



By this point in the socially distanced, hybrid, work from home world, we all need to get creative to keep our team members engaged, especially during virtual meetings. Are you going through the motions? Or have you thought of fun ways to get participants sitting at the edge of their seat, leaning in? This month's articles can help.

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BRING YOUR VIRTUAL MEETING TO LIFE WITH "SHOW AND TELL"

I was coaching several panelists on how to make a virtual webinar/meeting more interesting and I suggested they "show and tell" something about themselves and/or the topic. In this case, they were talking about disinfecting surgical tools and I asked, "So, do you have a tool that you can actually SHOW the audience?" Why yes! she had a hemostatic clamp that she could show where all the crud can build up and how important it is to disinfect the instrument properly! (It actually looks like scissors...)

Excellent news! I suggested that she actually practice using the prop in front of the camera and use a pencil or something to point at specific areas. Ideally, the audience should be able to see the entire prop within their field of vision of your camera. If and when they need to see detail, you need to hold it closer to the camera.

Well, during the webinar, she expertly showed the clamp and told some interesting things about it. The result? She was the hit of the conference!

Simply put, props bring your words to life. You can use props to strengthen your audience's ability to visualize, understand, accept, and remember an idea, concept, or theme during a meeting, webinar, or panel discussion.

Here are a few examples to help spur your thinking:

- **ENHANCERS.** For a meeting about oyster restoration in the Chesapeake Bay, one panelist brought an actual local oyster, another brought in a replica of a non-native oyster, and another brought in a piece of aqua farming material. It set the context in real-world terms. These props enhanced our understanding and appreciation for the topic.
- **THEATRICAL.** Actors use props to help the audience believe and follow what they are saying. Moderators and panelists can too. For example, hold up the magazine or book you are quoting.

- **METAPHORICAL.** Metaphorical props are used to make or reinforce your point. For example, show a Slinky® to illustrate the need for flexibility or a telescoping spyglass to show how strategic, business, and operational plans all need to be integrated with each other.
- **MODEL.** A model is a representation (usually smaller) of an object, person, or concept. Although you cannot bring a bulldozer into a meeting, you can certainly bring a toy bulldozer with you! Doctors often point to an organ model as they explain a physiological problem. Or take us on a tour of your home, office, or location. Just make sure you can walk around with your camera!

In a pinch, use a slide that is a picture of the prop—just in case they can't bring it to the meeting because it's too big, too small, too dangerous, or too weird.

And don't forget the opportunity to use Show & Tell as an icebreaker!

TOP TEN TIPS FOR VIRTUAL PANEL DISCUSSIONS

A virtual panel discussion can seem like a conversation amongst the panelists with absolutely no regard for the audience. But there is no reason NOT to include the audience, even if the panelists can't see them! Here are ten ways to engage the audience:

1. **Play to the camera.** Take advantage of the "frame" of the screen. Talk directly to the camera just like you are talking to the audience. Show your facial expressions, make gestures within the "frame," lean in when you want to talk, and lean back when listening. Slightly over-exaggerate your reactions to what your fellow panelists are saying.
2. **Take a poll.** Sure, you can take a poll with the platform's functionality. But why not spice it up with a poll asking the panelists to do something – and ask the audience to do it as well (even if we can't see them!). Grab a red, yellow, green object, raise your hand, thumbs up/down, etc.
3. **Annotate a screen share.** When sharing a screen, you can ask the panelists and audience to "annotate" the screen to select among options or share a preference.
4. **Use a whiteboard.** Ask the panelists (and audience) to answer a question, vote on a poll, or share an idea using a dry erasable whiteboard – or just a white piece of paper! (I like to send the whiteboards out to the panelists ahead of time so we're all using the same type of whiteboard).
5. **Show a prop.** Ask the panelists to bring in something to show that will enhance an idea, reinforce a point, or represents a model. Talk about leaning in! The audience will lean in to look at what you are holding up to the camera!
6. **Switch gears.** Adults get bored, so change it up every six to ten minutes to keep it lively.
7. **Change backgrounds.** Keep it interesting by changing your background between segments. You can easily create visual variety with virtual backgrounds. I have a VooDrop where I can easily flip over the backdrop!
8. **Queue the questions.** When questions flow in, let the panelists and audience know the order of who is in line to speak.
9. **Use the chatbox.** Especially for the audiences you can't see, ask a question, or take a poll while asking them to comment in the chatbox. Then read a sample of the comments and riff off the audience!
10. **Go to breakout rooms.** Especially with large groups, it's hard to have a meaningful conversation. So send the audience to a smaller breakout group with a specific question for more meaningful discussion.



TIPS FOR VIRTUAL PANEL DISCUSSIONS

USE THESE TECHNIQUES TO ENGAGE THE AUDIENCE



- 1 PLAY TO THE CAMERA**
and show expressions, gestures and reactions.



- 2 TAKE A POLL**
With the software. Grab a red, yellow, green object, raise your hand, thumbs up/down, etc.



- 3 ANNOTATE A SCREEN SHARE**
To select among options or share a preference.



- 4 USE A WHITEBOARD**
To answer a question, vote on a poll or share an idea.



- 5 SHOW A PROP**
To enhance an idea, reinforce a point or represents a model.



- 6 SWITCH GEARS**
Every six to ten minutes to keep it lively.



- 7 CHANGE BACKGROUNDS**
Between segments for visual variety.



- 8 QUEUE THE QUESTIONS**
So panelists and audience know who's next to speak.



- 9 USE THE CHAT BOX**
To drive audience engagement.



- 10 GO TO BREAKOUT ROOMS**
With a specific question for more meaningful discussion.

For more information about how to moderate a lively & informative panel discussion, Contact us at www.PowerfulPanels.com



FROM THE BOOKSHELF: INSIDE YOUR CUSTOMER'S IMAGINATION: 5 SECRETS FOR CREATING BREAKTHROUGH PRODUCTS, SERVICES, AND SOLUTIONS

As a facilitator of myriad customer experience conversations, journeys, and maps, I have always been interested in this idea of “co-creation” to develop new products and services in a collaborative way. Rather than assuming we know what the customer wants or needs, hosting focus groups, or creating customer advisory boards, what about asking a specific client to partner in the “co-creation” of a new product or service offering?

Chip Bell, in his latest book, [*Inside Your Customer's Imagination: 5 Secrets for Creating Breakthrough Products, Services, and Solutions*](#) provides a playbook for identifying and collaborating with your customers.

This book is a treasure trove of ideas and real-world examples to tap into your customer's brilliance. Not all of them will resonate with you – but it's a great springboard for thinking about how YOU can create partnerships with your customers! And how do you do that?

It starts with inviting and attracting their **creative contributions** by “communicating to your marketplace that you are a resource for experimentation and thus open to collective discovery.” You then begin to build the relationship by clarifying the collective focus and agreeing on the guardrails – even before you start whiteboarding a plan and crafting the ideas!

The main thesis of the book is that “a co-creation partnership takes

1. curiosity that uncovers insight,
2. grounding that promotes clear focus,
3. discovery that fosters risk-taking and experimentation,
4. trust that safeguards partnership purity and wholeness, and
5. passion that inspires energized generosity.”

And the payoff? The journey leads to ingenious outcomes and a customer who emerges as an advocate.

Five elements seem like a lot, but Bell has broken each element down into bite-sized chunks with lots of actionable ideas and examples. It certainly got my wheels turning! It will become my new reference book for customer co-creation!