

3 Day Virtual Strategy Meeting

Can You Run A Successful 3-day Meeting Online?



Why this? Why now?

In a world dramatically altered by a global pandemic, businesses have been forced to rapidly adapt their approaches and techniques. At Operation Explore, we have certainly felt the impact of COVID-19, and have been relocating all of our typical face-to-face programs into the virtual realm. Our first virtual 3-Day Quarterly Strategy Meeting was an excellent test of our technical agility, utilizing a number of new technologies in an effort to allow for a smooth and authentic transition into cyberspace.

1

Day 1
 2 Hours
 1.25 Hours
 2 Hours

2

Day 2
 3 Hours OFF
 2 Hours
 3 Hours

3

Day 3
 2 Hours
 1.5 Hours
 2 Hours



Pre-Assessment

Saboteurs Assessment to build personal awareness and vulnerability based trust

Pre-Readings

Harvard Business Review

We selected two timely HBR articles as pre-reading.

Data Collection



Prior to all quarterly meetings we conduct a variety of interviews in order to create an understanding of context.

Virtual Hike

Downloading and use of 'Strava' to assess technical agility and be allowed to share hiking data.

The Quarterly Strategy Meeting began with an interactive activity using Strava, an app that combines social media and exercise. After getting everyone set up on Zoom and broken up into pairs, Jeff Boyd set up the "Operation Explore Strava Club", a shared virtual hike which allowed everyone involved to see each others' maps, detailing where the walks were, how far, and how fast each person traveled. Each pair stayed on the phone throughout the duration of the walk, and was given a list of questions to discuss. This exercise was a remarkable opening for the program, and was especially interesting given the international collaboration aspect of it all (see the map above). The second day primarily involved asking and answering questions based on the program's pre-read assignment.



“Virtual Hike included a check-in on a variety of data points that was a chance to do a partner walk, virtually. Check out the *results above* - we could have had them spell out a word”

HARVARD BUSINESS REVIEW ARTICLES

Pre-Reading Assignment - we assigned two very timely articles for the team to prepare to respond to. We also created worksheets that allowed us to assess the teams perception of them as it relates to themselves and the organization.



**Harvard
Business
Review**

Public Relations Challenge:

One of the highlights of the program was the **PR Challenge** executed by Roger Woodgate and Nate Folan on our third day, which they adapted from a program 2 years prior customized to make it relevant for COVID-19 times. This 2-hour simulation focused on four different scenarios that might arise from this pandemic, and how to respond to them publicly in the context of the media finding out about such challenges. Everyone was paired up in Zoom breakout rooms and given 25 minutes to formulate a clear, concise response that aligned with the company culture and strategy. This exercise provided preparation and practice for scenarios that are genuine possibilities, using questions such as “The first positive case of COVID-19 has been diagnosed, how do you handle this with the media?”, “Are you willing to commit to giving part of your salary to frontline workers, here on live TV?”, and “So, how much did you pay the PR company to write this script for you?” to create thought-provoking dynamics. Not only did each of the scenarios intertwine in some way, but the feedback the groups provided for one another after the activity was immensely valuable.

I had the opportunity to discuss this virtual strategy meeting with Nate and Roger, which gave clarity on many aspects of the program and some of the benefits and misgivings of virtual vs. face-to-face programs. “There’s no replacing in-person interactions,” states Nate, “We’re human, and part of being human is having in-person contact. With those that looked through the camera and spoke with their heart, you could feel that human connection...their humanity could and did permeate the virtual realm.” Nate also noted that certain aspects of the program were *more* efficient online than they were in-person: he felt that there was a heightened focus in these Zoom meeting sessions, which opened the possibility for a future path which might involve more blending of online and in-person engagements. As the primary administrator for Zoom and additional softwares, this endeavor gave Nate an enhanced understanding of virtual tools for work that would typically be done with flip charts and post-it notes, giving him ideas for how to enhance efficiency in future ventures. If certain aspects of the program can be completed online before meeting in-person, perhaps the process of decision-making and having more in-depth conversations could be expedited.

Roger stressed the importance of being able to connect emotionally instead of simply spewing information. “The key is not to be too teach-y,” he says, “Form discussions instead of presentations in order to keep everyone engaged! Construct things well and make sure they are interactive. People really enjoy connecting with each other at this moment in time.” He lauded the level of engagement that everyone showed, and found that everything flowed smoothly and people connected authentically thanks to the team’s commitment, creativity, and preparation. He found that even though nobody was together physically, a team bonding experience was still achieved. Roger attributed the success of these “virtual adventures in isolation” to these key components: putting things together thoughtfully, having variety, posing questions, keeping people engaged, and replacing teaching/preaching with a more discussion-based approach.