

## **11 Top Tips for Fantastically Fun Online Team Meetings**

*Lyssa Griffin Zwolanek, Stampin' Up! [www.songofmyheartstampers.com](http://www.songofmyheartstampers.com)*

Never done a virtual team meeting? They're easy! And they are perfect for helping to unify your long-distance group. Thanks to social media, I have members in many different states! And while I still hold local meetings here in my town almost every month, I'm finding that everyone really appreciates our quarterly virtual party. I've compiled eleven of my very best tips for online meeting, sharing things I've learned, practical technology tips, and lots of little things learned from experience. Good luck!

### **VIRTUAL TEAM MEETINGS Tip #1:**

#### **Don't complicate things. Just do it on Facebook!**

Stop putting it off! You know it's time to start regularly unifying your busy team members, and including those who live in other states in the group fun, but for some reason it just seems terribly intimidating.

For most people the number one hurdle is *technology*. They think they need to have a fancy webinar or live video service when in actuality, while those things are nice, plain old Facebook is just perfect for online meetings. You already have a team Facebook group, I'm assuming. Start a post, select a time and day, and add a cute graphic. Now you're committed!

**Techie Tip:** I don't "pin" posts to the top of the page much in our groups because people accessing Facebook on their phones sometimes cannot see pinned posts. Instead, I "bump" the meeting reminder thread up every day or so to keep the information near the top.

Just DO it--and doing in on Facebook removes the biggest excuse you've been giving yourself. Practically everyone is on Facebook (or will be soon if you are holding fun meetings there!) and there is no "learning curve" to the platform like there is with other technologies. *Feeling comfortable with getting around, and not intimidated by fancy technology, is key to good attendance.*

### **VIRTUAL TEAM MEETINGS Tip #2:**

#### **Pick the date and let the chips fall where they may.**

Like a local demonstrator meeting, there's no way you are going to get everyone to agree on the perfect time and day for a virtual meeting. Someone will have to work... someone will be in a different time zone... someone will have little kids to put to bed during that hour. it's just the way life works! So pick a date and time somewhere in the middle.

Plan your meeting for at least an hour. If they can't make the beginning or ending, they can still catch some of the fun in the middle. And because we're using our Facebook group for the meeting, if they miss any posts they can just keep scrolling down to see them.

In general, evenings tend to work better for people than day times. Weeknights work better than weekends, too. Since I have team members in all four continental U.S. time zones, I just use a chunk of time mid-evening in Central Time.

How long is the perfect length? I've tried one hour (not enough--you won't believe how fast time flies during a virtual meeting) and two hours (too much; enthusiasm begins to flag). For my group, an hour and a half has proven to be just right. You'll soon find what works best for yours.

### **VIRTUAL TEAM MEETINGS Tip #3:**

#### **Hype it up with lots of heads up!**

*Your team will be excited about it if you are.* But, being human, they need reminders and sneak peeks about why they are excited!

Don't just post the meeting notice... and then not say another peep until start time. Give them advance warning so they can mark their calendars and set their phones, and then remind them every few days. Share a few things to look forward to, or even a sneak peek photo of a project you'll be demoing. As in all things direct sales, *YOU must be our own PR person*, and you must "sell" the event to your team.

**Techie Tip:** Tag your team, if there's not too many of them, in the final reminder post the half-hour before the event, to make SURE that Facebook shows it to them. I post a "so excited, my group meeting's tonight!!" status update on my personal Facebook page, too, so downline members who are just wandering on Facebook have one more chance to catch the reminder and scoot on over to the team page.

### **VIRTUAL TEAM MEETINGS Tip #4:**

#### **Plan for success by having an agenda!**

Just like any local demo meeting, a schedule is crucial in order to squeeze in all the news and fun that you want to accomplish during your short time together. But it's a balance--plan too much and everyone will feel rushed and behind, plan too little and it will drag and excitement flags.

For maximum engagement sustained over the entire length of your meeting, write out *an agenda that includes stamping and product segments interspersed with announcements and business tips*. Virtual meetings are less about bombarding with info and more about team-building, so if you err, err on the side of fun and games over serious business time.

Here's a sample list of things to consider including during the meeting, when you're first sitting down to plan out what your event will look like. I've found that five-to-seven minute intervals are about right between posts. You will be ASTOUNDED at how fast the time flies!

One other note--be flexible. Some segments move way faster than expected and others take longer than anticipated. Put time intervals in your agenda as a general guide, but just know in advance that sometimes you'll be correcting course as the evening progresses.

- One hour before: reminder post for whatever they need to gather or set up for the meeting
- Ten minutes before: fun reminder graphic

- Welcome post--Roll Call--who's here?
- Door Prize post and 1-2 other quick games scattered through the event
- Overview of what to expect tonight, reminders to refresh regularly
- Virtual swap instructions (where to post/send photos)
- 3-4 SHORT stamping videos or tutorial uploads (live or taped in advance) sprinkled throughout the meeting. Give the assigned demonstrators an approximate time slot to post or upload their contribution and *make sure they're clear on how to do so!*
- Awards & recognition
- Monthly business & product challenges
- Business Handouts or project templates can be uploaded to Files section, which starts a post where you can chat about the topic
- SU news & announcements (copy and paste)
- Next meeting information
- Next swap announced
- Good night thread and final door prize

#### **VIRTUAL TEAM MEETINGS Tip #5:**

##### **Make time for silly fun!**

Since we've already established that we have two main goals for our virtual team parties, fun and team-building, let's talk about how to insert the fun! I'm a firm believer in having LOTS of prizes, even if they are small, so I plan to have some drawing, game or challenge involving a giveaway every 15-20 minutes. You can adjust that for the size of your team.

**Important:** for each game you add, make a note on your master agenda to pick and post the winners later in the evening. Otherwise it's very easy to forget, and people hate it when you don't follow through on promised prizes.

Start your event with a door prize thread. All they have to do is post to enter. Some ones we have used or run across recently:

- post a pic of yourself (sometimes we do celebrity look-alikes)
- post the "snack" you brought to share (pic of junk food)
- post a pic of the object to your immediate right/left
- post a pic of one of the earliest cards you made
- post your fave In Color/stamp set
- (note: don't do spouses, pets, or kids, as not every one has one of those!)

I usually do another door prize on the "good night" thread:

- post a pic of who you wish was kissing you goodnight (hilarious photos of everything from hunky celebs to cute little puppies) or have them post an inspirational quote to send us off on.

Scavenger Hunts, Identify the Close-Up, Catalog Speed Drills, guessing games, counting games--the sky is the limit as to other games you can adapt to play online in a short amount of time. If you need proven game ideas, visit <http://bit.ly/SUdemonstrators> for a great list.

#### **VIRTUAL TEAM MEETINGS Tip #6:**

##### **Delegate responsibilities! Done is better than perfect.**

It is really, really hard to give up control and know that things will be handled in ways that you wouldn't necessarily handle them (or sometimes not handled at all, leaving you in the lurch). However, the benefits of delegation cannot be over-stated. Not only does it free you up to do tasks you really wanted to do but didn't have time, it's also *crucial for developing leadership* on the team. So--delegate away--assign tasks wherever you can. **Done is better than perfect!** It will alleviate stress on YOU, and it's good for THEM. I don't know about you, but if I think something is good for my team, I will do almost anything.

For virtual meetings, I assign demonstrations and business shares just like I would at a local meeting. I also have an assistant (lately two of them) who are helping me behind the scenes.

**Techie Tip:** I always have two Facebook screens open, one with the group page and one with a private message thread with my helpers. They help me keep to my schedule, post threads for me, respond to comments and bump up threads that need to remain at the top.

If you try to throw a whole meeting by yourself, whether it's in real life or online, you'll soon burn out, and come to resent your team (even though you thought you didn't want or need their help). I encourage you to remember that *your TEAM is more than one person*.

#### **VIRTUAL TEAM MEETINGS Tip #7:**

##### **Got swaps? Of course you do!**

You can still swap even if your meeting is virtual and not a live event! This is a great way for EVERYONE to be able to participate and have a chance to win the swap contest regardless of where they live, without the added expense of shipping back and forth.

I announce the swap theme every month just like I would normally, and remind them to be working on it and to take a good quality, well-lit photo of it. Pictures are uploaded during the meeting and people vote by liking the one they think is best.

Since they only have to make one item, instead of multiples, we'll often do a little more challenging project; for example, a home decor item or gift packaging.

Our meeting swaps are always anonymous, and I wanted to keep it that way even when the gathering is a virtual one. It's a little more work, but it removes any hint of favoritism, which is important for any team. There may be other ways to do this, but the one that is working for us is to have people send their unwatermarked photos to my event assistant, and at a set time during the event, she posts them all in an album on the team page.

**Techie Tip:** After the voting deadline, the winner is announced, and my assistant goes back and edits the photos to include the swappers' names so they get credit for their work and we can ask questions and leave comments.

If you're not in the habit of having swaps at your meetings, whether in person or online, I encourage you to start doing them. They provide excellent chances to practice technique, gain confidence, and use up products--all important things that an upline can help with! **Keep your team creating.** There should always be something they can work on, whether it's swaps, a challenge product for the month, or a team charity project.

### **VIRTUAL TEAM MEETINGS Tip #8:**

#### **Take plenty of time to celebrate!**

Recognition of accomplishments and effort is a HUGE part of any demonstrator gathering, and online events are no different. In fact, recognizing achievements online can have a profound effect as people leave happy comments congratulating the achiever and they hear from many different voices in the team instead of just those able to attend a local meeting.

I used to feel it was not as exciting to do the awards at a virtual event, but with a few tips, you can keep enthusiasm strong and excitement high.

- Have the awards near the beginning, but not too close. Allow the people to get there and the party atmosphere to begin before you start with the recognition. **Don't put them at the end** when people are beginning to leak out and go elsewhere on line.
- Put each accomplishment in a separate post, or each group of accomplishments, if your group is large. Use colorful, fun graphics (I share lots of them on Song of My Heart Demonstrators on Facebook.)
- Tag the person(s) you are recognizing so that they are sure to see the post in their honor. They will enjoy reading all the congrats, and people who were not able to attend can chime in later.

**Techie Tip:** Type this all out in advance of the meeting, so that during the hectic, crazy virtual party, all you have to do is copy and paste from one screen to the next, tag the person(s), add the photo and post. That way you're not making mistakes in the heat of the moment, and the information is accurate and complete.

Have fun with it! "So-and-so promoted this month; everyone post a virtual bouquet of flowers for her!" Or So-and-so is our top seller this month; what bling should she buy herself?" The team members comment with hilarious photos, clip art, funny memes and more. It increases engagement by leaps and bounds and keeps everyone on their toes.

### **VIRTUAL TEAM MEETINGS Tip #9:**

#### **Keep it short and sweet!**

We've all been to that party or wedding that dragged on just a little too long. We left with a sense of relief that we got out of there, instead of regret that it was over. When you host a demonstrator meeting, local or online, make sure you *leave them wanting more!*

I also advise not doing virtual meetings too close together or too often. People begin to place less of a priority on making the effort to attend, if they think the next one is right around the corner. It takes away the sense that they are really missing something when they believe they can "catch up" without much hassle.

Just like a regular gathering, it takes WORK to make a meeting that is not to be missed. And sometimes, if we've had trouble maintaining that feeling for a while, it takes time to build that anticipatory sense back up. I encourage you not to lose heart. If you are running your virtual team meetings right on your team Facebook page, as I recommend, it will soon become clear that they are fun, quick, informative and worthwhile to attend live.

**Techie Tip:** Don't hide the meetings away by making them a Facebook "event" or yet another group page that they have to join or confirm. Facebook events "disappear" immediately after the date, *effectively deleting all your hard work and fun.*

#### **VIRTUAL TEAM MEETINGS Tip #10:**

##### **Don't post without a graphic!**

Facebook knows that people don't engage nearly as often with text-only posts as they do with those containing a picture or meme. While we're not worried about Facebook not showing posts in group pages, we do still need to be concerned with making sure our content is seen.

Take a cue from them and use a colorful graphic with every meeting post you put up. It will boost the chances that more team members see it during the frenetic pace and constant refreshes during the meeting.

I usually just Google what I am looking for and snag an appropriate one from a free site, but you can take a little more time to create your own, which contributes to the sense of team-ship and personality. If you still have MDS, use that, or purchase a vector art package from Etsy or somewhere online and enjoy adding text to personalize them. But *any pictures will contribute to the party atmosphere* because they are out of the norm.

#### **VIRTUAL TEAM MEETINGS Tip #11:**

##### **Don't quit until you're finished!**

The meeting is over and you had a fantastic time sharing and laughing with your team. Everyone agrees they want to do another one very soon! The temptation is strong to turn off the computer and head to bed. That's ok--I do it too. But the job isn't over yet!

- Either that same night or the very next day, go back in and read every thread. Respond to the questions you missed in the heat of the moment, and elaborate on any points that seemed to cause confusion.
- Go back in and organize the event photos in an album--you'll be so glad you did this!
- I go back and make sure everyone got at least one comment on their photos. It will encourage them to participate more often if they feel their comments and contributions were heard and appreciated.
- As you read back through, if you didn't make a master list of who won what prize during the event, make one now, and follow through promptly to get those mailed or delivered.

If you keep a regular meeting log or minutes, update those with the virtual meeting information NOW. It is way *too easy to assume* that you'll be able to find that information when you are prepping for the next month--trust me, in an active Facebook group, posts get buried so quickly that within a week or two the meeting posts will be ancient history and very difficult to find again.

The follow up after the meeting is almost as important as having the meeting itself. **Attention to detail is so often what distinguishes a good upline from a great one.** If you're like me and not terribly detail-oriented, here's two tips--write the tasks down. They are far more likely to actually happen if they are on your to-do list. And delegate someone who IS good at details to remind you to do your followup (see tip #6).

I hope you've gotten some food for thought from my 11 Top Tips for Virtual Team Meetings! If you'd like to contact me, I'd love to hear from you. Email me at [Lyssa@songofmyheartstampers.com](mailto:Lyssa@songofmyheartstampers.com)