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30. GROUP MANAGEMENT

How to manage time in distance meetings

CONTEXT

One of the main concerns when leading a distance meeting is managing time effectively. Very often, people become overly focused on fitting everything into the designated time slot that the goal of the meeting might be forgotten. This creates a vicious circle of poorly led meetings, leading to more people showing up late or leaving early.

THEORETICAL BASIS

Time management is a central issue in all group sessions and meetings as one can never know if they have enough time to do all those things that ought to be done. The group leader should carefully coordinate the session so that time is not wasted and every activity goes smoothly. Managing the session at a distance can be done through different platforms (e.g. sending a timed agenda in advance) and IT tools. The group leader can also use chat and emoticons that many synchronous virtual platforms offer and ask for a reaction to a question so that the whole group can participate.

ACTIVITY IN A NUTSHELL

Good time planning will help you have a more productive meeting. In many cases, participants cannot stay longer than planned because they must attend other virtual meetings.

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CONTACT TYPE

Online

TIME NEEDED

10-30 minutes

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS

Over 3

ACTIVITY TYPE

Group work

TARGET GROUP

- All target groups

VARIATION OF THE ACTIVITY

From time to time, if there is time left from the meeting, an engaging and energising game
from the other 35 cards could be used. However, sometimes, the participants might appreciate leaving the meeting on time
or even earlier.

Goal

- To manage time during virtual meetings.
- To make meetings as manageable, inclusive, and time bound as possible.

How to prepare

- Share the agenda in advance so that participants know what to expect from the meeting and how much time to dedicate to it.
- For larger meetings, assign a co-host who can help you to let people in, manage microphones, create breakout rooms, follow the chat, etc.
- To create cohesion in the group, the role of the co-host should vary from meeting to meeting, if possible.

Activity step by step

1. Share the agenda at the beginning of the meeting so that everyone can see it.
2. Ask the participants whether there are items on the list that need more time for discussion or whether there is something that should be moved to another meeting.
3. Ask them whether the order of the agenda suits everyone (e.g. if someone must leave the meeting before the end).
4. Assign a co-host to watch the time for you for each topic.
5. As the original time nears its end, the co-host should check with participants whether they have accomplished what was set out.
6. Decide the next co-host at the end of the meeting.