

Digital Delivery: Advice for online sessions & workshops

With less than 2 days' notice, and very little online experience previously, we transformed a residential face-to-face workshop into a 'Virtual Workshop'. We delivered digital sessions across 8 countries, reaching 30 people, for 10 days. We share **10 key lessons learned** below:



1) Online sessions require greater direction than the classroom situation, which everyone can draw from body language clues. There needs to be an **Online Facilitator** (who may be the session presenter) who fills the 'dead space', actively invites contributions from the participants and who conducts the proceedings. 'Dead space' is very short online! Be prepared to fill it. Also, have a **'Technical Support' person** to manage the Chat, software and screen sharing.

Digital Delivery takes Two!



2) Managing discussions: it may take more time for some people's contributions to be heard and it might be difficult to work out the order of contributions. So, make use of the **Raised Hand** icon in Zoom, or equivalent, or **agree an order in advance** for discussions if the platform does not have icons – this could be alpha order or simply dictated by the Online Facilitator (see above). Arrange online groups in advance too.



3) One of the advantages of online sessions, especially if the digital channel is left open, is that participants can move in and out of the session with little or no disturbance. However, switching between speakers and/or between sessions requires a verbal signpost and linking for the participants – a bit like a DJ links tracks with an 'intro' and 'outro'.

4) Appoint a Chat-box notetaker at the beginning of each session to take live notes (it could be a volunteer, but probably best not the facilitator). If participants lose connectivity, it will make it easier for them to pick up the discussion when they re-join. The notes in the Chat-box can also be saved for participants to refer to later.



5) Participants need regular breaks – icebreakers, energisers and exercise - probably every **30 minutes** or at the **beginning, middle and end of a longer session**. Online Facilitators need to build these into their sessions. They can be simple things such as physical clapping, standing up and wiggling at the computer, an online quiz, polls and voting emojis. Using external software like [Vevox](#) or [Menti](#) will add variety to the session.

The longer the session, the more physical these interrupters may need to be!

6) Ask questions or for an online response **regularly**, ideally every 3 minutes or for a short approval /response at the end of each slide in a presentation! This will make the session feel more interactive.



7) Mix up the content! For **creative interactions** use online polls; insert videos and pictures; and switch to other websites or software during the session. Ask participants to download materials from a shared space, and to upload documents and photos to share with the group. We asked for photos of work, local weather and participants' desks! When everyone is more confident about working in this way, you can work collectively on the same document – live.

8) Participants need to feel an 'emotional' attachment to each other. Seeing each other momentarily by taking turns in switching on video cameras and/or audio to wave or say 'hello', especially if the internet bandwidth is limited, will make a session feel less anonymous. In smaller groups, everyone can probably have their video on.



9) Appoint Offline Facilitators – or ask for volunteers. They will help to hold everything together and can build on online discussions, embed learning, and act as sounding boards. They act as the glue! **Give priority, in designing sessions, to offline (asynchronous) activities** – as these will take much longer than in a face-to-face session.

10) Have a consistent structure and pedagogy/andragogy, especially if holding more than one day of digital delivery. We began each day with a Daily Update, a wave to each other, and local weather reports.

The **pace of digital delivery is slower**, which is a good thing i.e. **45 minutes online** followed by **20 minutes break; 1 hour online** and **30 minutes break**; and if online for **2 hours**, then follow it with **an hour break**.



Digital delivery necessitates: **Patience** (with each other), **Tolerance** (of poor connectivity) & **Commitment** (to participate).