12

Best Practices

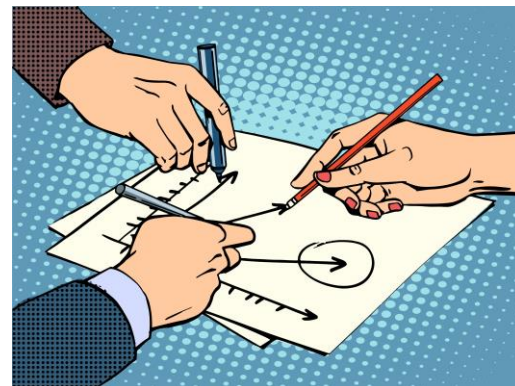## for Virtual Meetings

to Healthcare Professionals

A Whitepaper by MedPoint Digital

Virtual Meetings to Healthcare Professionals are very distinct from internal virtual meetings, requiring a different solution than self-service web conferencing. These external meetings often involve top-tier physicians who demand productive use of their time and deserve white-glove support. Today, most biopharm companies are converting on-site events into virtual meetings, including Investigator Meetings and Advisory Boards. For these multi-hour VIP events, it can be especially challenging to hold participant attention and achieve meeting goals.

This Whitepaper outlines best practices garnered over 27 years and thousands of virtual meetings for the biopharm industry. For more information, please contact MedPoint Digital at +1-847-440-9555 or info@medpt.com.

1. Sharpen Your Plan

Every successful virtual event begins with a solid plan based on the unique character and goals of each project. The effectiveness of best practices outlined in this Whitepaper depends on careful planning, and there are numerous variables and options to consider. A virtual meeting specialist has the skills and experience to make recommendations and guide you through a comprehensive planning process.

2. It Starts with Invitations

Inviting and confirming participants usually defines the critical path for virtual meetings. Generally, medical professionals need 5-6 weeks or longer lead time; any less and attendance can be diminished by scheduling conflicts. If you're under 5 weeks, get going as soon as you can, at least with a save-the-date message. Timely communications and individual follow-up are essential to maximize attendance for short-term meetings. If you already have invitees confirmed to an on-site meeting, you're in good shape!

3. Keep Participation Simple

It's no secret that physicians tend to have little tolerance for complicated or glitchy processes. That applies to registering, joining and participating in a virtual meeting. Make sure that you select an intuitive, reliable platform with a simple, seamless registration and logon process for users. And no matter how easy the process, some medical audience members will require hand-holding, so the Help Desk supporting your event must be highly available and responsive.

4. Focus on Engagement

The most important element for the success of a virtual meeting is effectively engaging the participants. This is especially true for medical professionals, who are highly educated and learn by active engagement. Luckily, many virtual meeting platforms incorporate interactive functions such as polling, surveys, text, feedback and gamification. Such tools can enhance the interactive experience, even for meetings with large audiences. Skillful planning and application of these tools is needed to enhance rather than disrupt a natural meeting flow.

5. Pre-Produce Each Event

Engagement tools and other best practices don't just happen; they require meticulous planning and skilled pre-production. Virtual meeting platforms need to be pre-populated with layouts and apps for slides, video, media, documents, etc. For busy VIP presenters, proactive project management is needed to drive basic preparations such as polling questions and slide optimization. To ensure a seamless meeting flow, the moderator should work from a prepared script of housekeeping notes, introductions and event transitions.

6. Use Live Video and Multimedia

Live webcam video enhances an all-important sense of personal connection among speakers and participants. Although some presenters may push back, live video should be used extensively, including hi-def video feeds and multiple video panel sessions. Virtual meeting platforms also support a full range of media, including pre-recorded video and scientific animations. To enhance the participant experience, every virtual meeting can benefit from a plan for optimized video and multimedia.

7. Optimize Q&A

Question & Answer sessions are among the most interesting and informative parts of a virtual meeting. For large virtual audiences, questions are usually submitted by text, which can be daunting when managing potentially hundreds of in-coming questions. To handle this requires a thorough plan on use of technology and coordinated teamwork to review, vet and organize questions. Done correctly, this process can result in seamless sessions with the most relevant questions cleanly handed off to an expert panel for comment.

8. Tighten Up on Time

No matter how well produced, virtual meetings tend to wear more on the attention span of participants, especially for multi-hour virtual programs. Measures should be taken to condense material and shorten the duration of virtual meetings relative to on-site events. Tactics include encouraging presenters to be succinct and allotting them 20% less time. Meetings sponsors should consider moving less vital topics off the meeting agenda, possibly making them available as pre-read assignments or online learning modules. And professional moderators can be instrumental in starting on time and maintaining a brisk meeting pace.

9. Break Away from Slides

Long, slide-heavy virtual meetings have become notorious as "death-by-PowerPoint," and the risk of losing audiences to a monotonous experience is real. The best way to combat this is to break out of the slide paradigm and alleviate audiences with a variety of materials. This includes document viewing (instead of slides about documents) and live website screen sharing (instead of screen captures on slides). Movement between slides, documents and screen sharing could go awry and needs to be deftly executed. But done well, moving from slides to other media will be received as a welcome change.

10. Conduct Team Rehearsals

Team rehearsals help identify any disconnects or gaps in upcoming virtual events and are a core best practice. But in the daily rush of business, rehearsals can be tempting to forego, especially by busy VIP presenters. It's important to position rehearsals as mandatory and to remind presenters that the virtual format is saving them a full day or more of travel time. It's also important to maintain separation between a team rehearsal and a slide review; the former is a time-efficient walk-through of the virtual event, while the later is a more intensive and prolonged exercise in critical review of each presentation.

11. Track Participation

For many reasons, it's important to track and capture data on participation in virtual events. This can be done in real time, to confirm that attendees are paying attention, and give them channels for real-time feedback. It's also important after the event, to capture valid detailed data on attendance, participation and responses. Data at the individual level can include logon/logoff, polling responses, text questions, active screen time, feedback meters, and responses to surveys and gamification.

12. Provide Global Support

Biopharm commercial and research activities span all regions of the world, and virtual meetings that connect global participants pose special challenges. This can be as obvious as coordinating across time zones, or as subtle as cultural factors in communications. Best practices include coaching presenters to speak more clearly and hosting virtual breakout groups by country or language. Non-English and English-as-a-second language speakers require accommodation, and virtual meetings can support pre-translated materials, simultaneous translation and auto-translation technology.

Bonus Best Practice!

#13. Work with Professionals

Planning, pre-production, invitations, team rehearsals, event execution and more – it adds up to a lot of work! Your virtual event will benefit greatly from a team with the specialized skills and a proactive service model that takes the burden off hosts and presenters. MedPoint Digital has produced virtual meetings exclusively for the biopharm industry for 27 years and brings unrivaled excellence to client programs. We wrote the book on best practices! To experience an elevated virtual meeting, please contact us for a demo.

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