Best Practices for Virtual Facilitation

Below are best practices for hosting virtual workshops based on our recent experiences.

1. Have a buddy work with you to handle technical issues on the day of the session so you can focus on the workshop. Technical issues may include learners emailing or calling because they can't access the site, can't find course hand-outs, can't find the class link, etc.

2. Set up a Course Resource Page on your server or intranet as a single location to find all things needed for our course. This may also be sent as an email.

3. Request learners test that they can access the site several days ahead of the session.

4. Use a headset.

5. Have an optional plan should your internet drop. Know how to hotspot your smartphone or have an alternative hotspot device that you can plug in.

6. Set and announce class policy for whether learners are expected to have their web cameras on/ off or optional. Let them know the policy ahead of time.

7. Practice, Practice, Practice. Use a friendly audience—family, friends, co-workers—and seek their feedback. Also consider recording your session using the video-conferencing platform and review it.

8. Engage learners throughout the program with various touches—launch a poll, do a quick survey, request a response through the chat, asking for learners to unmute and verbalize their comments, emojis, whiteboard (show them the annotate tool bar), videos, etc. If cameras are on 'play virtual toss ball' to get everyone to offer feedback. That is, throw a virtual ball to a participant and call out the person's name; this person catches the virtual ball, responds and announces the next person and throws the ball. Continue until everyone has responded. This could be an opener for class introductions or other activities where you want everyone to comment.

9. Use breakout rooms to allow learners to interact outside the main classroom. When possible set them up ahead of time. Determine how participants will record their work and bring it back to the larger class to present out. We have had groups use Google Docs as well as ask one person in the small group to open MS Word on her computer and share the screen with the small group. Be creative.

10. Decide your video strategy. Videos are accessed via a weblink. See the Facilitator Guide to get the links. Decide if you will play them for the class or if you will ask learners to copy the link

(from the chat box) and view the video on their own and return to class. If you are playing the video for the class, you will need to turn on a feature from your video-conference platform that allows your computer's sound to be heard by those in your virtual classroom.