

How to Invite Engagement during a Webinar

by Jeanette Romkema and Ellen Kupp

So ... you've scheduled your webinar, sent out the invitations and marked your calendar with a reminder to log onto your selected platform 15-20 minutes early to make sure everything is ready to go. You'll be ready to start on time – which will please your online crowd. Ending on time will also please them and keep them coming back for more.



You've got your “co-pilot” lined up to handle any technical difficulties that may arise. This person knows to push the Record button and to monitor the dialogue in the chat box so you can concentrate on giving your presentation and engaging your participants.

Here's the pinch: how can we engage our eager group when the learning space is a webinar?

Below are three tips for getting people into the online environment in ways that invite meaningful engagement and opportunities for personal meaning-making.

1. **Encourage people to use the chat box.** Prime the pump by pointing out the feature at the beginning of the call. Some people will take to it more naturally than others, so use the examples below to encourage engagement. Remind everyone that your co-pilot will be monitoring the chat to ensure everyone's voice is heard (read) either on or after the call.

Example: “Take a minute on your own and use the chat box to share your thoughts about the pre-reading. Name one thing that pushed your thinking about XX.” Then, you can debrief what is shared.

Example: “Let's see what people are thinking. On your own, jot down two criteria for XX in the chat box. After a few minutes we'll hear from a few of you...”

Example: “As we review the comments everyone offered in the chat box, what seems to surface as a generative theme or areas of great importance for this group? Why might this be?”

2. **Don't be afraid of silence.** We often think that silence is to be avoided at all costs or that silence is a sign of boredom – not so. As is true for in-person sessions, introverts need time to consider what they think about something and what they would like to share with others. As well, small invitations for solo work with the expectation of sharing afterward, can increase engagement for everyone.

Example: “I invite you to take a minute on your own to re-read the quote on the screen. In the chat box, write the word that is most provocative or important for you from this quote.” Then you can debrief.

Example: “On your own, read the description of XX and circle the words or phrases that push your thinking about XX. After a few minutes, we will here from a few people.” This can be done on the screen or on the hard copy in front of them (assuming you asked them to print this in advance of the session).

Example: “Take a minute or two to complete the three-question poll on your screen. After we are finished, we’ll review the findings.”

3. **Start and end with personal sharing.** GLP’s [4A Model](#) remains a powerful tool for designing online learning sessions. Start by anchoring the learning session in what they know and have experienced and end by inviting them to consider what they want to use right away in their work or life. This learning sequence helps keep the focus on the participants and why we have gathered.

Example: “As we wait for everyone to arrive in this session, please write your name and city in the chat box, along with *one common challenge* you have been having with customers.” Then you use this in your introduction for the session. (ANCHOR)

Example: “Let’s start by seeing where people are at. On the screen is a list of common area of HR frustration or concern. Check the boxes of the ones that are true for you.” (ADD) Then you debrief what you see with the group. You can return to this data at the end, after learning has happened: “Now that we have spent time with the XX model, circle on the white board the one concern you are confident you can better address using the six steps we discussed.” (APPLY)

Example: “Take a minute on your own to consider all we learned and did today. Decide on the one step you want to take in the next week to use this information. Please write this in the chat box and I will check in with you in two weeks to see how it went.” (AWAY)

Following the webinar, be sure to send out a note thanking your participants for attending, summarize the key learnings from the call and attach a link to the recording in case they want to review or share the time together.

Lather, rinse, repeat.

What tips would you add for inviting engagement during a webinar?

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- [Ways to Ensure Offsite Participation During In-Person Meetings](#)
- [3 Things Seasoned Facilitators Can Learn from E-Facilitation](#)