

Preparing Your Committee to Operate Virtually – Hints and Tips

This guide supports clubs/organisations to run virtually.

Running a club/organisation virtually has many advantages, such as time saving for time poor volunteers, widening their support base, not just relying on those living locally or in the event of an emergency such as a pandemic.

Operating virtually should not inhibit any part of your governance or activity, and this guide shares some best practice and top tips that can be followed in order to make this a successful way of working. It is also advisable to put an action plan in place to ensure you can meet your financial obligations.



Top Tips:

- A committee's role is to provide leadership and make decisions about the strategic direction of your club/organisation. This usually can be done as effectively virtually, as it can face-to-face.
- The committee should always be clear on its direction of travel and through careful planning should have clear priorities. Roles and responsibilities to achieve the objectives should be assigned.
- Think about decisions and activities that must take place when working virtually and those that can be deferred – ensure your committee is prioritising effectively.
- Committee meetings should take place as per your constitution. Meetings can usually be face-to-face or virtual but this may not be the case in the event of an emergency. When holding virtual meetings, they can take place in a way that suits your members/customers and your committee – there is no right or wrong approach. There are, however, some top tips for best practice and ideas for making these as effective as possible (1).
- Be inventive about how you run your club/organisation. Think about all your activity and work out how you can use technology so that anything that happens face-to-face can also happen virtually – technology can help.
- Don't be afraid of virtual working. The number of technology options for communication when we are not with other people can be overwhelming but finding the right ones for you and your club/organisation can be very powerful.

1. Technology:

- Agree the IT systems you want to use (1). There are so many different options! Beware of using too many different ones, which could be confusing and overwhelming.
- Agree the technology you are using to communicate with members/customers. What do you want to say to them and what is the best method? (2,3)
- Make sure people can use each method effectively – send round a skills matrix to understand what people are able to use within your committee, see a suggestion below. Plan your approach to upskilling people – can you call on anyone within your club who is confident with technology to provide some training?



Example Skills Matrix:

Communication method	Not confident at all	Quite confident but would like support to start with	Very confident
Emails (4)			
Receiving, opening and reading documents			
Attaching documents			
FaceTime/WhatsApp video			
Conference calls			
Online meetings (video)			
Online training (6)			
Social media (3)			
Remote social meet ups			

2. Communication

- Good communication is key to the successful running of any club or organisation.
- The committee should oversee a communications plan that outlines its engagement with different groups. This could be phone, text, email, video calls etc., but it must work for everyone (2). The plan will also identify what communication goes to who and when. Make sure communications are clear and concise (2).
- Ensure the committee have defined the club/organisation's online presence and it is clear, consistent and professional – how do you use social media, your website and member communications? Visit Club Matters for advice and guidance on how to give your club a **strong online presence**.
- Check understanding within the committee when using virtual methods of communication – without being able to take body language cues in the same way as when face-to-face, clarifying someone's understanding of your agreed position is important. Take time on calls/video calls to do this.
- Use phone calls and video conference calls to communicate amongst the committee. Emails and text messages are good but when running an organisation remotely, talking to people is very important. (2)
- In some cases, the fewer the people that need to contribute to a decision, the easier it will be when working virtually. The more people on a video conference, for example, the harder it is to let everyone's voice be heard. Ensure only people who need to be on a call/video conference/message chain are on and have a clear plan for updating everyone else.



3. Organisation

- Organise your folders on your computer so that you have easy access to all the files you need. Keep track of all that is sent to you and all that you create. Ensure files are stored securely.
- Sometimes things can get lost on emails. If you are sent information by email that you want to keep, copy it to a document and save it in your folder, so you don't have to scroll through emails to find information.
- Ensure everyone is clear of their roles in the virtual world – for example, who sets up and manages online meetings (1), who is in charge of online support for members/customers and volunteers etc.
- Protect management time, even though it may not happen at the same time and in the same way. Identify the times that you are available to speak to people so that you can have good quality conversations when you have time to dedicate, rather than calls at any time when you are busy doing other things.
- Be flexible in your approach. When things are virtual, they can often happen at any time and in a slightly different way, ensure that people are aware of this and that everyone adopts a flexible approach to the work that needs doing.



References

1. Running virtual meetings (incl. AGMs) effectively. Download here: <https://learn.sportenglandclubmatters.com/course/view.php?id=71>
2. How clubs can communicate and engage with important groups (members, volunteers, sponsors, staff etc.). <https://www.sportenglandclubmatters.com/communicating-and-engaging-as-a-virtual-club/>
3. Using social channels to support the club's communications, engagement and management. <https://www.sportenglandclubmatters.com/social-media/>
4. Introduction to Email - <https://edu.gcfglobal.org/en/email101/email-etiquette-and-safety/1/>
5. Better Virtual Meetings Training <https://www.udemy.com/course/better-virtual-meetings/>

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