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# IDEAS TO ENGAGE YOUR VIRTUAL AUDIENCE



## 1 Vary Pitch, Pace and Volume

All great presenters know the importance of these three vocal elements. [Click here to listen](#) to the famous Paul Harvey deliver "So, God Made a Farmer." Then record your next presentation, listen to your speaking style and make the necessary adjustments.

## 2 Provide Handouts

This idea is often forgotten in virtual meetings. Make your handouts effective by leaving blanks for people to fill in content their obtaining from your presentation. Plus keep them focused by verbally referring to topic headings or page numbers as you transition.

## 3 Vary Your Delivery

Mix it up every 5-7 minutes using a variety of lecture, story, video, slides, rhetorical and direct questions, chat and partner/group activity.

## 4 Ask 2 & 1 Show of Hands Questions

This is when you ask two questions that are certain to get a "yes" response and the third that brings a laugh. The audience is asked to raise their hands if they agree with the question. If you're leading a sales meeting, one question might be "How many want to increase their sales next quarter?" (hands go up) "And how many want better margins on what you sell?" (hands go up) There will be some that don't raise their hands, so the third question is, "How many don't like to raise your hands in meetings?"



## 5 Use Silent Movie Gestures & Facial Expressions

Search YouTube for silent movies with actor's like Buster Keaton or Laurel & Hardy. Notice how expressive their faces are and their overly demonstrative body movements. As a facilitator or meeting leader, accentuate your expressions and body movement at moments throughout the presentation. When delivering a key point, look directly at the camera.

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### Get Creative with Chat

While people are logging in, have the audience type in a weather report of the city where they are or a word of the day. After your introduction and before you transition into content, have them type “I’m ready” or “let’s go”. You prompt them with, “if you’re ready to get started, type...” As you continue presenting content, keep them involved by asking them to type “I agree” or “yes” to points your making. Make sure to comment on what you’re seeing by saying, “Tom’s ready”, or “Cindy agrees.” Finally, so you have to only manage one chat box versus using the Q&A function too, simply have participants type their questions in ALL CAPS. This makes them easier for you to distinguish when you’re scrolling through chat. You can also instruct participants to send questions private to you versus to everyone.

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### Use Audience Props

Many audience members attend presentations from home. Have them get something in their home to show on camera that represents a key point or theme of your presentation. If you’re teaching Stress Management, you can ask them to find something that brings them calm. If you’re teaching Problem Solving, have them get a unique object for use in creating an analogy to their problem to spark their creativity. Or if you’re teaching Conflict Management, have them get something that represents a source of conflict in their home (i.e., the tv remote).



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### Create Partner or Group Activities with Breakout Rooms

This is very popular, and people are getting more familiar with it as well. It’s important that you provide clear instructions and tell them you may be popping into the conversations. Before you send them off, you can share what order you’ll want to hear from them when they return. This assures everyone shares. Plus, you can also do partner activities in front of entire group just like you would in person. They can practice a skill you’re teaching.

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## Use Polls & Quizzes

Most major platforms now have a polling function. This is a great way to kick off a meeting, test knowledge or gain audience insights during a presentation. Think of having fun and being creative but still connect to your topic or theme. You might poll, "What's the favorite vacation destination in the U.S.?" or "What's the fastest animal on the planet?" These could be used to tee up a presentation about where the company is headed or the importance of responding fast to customer support tickets.

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## Get Anonymous Short Phrase Responses

[www.Mentimeter.com](http://www.Mentimeter.com) is fun and visual way for ideas to be expressed anonymously. Participants can see the responses as their being added which creates a visual word cloud of all responses. You can then open up discussion by asking questions based on what you're seeing or simply ask an open ended to the group, "what are your impressions of what you're seeing?"



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## Minimize Slides and Bullets

This is becoming a norm and if you're not doing this you're not in the game. Use more images and icons that connect to content and evoke emotion. For inexperienced presenters, the technical challenges virtual presentations can create outweigh the benefit of slides all together. I've even had audiences tell me they prefer no slides. One solution available today that allows the presenter engaging options when using slides is PREZI Present.

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## Signal in Advance Someone's Participation

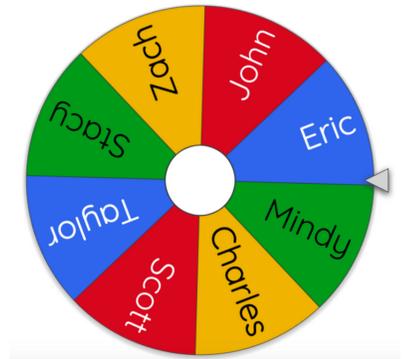
Tell the person as you're starting to cover a point or address a topic that you'll be coming to them first for feedback or insights. To keep the discussion moving, you can ask them to "tag" who shares next.

### 13 Refer to Audience Members When Making Points

Ideally used when the point you're making is one the person endorses. (i.e., "Tom, we've talked about this idea and you liked it. Tell us more.") This provides social validation for your idea which is an effective form of persuasion.

### 14 Hold Prize Drawings or Pick Order of Who Shares Next

This is a fun web-based tool (<https://wheelofnames.com/>) Enter the names of meeting participants and spin the wheel. The "winner" become the next person to share in the discussion or one that wins a prize. Prize drawings held at end of meetings are a way to encourage folks to stay logged on. Consider \$5 digital coupons to Starbucks or other retailers.



### 15 Involve Audience in Responding to Questions

Instead of the presenter responding to all the questions, let the audience in on the discussion. Great language to use is "who has an idea on that?" Once you obtain audience input, you can add your expertise to conclude the response. You can also use chat for the audience to provide responses.

### 16 Use Key Phrases to Encourage Sharing

You can get sharing started and keep it alive with these phrases. To the group, "who would like to start us off"? To the first person who responds, "thanks for starting us off Tom, who's next?" And after the next responds, "thanks for keeping us going Kay, who else wants to share?" If there's silence at first, ask "if you had an idea to share about this topic, what might it be?" "If" and "might" are key words that make it easier for people to comment. Finally, make sure you as the facilitator DO NOT comment after each response. Wait until all comments have been expressed and consider simply saying, "great discussion, thanks to everyone who shared." Commenting after each response reduces the time for people to share and if your comment is not said well, can discourage additional sharing.



Hi, I'm Tom Schreiber. My career has taken me to every state and halfway around the world designing, selling, and delivering training, coaching, and consulting services.

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