

13 Steps for Energizing Virtual Events- Live, Interactive Growth Zone Webinar with Engagement

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August 2020 Notes

Thank you so much for participating in the 13 Steps for Energizing Virtual Events webinar. I loved co-creating and learning with you!

In the pages below, you'll find the notes I promised and everything we brainstormed from both the August 27th and 31st sessions (you get double the goodness). Read on for icebreaker ideas, the 13 steps, an extensive Q&A, and all the fun stuff (books, trips, shows). Enjoy!

Planning your next virtual meeting

Before you plan the agenda

As you are setting the stage and planning the agenda, think not only about the content but also how you want members to feel.

How would you like members to feel after attending your next virtual meeting? Here are some words that inspired you.

Accomplished	Informed	Respected
Accepted	Inspired	Supported
Connected	Educated	Like they want to come back
Welcomed	Energized	Engaged
That they accomplished something	Uplifted	Motivated
Happy	Satisfied	At ease
Fired up	Included	Valued
Looking forward to the next one!	Prepared	Positive
Excited	Productive	

Introductions and icebreakers

You can do icebreakers or mid-meeting energizers by playing games and asking all sorts of questions like:

- What is a paradise for you?
- What was one of your first jobs?
- What has been your biggest adventure so far?
- What are some of your self-care techniques right now?
- What got you interested in this profession or industry?
- Find more icebreakers, games, activities, and energizers at [Playmeo.com](https://playmeo.com).

Engaging and meaningful things we've seen in virtual meetings that we might be able to adapt to our virtual member meetings

- Editor Happy Hours where PR folks and Editors are meeting in small groups and just chatting about anything
- Speed networking event utilizing the breakout rooms
- Videos
- What skill do you have that nobody would expect
- Utilizing polls
- Virtual tradeshows
- Attended online funeral -- it was beautiful
- I shared the beach party at ASAE where you could make your avatar dance, and you could chat with people next to you and go for a boat ride
- Kids joining in during a work meeting
- Icebreaker - "if you were a vegetable, what would you be and why?"
- App.piccles.com (an ice breaker that allows participants to draw their response) -- PCMA event last week.
- Icebreakers for the breakout rooms
- Prizes
- Mom's 83rd birthday!
- Virtual Baptism outdoors in NC shared throughout the country
- My very first zoom meeting. To see people's expressions.
- Avatars - dancing
- Gamification - prom pictures at happy hour. Guess Who?
- A successful networking event, when members were eager to provide referrals and testimonials for guests
- We did a Quarantine Mixer on Zoom - everyone ordered in from their favourite local restaurant and grabbed a bottle of their favourite local wine (we're a wine region) and we celebrated by 40th B-day at the same time
- We also used Zoom to record a series of Biz Banter interviews with our members, which were then shared on our social media channels - we discussed the challenges and also the innovations that have come as a result of the pandemic and how services/products have adapted to continue serving the community

- Zoom Cocktail Hour
- Using polls for voting...quick, easy
- Using breakout rooms for strategic planning
- We liked how people are using virtual backgrounds
- We had them find certain items, whoever showed the item first won a gift card
- Internal ATHENA award presentation of 'handing over' the award
- Polls, giveaways, panelists
- Having a local bartender teach a cocktail making class a small portion of a virtual happy hour
- Show and tell icebreaker. Run and Find something in your home or office that tells others about you
- Using rooms for separate focus groups
- Breakout rooms for speed networking!
- Polling every 5-7 minutes to keep members engaged.
- Playing a quick game as a group to get people more comfortable interacting with each other
- Cooking/Recipe themed Mixer
- Use Slido for polling
- Using a riddle to kick off a team meeting and saving the answer for the end of the meeting. Gets people guessing what the answer is during the meeting and gets them engaged early
- Simple but I really like polls during webinars/calls
- We did a trivia competition in breakout rooms. We kept the rooms random and let people who don't normally connect with each other work together on trivia questions.
- Zoom cocktail hour was attended well
- Asked guests to share a place they had never visited in our town
- Zoom bingo
- Online yoga class
- Successfully hosted a 2-session virtual community engagement summit, 10-12 ideas to better our community while keeping youth in mind
- Trivia party
- Virtual escape room
- Wheelofnames.com for prizes
- Speed Networking to discuss different ideas - I remember, "what was one thing you could not live without and why?"
- Virtual trivia game
- I saw a person use an embedded code within a presentation where someone could text words that populated on the presenter's screen
- We had one of our gyms that led us in an exercise, loads of fun.
- Yoga and Pilates classes
- Business After Hours
- Beer and Bingo

- Having different business and community leaders as a guest speaker at our various events
- PowerPoint Party - where everyone prepared 2-3 slides they shared
- We had a Cinco de Mayo event with demonstrations of how to make nachos and margaritas
- Brew and Who?
- Breakout rooms are great for Scattergories with teams.

13 Steps for creating collaborative member meetings

- STEP #1: Orient attendees before the meeting – sending an email in advance helps participants prepare, know what to expect, and sets the tone.
- STEP #2: Make sure participants know how to use the features and tools by giving them a quick tour of where they are and how they work.
- STEP #3: Create the habit of participation early in the meeting by providing opportunities to interact right away. Posing timely/interesting questions that everyone can participate in is one way to do this.
- STEP #4: Set expectations so everyone can have a great experience, i.e., cameras on and mics off in big groups, and demonstrate many ways to participate.
- STEP #5: Alternate and try lots of methods of engagement – chat, visual ques, breakout groups, shared documents, etc.
- STEP #6: Ask participants to interact progressively, start with little asks like "give me a thumbs up" or type into the chat before asking people to hop off of mute.
- STEP #7: Architect ways for people to share something new about themselves, like ask about books, travel, or what the biggest adventure they've been on so far.
- STEP #8: Use breakout groups to get deeper participant interaction when there are many participants in the meeting. Set breakout groups to 3-6 participants and use this format to dig deeper into topics, and use it for brainstorming, roundtable discussions, or mentoring.
- STEP #9: Plan how to debrief the big group after the small team breakouts. The usual spokesperson method might get boring in the virtual setting, but they could type notes into a shared document or chat.
- STEP #10: Think about the tone you want to set. If it is appropriate, have fun!
- STEP #11: Welcome kids and pets.
- STEP #12: Get creative. What games, icebreakers, new ideas can you try to help people contribute, and feel supported, and maybe even leave feeling energized?
- STEP #13: Debrief participants by sending conversation highlights, notes, co-created chat text, next steps, connect the dots, thought starters, or resources.

Platforms that allow boards and teams to collaborate

Miro	Zoom	Kahoot
Crowd Purr	Slido	

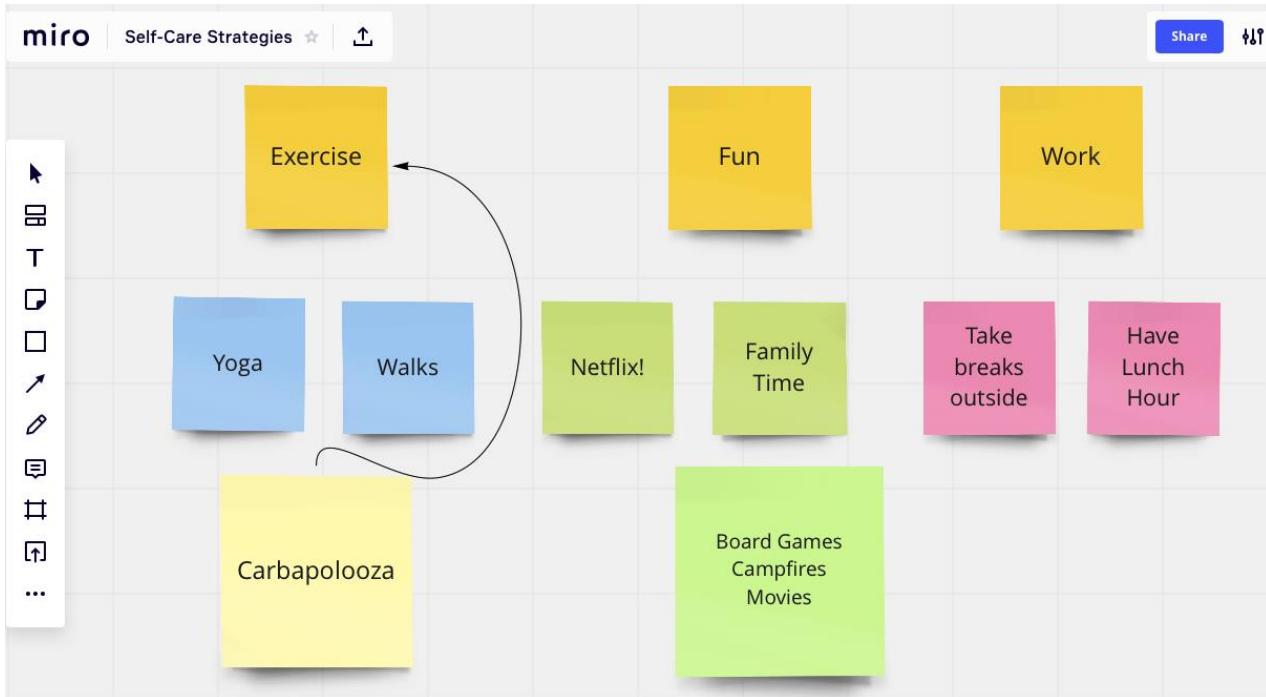
More pro-tips

- Welcome new members in the chat when you see them attending.
- Think about allotting time for an icebreaker to promote participation, but also to give people time to do that superficial, fun chit chat before you get into the heart of your content.
- Demonstrate to others how to be an active chat contributor – ask the group questions, answer questions, cheerlead other contributors, raise up great ideas, ask folks to elaborate when they may be on to something.
- During board meetings, you might want to investigate some collaborative virtual platforms. Miro.com is a great whiteboarding tool, and Google Docs is free and straightforward.

Q&A

- AMANDA, WHAT ABOUT TIPS FOR US, MODERATING OR BEING PART OF A FORUM WITH SET OF 3 SPEAKERS, ETC? SHOULD WE INTERVENE AND LOOSEN UP THE CROWD? If one of your goals is participation, you can time the forum to add in energizers throughout the meeting. Perhaps 5-15 minutes before the first speaker starts, you open the meeting with an icebreaker and let participants do their catch-up chit chat. Between the first and second speakers, you can jump in with another energizer, the same between the second and third speakers. For maximum participation, let your speakers know what your engagement goals are and train them on the various ways they can encourage their virtual audience to participate.
- DO YOU USE CHAT THROUGHOUT MOST OF YOUR MEETINGS OR DO YOU TURN OFF DURING YOUR ACTUAL PRESENTATION (DEPENDING ON TOPIC)? IT'S DISTRACTING TO LISTEN AND WATCH CHAT. I do encourage the chat throughout all of my presentations because, for many attendees, the chat function is a crucial way to participate, connect, and learn. Most presentations seem flat and perhaps boring without the chat in the digital environment. But some presentations are so technical or so in-depth that attendees can't multi-task; this is when the chat slows significantly. When I'm giving speaker training, I tell speakers to follow the lead of the audience. If the audience is chatting like mad, be a great chat contributor. If the audience isn't chatting, don't worry, they are 100% focused on your content, so keep an eye on the chat for any questions they may have.
- DO YOU HAVE INSTRUCTIONS TO COACH/GUIDE SPEAKERS LEADING BREAKOUTS? Yes, when I've run presentations where breakouts are preselected and populated with facilitators, I will host a pre-meeting meeting with them. I'll share the goals of the overall presentation and the breakouts. We'll go through the agenda, how the breakouts should work, and expected outcomes. We might even create roles to assign, i.e., time-keeper, scribe, etc. I will also take them through the logistics like how the breakout rooms function and how they can access their Google Doc to take notes.

- WHEN IS THE BEST TIME TO ENTERTAIN QUESTIONS, FOLLOWING A PRESENTATION OR DURING? Audience questions are another place where virtual has a leg up on in-person because people can ask their questions anytime. I encourage people to submit questions throughout my presentations, and then I ask a moderator to ask me the most popular questions at the end. When I can, I'll review the chat and respond in writing to the rest of the questions after the presentation.
- IS THE MEETING FUNCTION BETTER FOR NETWORKING THAN THE WEBINAR FUNCTION? I have seen both works well, and it may depend on how many participants you have. If you had, say 600 participants, you may want to stick with the webinar function and elevate people to host status during the event to keep things fresh. If you have a smaller group or a close-knit group, the meetings function might work better.
- HOW TO NOT LOSE PEOPLE DURING BREAKOUTS? WE ALWAYS LOSE PEOPLE THERE. Keep experimenting. Try shorter or longer breakouts. Try making the groups smaller (3 people) and larger (6 people). Try different kinds of questions. Let participants select the guiding questions for the breakouts. Try facilitating the breakouts with trained volunteer facilitators. Articulate ways for members to keep the conversation flowing. Keep trying new things and see what methods work best for your members.
- AT WHAT SIZE MEETING DO YOU USE AN "AMY" TO CONDUCT THE MEETING WHILE YOU ARE PRESENTING? Any size meeting benefits from a co-host. Since I'm most often a single presenter, my co-host tends to focus on the administrative tasks like letting people in from the waiting room, muting participants to keep down the background noise, and launching breakout rooms. Co-hosts can also introduce the speaker and moderate questions. The largest presentation I hosted myself was 116 participants, but I didn't love the inevitable pauses while I had to stop to click buttons in Zoom. Co-presenters pass presentation and administrative duties back and forth, which works well too.
- HOW DO YOU KEEP YOUR FOCUS WHILE READING CHAT QUESTIONS? Practice. I'm getting better at this over time.
- IF WE'RE HOSTING BUT NOT PRESENTING, HOW CAN WE ENCOURAGE THE PRESENTER AND/OR MIX IN THESE IDEAS INTO THE PRESENTATION? More and more event organizers are giving or investing in speaker training. There are so many tips for engaging virtual audiences that even long-time in-person speakers haven't learned yet. From creating your PowerPoint to filming to creating interaction in the chat, these are all new skills for most speakers. Learn more about speaker training on my site, SmoothThePath.net.
- ANY ADVICE FOR VIRTUAL RECEPTIONS? The format may depend on how many participants you have and how well they know each other. Large receptions may want to use the webinar function and have 2-4 main speakers who elevate willing participants to host positions as ASAE did with their first virtual MM&C conference. Small receptions for many new members may want to take advantage of facilitated breakout groups for easier networking. Or if you're going for fun, perhaps a professional chef or bartender can run a class!
- CAN YOU PROVIDE EXAMPLES OF WHAT YOU USE VIRTUAL WHITEBOARDS FOR? Just like a group can brainstorm in-person with sticky notes, we can now brainstorm virtually with virtual whiteboards. They function in nearly the same way. You can add "sticky notes" and move them around. The below image is an example from a workshop I gave early in COVID where participants crowdsourced their self-care strategies.



- **WHAT ABOUT THE USE OF SWAG BAGS BEFORE AN EVENT?** Mailed swag bags is a great way to get your sponsors and exhibitors involved and a great way to get participants excited about the event. Just like with new member welcome packets, less might be more. Think about what you can place in the kit that links to the content of the event and then see if sponsors or exhibitors will sponsor those items.
- **DOES ANYONE HAVE ANY SOURCES FOR SENDING ANY TYPE OF KIT OR BOX TO ATTENDEES PRIOR TO A ZOOM NETWORKING EVENT?** Check out [stickermule](#) for custom packing tape and bubble mailers.
- **HOW CAN YOU GET MORE ATTENDANCE WITH SO MANY MEETINGS TO COMPETE WITH FOR NETWORKING PURPOSES?** Word travels in member organizations so members, and future-members, will hear about the best networking events and will want to attend. Keep experimenting to see what your members like best. Try new formats, topics, speakers, and techniques. Over time you'll earn the reputation for the organization that puts on the best virtual networking.

More resources

- You can subscribe to my blog about member engagement at <http://www.smooththepath.net/blog/>.
- [Download the New Member Engagement Study](#) for free.

For Fun!

You didn't think I forgot about all the great fun recommendations, did you? From your next trip, book, or at home movie night – tap into the wisdom of your peers for your next adventure.

Here is a sampling of the neat places your colleagues are dreaming of.

If you could travel anywhere and anywhen, where and when would it be?

Alaska early September	Anywhere in Europe... pre-COVID	Assateague Island for the running of the horses
Belgium at Christmas	By the ocean anywhere	Chile for the solar eclipse in December
Colorado during the winter at the top of any ski mountain	Croatia, 2021	Germany.... Oktoberfest
Go to Florida and be by the beach	Greece, in the Spring	I'd jump in my Scamp Camper and find lots of backwoods hiking trails, waterfalls, kayak trails, etc.
Ireland in November	Japan in the Fall	Machu Picchu for my next birthday
Paris, France as soon as it's safe	Positano, Italy in the summer	Regina Saskatchewan for a Saskatchewan Roughriders game
Shanghai Disney	Two months traveling a loop through Portugal, Morocco, and Spain	Zion, Yosemite, Yellowstone National Parks

I don't know about you, but my bucket list just doubled in length. I had to Google "Scamp Camper," and now I want one because there is sooooo much to see. In the meantime, I cannot wait to dive into the full list of your AMAZING book recommendations.

Books & authors

A place to stand	How to Lose Weight on a Chocolate and Wine Diet	Sweet Sorrow by David Nicholls
A Prayer for Owen Meany - John Irving	I just finished Grnadmere a great personal look at Eleanor Roosevelt a great book for inspiration	Sweetbitter

All the books from Doretha Benton Frank	I just read an old book I found at a Thrift Store about a guy who bought a "2-ton Albatross" aka aluminum camper and took his family from the furthest west to the furthest easterly point...Crazy! 1961 Book	The Accidental Road by Jodi Lea Stewart
Amazing, Incredible, Truly Accurate Correct Facts From	I love Fredrik Backman's books	The Book of Awesome
Amelia Peabody mysteries by Elizabeth Peters - they are a hoot	I Owe You One - Sophie Kinsella	The Boy, the mole, the fox and the Horse
Any of the Stephanie Plum novels by Janet Evanovich	I'm Judging You - The Do Better Manual	The Chisellers by Brenden O'Carroll A very sweet and interesting read set in Dublin
Anything by Iris Johansen	James Thurber The Wonderful O	The Funeral Makers, Cathie Pelletier
Anything by Jennifer Crusie	Janet Evanovich - The Stephanie Plum novels	The Great Alone
Anything by Jennifer Weiner	Jitterbug Perfume- Tom Robbins	The Half-Stitched Amish Quilting Club Trilogy
Anything by Liane Moriarity	Just finished A Gentleman in Moscow. Highly recommend!	The Hardy Boys mystery series...found 35 of them at the beginning of lockdown at an estate sale...fun!
Anything by Michael Crumley	Kiley Reid - Such a Fun Age	The Heart-Led Leader by Tommy Spaulding
Are You There Vodka? It's me, Chelsea by Chelsea Handler	Larry McMurtry's Berrybender Series	The Immortalists
Barbarians at the Gate	Lemony Snicket A Series of Unfortunate Events	the joy of leaving your sh*t all over the place
Bear Town by Fredrik Backman	Love is the Killer App	The Notebook
Before We Were Yours or Where the Crawdads Sing	Man of Tomorrow	The Princess Bride
Bill Bryson "I'm A Stranger Here Myself" or Mike Rowe "How I Heard It"	maybe Someday	The Secret
Born on a Rotten Day	Michelle Obama's Becoming - it's fun, engaging, and has some powerful moments, too.	The Shepherd, The Angel & Walter the Christmas Miracle Dog by Dave Barry

Bossypants!	My Lady Jane by Cynthia Hand, Brodi Ashton, and Jodi Meadows	The Tipping Point
chasing the sun by Melanie hooyenga	Outlander, Diana Gabaldon	The Wreck of the Titan in 1912
Crucial Conversations	Party Girl by Rachel Hollis	The Year of Yes - Shonda Rhimes
Dear Edward	Personality Plus by Florence Littower	Where the Crawdads Sing by Delia Owens...great!
Educated	Power Thoughts Devotional by Joyce Meyer	Who Moved My Cheese by Spenser Johnson. Older book but great time to re-visited due to Unexpected Change
Every night, Josephine! by Jacqueline Suzanne	Run Away Jury	Winter in paradise trilogy by Elin Hilderbrand, third comes out in Oct!
Go Be Kind by Leon Logothetis	So Far from Heaven by Richard Bradford	Worth It by Britt Barron
Grandkids read - A Porcupine Named Fluffy!	Stay Sexy and Don't Get Murdered. Good book.	You Are a Badass
Hissy Fit	Steve Patterson - The Book of Letters I Didn't Know Where to Send	Zen as F*CK at Work
How to cook without a cookbook	Sting Ray Afternoons by Steve Rushin	

Are you looking for a binge-able show for tonight? Outlander, Schitt's Creek, and Ozark, Yellowstone, and Lucifer were the most often mentioned shows, and here is the whole list for your viewing enjoyment!

Binge-able TV tonight

Alias on prime video	Hallmark Christmas movies!	political junkie - I've been busy
Alone on History Channel	Handmaids Tale	Queen of the South - Netflix
Black Lightning	Hannibal	Reign - Netflix
Bosch-Amazon Prime	House of Cards	Reruns of Big Bang!
Brockmire on Hulu	Hulu Mrs. America	Revenge- Hulu
carnival row	HULU Homeland	rewatching Downton on Peacock
Corner Gas on Amazon Prime - family friendly comedy	just rewatched gravity falls	Schitt's Creek - Netflix
Criminal Minds, The Crown, Dead to Me, You, Schitt's Creek	Kim's Convenience on Netflix - funny family dramedy	Selling Sunset - Netflix
Cubbies!	Law and order Hulu	Shameless - Netflix

Dark on Netflix	Little Fires	Sopranos- never watched
Dead to Me	Loved the Crown	SUITS on Amazon
doom patrol	Lucifer - Netflix	Superstore, Hulu.
Elizabeth - on Prime (Queen Elizabeth)	Mad Men - Amazon ,Äl. older but a classic	Sweet Magnolias - Netflix
Endeavor - PBS app	Midsomer murders	the crown Netflix
Eureka - on Amazon Prime	Mindhunters Netflix	The Expanse - AWESOME
Flashpoint	Morning Show	The Good Place - Netflix
Fleabag - Prime	Netflix - Dynasty, Lucifer, Ozark	The Last Dance Netflix
For Life on Hulu	Netflix - Korean Series The King Eternal Monarch	The Umbrella Academy
Friday Night Dinner on Amazon Prime	New Girl - Netflix	This is Us
Frontier - Netflix	Orphan Black- Amazon Prime	Turner Classic Movies
Game of Thrones	Outer Banks - Netflix	Unsolved Mysteries on Netflix
GLOW	Outlander - Netflix	Vikings
Goliath on Amazon Prime	outlander, game of thrones, criminal minds, NCIS, Downton abbey	Virgin River - Netflix
Grace and Frankie on Netflix	Ozark - Netflix	Weed Country
Greenleaf	Parks & Rec, The Office	Yellowstone
Growing Belushi		

Thank you so much for participating!

