan a dynamic opening. Start with a "hook," establish a clear purpose, and develop an agenda.

“Plan disruptions as part of your content.”

“Develop a system of “red, yellow, green.””

Develop the body – the “meat in the middle” where the action really happens – by including stories, examples, data, statistics, and graphs.

Summarize what you’ve covered, and ask for action.

The way you structure your message is critical not only to helping your listeners follow along but also to keeping them engaged and connected.

Disrupt the pattern.

Pattern disruption is a concept that works well in virtual meetings. The idea is to disrupt the normal flow of information so that listeners are taken by surprise or jolted out of their complacency.

Because of the flat 2D format, virtual meetings have to be “made” exciting. Pattern disruption is one strategy that never fails.

What can you do to disrupt the ever-boring nature of the predictable “data dump” presentation? Tell a vivid story, share a startling statistic, show a mind-altering image, raise your voice, or quicken your pace.

Plan these disruptions as part of your content. Aim to disrupt the pattern every four minutes or so.

Prime the energy pump.

Your physical, vocal, and verbal skills will go a long way in helping you create and maintain energy throughout your virtual meeting. Use them!

Before your meeting, jump-start your physical and vocal energy by warming up. Speak in a loud voice, practice tongue twisters, sing a song, take a walk outside or around your house, go up and down stairs, make faces in the mirror, do anything you can to get your heart rate and your energy up.

And don’t forget to smile and raise your eyebrows right before you sign on. If you’re happy, tell your face!

Organize & clean out your work space.

Clutter is energy draining; organization is energy boosting. Therefore, remove all coffee cups, golf clubs, electric guitars, dog beds, dirty laundry, stacks of paper, games, and puzzles.

Create *one area*, no matter how small, that is yours and that you can keep organized, neat, and clean. If you can’t keep a neat space, use a green screen background of a “faux” organized office space.

Set boundaries on work time.

Family or housemates can be a big energy drain when you’re in a virtual meeting. Work with them to develop a system of “red, yellow, green” and announce what kind of meeting you are entering:

Red is highly important so everyone needs to be quiet and not interrupt.

Yellow is less important, but quiet is still required.

Green means you’re talking to a close colleague, so it won’t be a problem if someone walks into your space.

Setting boundaries with a color code will help everyone know the rules and follow them. When you don’t have to focus on anyone else, you can concentrate on sustaining your energy throughout the meeting.

Use these time-tested tools.

In virtual meetings, you can’t depend on outside energy to give you the boost you need. But you can use the time-tested tools of planning, preparation, and practice to help do the job for you. Use these tools. And whatever you do, don’t let the cat fall asleep in your workspace. 

Angela DeFinis is president of DeFinis Communications (definiscommunications.com), which offers executive speech coaching, presentation skills training, and virtual video conferencing training, helping people become poised, polished, and powerful communicators capable of leading effective meetings and delivering compelling presentations.

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