

8 PROS AND CONS OF VIRTUAL MEETINGS

By Eli Mina

<http://www.elimina.com/insights/virtual.htm>

With the advent of high technology more and more organizations are reducing the number of face-to-face meetings and replacing them with virtual meetings. Like actual meetings, virtual meetings should enable a group to exchange information and facilitate shared decision making.

The following pros and cons of virtual meetings are:

1. Pro: Reduced costs: A virtual meeting is generally less expensive than a face-to-face meeting. The cost of travel, meals and accommodation is eliminated.
2. Pro: Reduced disruptions: Participants are not inconvenienced by needing to leave their offices, disrupt their schedules and struggle through unpredictable traffic patterns.
3. Pro: Enhanced sense of purpose: With the recognition of the limitations of a virtual meeting, it is easier to establish the need for disciplined and well focused discussions.
4. Pro: The potential for increased objectivity: With the exception of videoconferencing, individuals are not distracted by facial expressions of others. This has the potential of forcing introspection and critical thinking in private.
5. Con: Group size: Although virtual meetings can work well for small groups, they are usually difficult to manage with large gatherings. Have you ever tried a teleconference call with more than 7 people?
6. Con: Reduced flexibility: It is impossible to employ interactive discussion techniques in a virtual meeting (e.g. breaking into small discussion groups), and such techniques can be very beneficial when issues are complex or controversial.
7. Con: No social interaction: The interpersonal "chemistry" and synergy that develops in face-to-face meetings are lost in a virtual meeting. It is much more difficult to build trust and team cohesion when people do not see or hear one another.
8. Con: Unique challenges: Virtual meetings present interesting challenges: identifying who is speaking, establishing a speakers' lineup, ensuring equality and fairness, and counting votes (can you take a secret ballot in a teleconference call?)