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Facilitating Positive Change

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## Leadership Tips January, 2021: Energize and Engage with Online Teambuilding Activities

### Message from Dr. Marilyn Manning



Dear Friends,

Happy New Year!

Consider making a New Year's resolution to increase the effectiveness of your business relationships. If you aren't getting weekly 1:1s with your manager, ask them for some dedicated time to not only discuss goals and progress, but to check in and learn more about each other. If you are a manager, hold quality 1:1s with each of your direct reports, biweekly or weekly. I suggest phone calls vs. distracting screens. You will find it easier to focus and listen.

The new year gives us all a fresh start to improve our communication, to show that we care, to support each other's goals, and to capitalize on each other's superpowers. Take a few minutes to reflect on each of your closest co-workers and write down their superpowers. Then ask each of them how you can help them shine. Let's start the new year by bringing out the best in ourselves and everyone we encounter.

Warmest Regards,

Dr. Marilyn Manning

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(Above is my direct email — please remove M@MManning.com from your address book.)

P.S. Don't forget to reserve your seat for our next two complimentary 30-min Zoom events, next week and next month (see items 2 & 3 below). [And we invite you to revisit our brand new 2021 Website at www.TheConsultingTeam.com](http://www.TheConsultingTeam.com)



### In this issue of *Leadership Tips*...

1. Article: How to Energize and Engage Remote Teams through Online Team Building Activities
2. Tuesday, January 12 Zoom event: Learn Effective Online Teambuilding Activities to Engage and Energize, 1:00-1:30PM Pacific. (No Charge)
3. Tuesday February 9 Zoom event: Energize Remote Collaboration, 1:00-1:30PM Pacific (No Charge)
4. Our new on-line trainings



## How to Energize and Engage Remote Teams through Online Teambuilding Activities

For leaders and managers whose teams are working from home: keeping employees engaged and energized is more vital than ever.

For employees: isolation, technological challenges and the sameness of each day working from home can lead to apathy, lethargy and depression.

The remedy for all: more contact, community, collaboration and teambuilding while connecting online. The question remains: how to achieve these goals?

**Welcome to the Engagement Party**

Simply put, we should invest more time and attention to engaging and energizing each other.

Through structured activities within meetings and unstructured time for sharing, venting and brainstorming, your team members can express joys and pain, commiserate, connect and collaborate. This will stave off the blues, replacing the boos and blahs with ah-ha's and ha-ha's!

Helping each attendee feel welcome, seen and heard is a winning formula. Connection is key. This is easily done through what you say and the questions you ask. During meetings, small talk and light banter are important. Check-ins that are all business leave us cold. Engaging is inviting. In person, a host might meet people at the door to welcome them. Let's be as inviting online.

### **Ice-Breakers Break Down Barriers and Warm the "Room"**

Each meeting can benefit from a short, participatory activity to center attendees, take the pulse of the space and hear from all precincts. Options abound:

#### *Ask a generic question of the day:*

- What are you happiest to leave behind in 2020?
- "What's your fun goal for 2021?"
- "What are you most grateful for today?"
- "Where is the first place you look forward to visiting post-pandemic?"
- "If you had a magic wand what would you wish for?"
- Or you can ask a work-related question about the present or future

#### *Show a provocative image:*

- Ask each attendee to weigh in on what they see?
- What it means to them?
- What it might represent?

(By the way, there are no "wrong" answers here.)

#### *The One Word Check-In:*

A quick way for each person to get present and share where they're at in the moment. (All responses accepted.)

#### *A Meeting of Minds:*

- Pose a riddle to solve
- Introduce a challenge question for consideration
- Declare a theme for the meeting for all to embrace

Your riddle or question can be related to the focus of your gathering. For example:

#### *Decipher an obfuscation*

Show an example of convoluted language which obscures a common saying

"Exigency is the matriarch of ingenious contrivance" Answer:

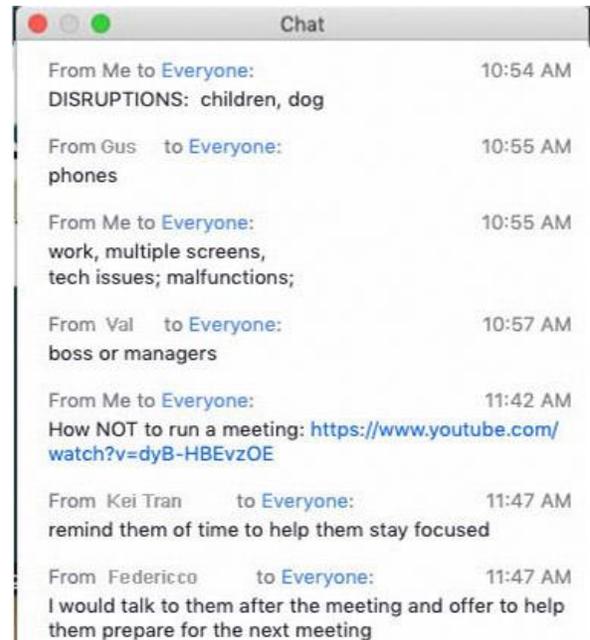
Answer: Necessity is the mother of invention.

# Tooling Around with Meeting Software

Your online meeting software offers tools for communication, collaboration and celebration. Are you using tools for maximum effect?

## CHAT: Your Window into the Team's Well-being

The Chat feature of meeting software can be used in any number of ways: to welcome, instruct, solicit input, allow attendees to vote, respond to closed and open-ended questions, and to offer feedback into the pace of the meeting, instruction or activities. Use it for quick pulse-taking or to answer questions people may be more comfortable writing about vs. speaking aloud. Many Chat features allow you to privately message the host or leader as well. Alert attendees how — at any time — you'd like them to use chat as part of your meeting.



## Turn White Boards into Write Boards

Many online meeting applications have built-in white boards or support external ones where team members can write and draw their own ideas, responses, captions and depictions to express themselves and inspire others.

Often attendees can select their own color or their name can appear inside their arrow as they make selections, annotate, contribute to online conversations, collaborative diagrams, brainstorm or align with their favorite items on a communal panel. It's energizing to create lists, art and even a storyboard online. Encourage others to express themselves at different times using these free form spaces and accompanying tools. Learn about the annotation tools for your particular whiteboard and model them for others.

*Below: Zoom Whiteboard's tool palette, and one example of a completed board. It also allows for color, free-form drawing tools, and boards can be saved.*



White board for majority voting

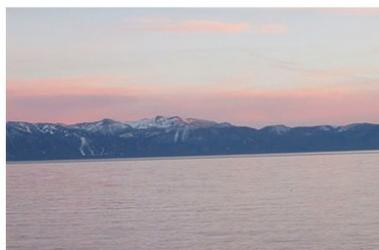
<p><b>Enrichment</b></p> <p>More feedback ★★★★★</p> <p>More coaching ★★</p> <p>More personal development ★</p>	<p><b>Efficiencies</b></p> <p>Helicopter for transport ★★★★★</p> <p>Narrow the focus on projects</p> <p>Better subcontractors ★</p> <p>Meetings run no longer than 50 minutes ★</p>
<p><b>Retention Ideas</b></p> <p>4-day working week</p> <p>5 free days per year ★★ ★</p> <p>Fitness classes ★</p> <p>Swimming pool on roof ★★★★★</p> <p>Restaurant in office ★★★★★</p>	

### The Virtue of Virtual Backgrounds

Virtual backgrounds provide more than backdrops...they are mood enhancers and complement activities such as celebrations, acknowledgments, milestone markers and more. In a course we used the following virtual backgrounds at key intervals for positive impact:



Attendee's birthday



Backdrop for Visualization Activity



Program Graduation Time

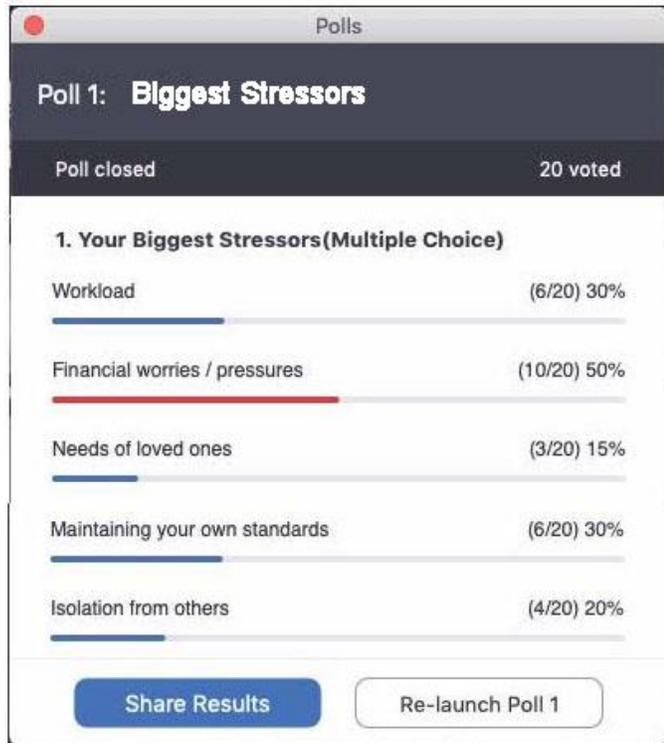
Your use of virtual backgrounds can signal different sections of your meetings, set or change a tone, or support a theme you have introduced. Use them strategically and also as a surprise to keep your events moving and attendees engaged. You can even create your own virtual backgrounds to reflect your team, campaign or organization.

### Hurray for (non-political) Polls

The polling feature of many online meeting apps is a great way to engage attendees and gather vital information on people's preferences, experience levels, mood or burning issues.

Many groups use polling to vote on issues, from best future meeting days and times to electing officers. But other uses abound.

Polls can set the stage for what's to come, and take the temperature of the



room. While polls are often employed toward the beginning as a soft way of engaging, they can also be deployed at different stages of a meeting, to gauge people’s interest levels for topics, or beliefs or existing knowledge on a subject.

Polls can even be used to take a quick vote of whether to extend a topic for 5 more minutes. Make your poll fun too.

*Polls engage and forward the action.*

What ways will you use polls to take the pulse of your team? Ask, probe, float trial balloons, new ideas and measure responses.

### **Breakout Rooms Offer Connection, Community and Safety**

Let’s face it: many employees aren’t comfortable speaking in groups or even in public. Forcing them to do so is not the best approach. Instead, create more intimacy through use of breakout rooms. It’s especially easier and less intimidating to share in smaller groups for introverts, shy people, ESL employees, and those who aren’t as skilled in oral communication. As we work from home, creating small group pods for discussion, brainstorming and problem solving can generate more cohesion, trust and improve teamwork. Breakout rooms create space for collaboration, idea exchange and reaffirm connections with colleagues in a less public setting. Magic happens in breakout groups, whether dyads, foursomes or larger groups.

### **Meeting Success: Formula Engagement, Energy + Fun lead to Fruitful Results**

We know from experience that time spent engaging and energizing your team pays great dividends for team cohesion, collaboration and well-being. When you invest time in designing your events for maximum participation, everyone benefits. Use your software tools, customize to your team dynamics and employ creativity to strengthen your team in 2021. And here’s one more tip.

### **RSVP for our complimentary engagement party...**

#### **Our next free monthly Zoom sampler: Tuesday Jan. 12, 1:00-1:30 Pacific**

Are you ready to experience many of these tools and techniques for engaging and energizing your team, and more? Next Tuesday we’ll be demonstrating oodles of ideas for online engaging and energizing during our free monthly sampler.

Click here to register for our free January webinar

**FREE 30-min. online event Tuesday January 12, 1PM:  
Learn Effective Virtual Team Building Activities**  
*Apply Engaging and Energizing Activities to your Online Meetings*



*Facilitated by Senior Associate Craig Harrison*

Learn how short online activities can energize and engage everyone in virtual settings.

This short program will address how to:

- Use ice-breaker activities to keep everyone focused and alert
- Boost morale when not in the same room through team building activities
- Learn tips to increase pacing and energy

**Tuesday, January 12  
1:00-1:30PM Pacific**

Limited space: confirm your seat and receive log-in details when you register using the button below.

Register for this free 30-min. online event next week

Click here to register for our free February webinar

**FREE 30-min. online event Tuesday February 9, 1PM:**

# Energize Remote Collaboration



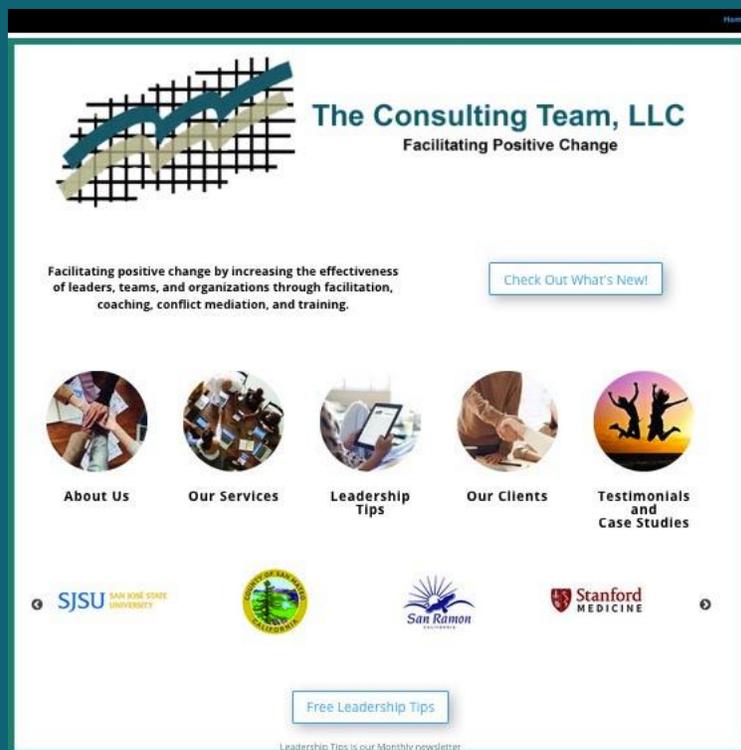
*Facilitated by Senior Associate Susan G. Schwartz, PMP*

Ensure all participants are engaged contributors, empowered, and are able to take action.

**Tuesday, February 9  
1:00-1:30PM Pacific**

Limited space: confirm your seat and receive log-in details when you register using the button below.

Register for this free 30-min. online event



**Our new On-line Trainings for Today's Virtual World:**

*Customized for you...from 90 Minutes - 3 Hours*

*All training offerings on [www.TheConsultingTeam.com](http://www.TheConsultingTeam.com) are now virtual*

## Best Practices for Managing Remote Workers and Teams

Would you like help communicating one-on-one with direct reports working from home? This program offers tips for conducting crucial conversations remotely, helping coach your staff in prioritizing timeliness and self-management, and strategies for increasing online engagement and motivation.

### Managing Crisis and Change: Surviving in a State of Flux

This session provides the tools you need for transitioning through change and self-care to embrace the new reality. Learn how to proactively navigate and smoothly embrace uncertainty by using the stages of processing change to know where you are and what's next.

### How to Stay Fresh and Relieve Stress

More than ever, employees, supervisors and managers are experiencing disruptions, frustrations, and stress from illness, technical challenges, economic pressures and the uncertainties of this current pandemic. Learn techniques for self-care, stress reduction, creating a nurturing and soothing environment, and how to look out for each other to remain healthy, productive and upbeat, while future-focusing.

### Applying Emotional Intelligence in Uncertain Times

During times of uncertainty people look to their managers to provide clarity that will enable them to deal with chaos, overcome challenges, and achieve shared goals. Emotional Intelligence equips managers to recognize their own and others' behaviors and make choices to improve workplace performance and productivity. This session provides you with easy-to-implement tools you can apply immediately.

### Listening Amid Endless Distractions

During shelter-at-home we're more distracted than ever. This training helps you pay attention to paying attention. Learn to avoid common listening mistakes, deepen your ability to "go deep" as a listener, discerning what is being said, implied, unspoken and more. You will learn to understand the "listening gap" and how to overcome it, and how better listening leads to increased trust, enhanced credibility and better team cohesion.

### Managing Multiple Demands and Priorities While Working From Home

Learn proven techniques for prioritizing your projects, time and energy while working remotely. Receive help managing distractions, remaining focused, dealing with internal and external pressures while getting back into your flow state while having your out-of-office experience. Discover ways to optimize your environment to increase productivity and peace of mind.

*For information contact [Dr. Marilyn Manning](#)*

*You can also reach us by phone: (650) 965-3663*

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# Get A Boost From Our Team of Trainers, Facilitators, and Coaches



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*Contact The Consulting Team to learn more about our  
online training, group and one-to-one virtual coaching,  
and consulting assistance for leaders and employees.*

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