

VIRTUAL TRAINING CONSIDERATIONS & FAQs

Onboarding new employees and providing ongoing training can be a joy to some managers, and a real challenge to others. The biggest barrier I see from clients is the time it takes to train properly, and when our schedule is already full, it feels daunting to provide the patience, preparation, and follow-through that high quality training requires. It can seem even harder when we are in different locations and time-zones!

Food for thought...

Look how much we've accomplished already as a society since the pandemic forced us to adapt! Even so-called Old Classics of training have changed. No one would be content to sit through some older-style training courses now that we've had a taste of tech, convenience, and compressed timelines – it's a brave new world and we can be assured that we are never going back to some of the old ways.

We might be guilty of romanticizing the way we used to do things. That's understandable because they were more familiar, but were they truly better? I don't think so. Different, not necessarily better.

1. The only thing I personally feel is missing from relevant content, well prepared, with an engaging presenter is the “energy in the room.” In InterAction Training, that's one of the most missed elements of in-person training. But to be perfectly frank, I feel connected to people in small groups and in 1:1 virtual sessions -- as long as the camera is on and people show up with an open mind, heart, and willing to make a connection.
2. The other piece that seems challenging to replicate is the captive audience situation. Trainers, presenters, managers – we all want to know that we our people are fully present and engaged in what we're sharing. Yes, this is harder virtually. But we can ask them to engage in various ways – and remember that in-person events did not guarantee people were paying attention. We could see them.

Invite and encourage their participation in a variety of ways – some of which we've covered in our team engagement topics. If you are in a training role, you may be interested in our [Train the Trainer Boot Camp!](#)

Posted FAQs:

Q. Do I need to customize to learning styles or is that passe?

Yes, and it's far from outdated, it's trending! Although – depending on the training and how many people, you obviously cannot customize everything.

Our recommendation is to change up your training method roughly every 20 minutes if you can. A few ideas: Balance information-sharing “lecture” with group activities, pause to ask for takeaways, have them write out a scenario or game plan, partner up to solve a problem together, and use visual aids and worksheets to support the training presentation.

Additionally, especially when you are training 1:1 try to adjust your style to your trainee’s preferences.

Q. What size group is ideal for virtual sessions?

It turns out there is no wrong answer to this one.

In our experience, almost any size group can have a positive experience with training virtually. If it’s hands-on, smaller groups are generally preferred (such as less than 10).

If your platform has the ability to do small group breakouts and if you have multiple moderators, you could have a very large group of hundreds and still have a successful event. Especially if you supplement with a tool like [Mentimeter](#).

Q. What if I can’t require cameras on? How do I know if they are paying attention?

We strongly encourage cameras on and are advocates of requiring it. But if you cannot, you’re not alone. Some platforms, like WebEx have an indicator for what percentage of the audience is paying attention – although that’s just if the session is their active screen.

Asking for frequent engagement and keeping things interesting are still your most effective methods for most attendees. Some ideas:

- Storytelling is powerful.
- You can ask them to send you a private chat message with their answer to a question.
- Announce there will be a quiz (or multiple mini-quizzes during a longer session), and optionally tie their quiz performance to their name then you’ll motivate them further and have proof of participation.

We also have several [free downloads on InterAction-Training.com](#) for more ideas!

Q. How do I know if I need a moderator?

If you have the option to get assistance from someone who can act as a moderator, do it.

It’s wonderful to be able to focus on content and not try to watch every feature, and worry about someone having technical issues, etc. Most trainers I know prefer to have someone designated to help, even if they aren’t a trained moderator, so that there are less interruptions for attendees when someone has an issue. This means a better experience for everyone.

That said, it's not required. If no moderator is available or you don't feel you need one, that's fine. I feel comfortable up to about 15 people in my 2-day virtual [Impactful Designs](#) sessions, but I love it when Vicki and I do our sessions together so we can help each other out.

If you're not sure, pay attention to the comments attendees share afterward. If a moderator would raise the experience for attendees, it's worth exploring.

Q. What tech works on a budget?

See also the supplement *Recommended Resources and Tools* for apps and websites.

As far as platforms, Zoom and Teams are the most popular in my circles. I've been a paid Zoom user since 2017 and I still love it. But whatever your organization has is generally what you get to use. Google Meet has gained a lot of ground, as has Adobe Connect. WebEx is still widely used as well. I recently used On24 and found it to be pretty cool.

For hybrid training, you'll want a camera and microphone. A good conference room with modern AV equipment probably has everything you need these days. If not, the Owl is pretty awesome. One of my groups uses this every week. We use a camera/mic combo [OBS Bot](#) that moves with hand gestures. Obviously a good internet connection is priceless!

[Mural](#) is a digital whiteboard for collaboration. It is real-time, making it an excellent choice for brainstorming, and sharing a whole host of things with each other. They also have tons of pre-built team activities!

Many people love [Kahoot](#) to make learning fun and find it to be cost-effective.

Q. Should I assess needs or survey participants before training?

When you are considering a training session, be sure to ask about the purpose. Drive to clarity to ensure you are on the same page! There is no substitute for this. For your internal training needs I would absolutely recommend checking in with stakeholders. Who benefits the most from the training?

Once the program is created and people are registered, we often send questionnaires out ahead of time to attendees to learn more about specific issues.

You can use SurveyMonkey or any popular survey tool, or just ask a few critical questions in email. Better than assuming!