Effective time management during your event

Time is a very valuable resource in every event, but it is particularly so in online events, when attention poses more challenges and it can be easily drawn elsewhere. A good facilitation / moderation process is key to ensure that each speaker sticks to the time frame, that questions or issues by participants are addressed in a timely manner and that the conversation is dynamic, participatory and easily followed.

Facilitators should always give more time than they think is needed for activities and exercises, taking into account the time it takes to mute/unmute, move to breakout rooms, tech problems, languages diversity, etc. Make sure everyone involved in the event assigns time for it like they would for an offline event (no interruptions, no other tasks at the same time). Also, you should remind your participants which sessions are optional.

Be aware that “online” means that people will be sitting in front of a screen. One hour and a half may be ideal for some online meetings, but absolute rules can’t be made on this, as capacity to be engaged differs from one person to another. We all have different pace of participation which depends on our technology and digital literacy, language, accessibility, internet connectivity, public speaking skills, etc. Consider adjusting the pace of your session to your participants’ needs and contexts. This is especially relevant if the language(s) used during the event are not shared by all participants.

Be mindful and allocate time for all participants. Gently remind and offer different spaces and ways of participation for those who haven’t shared anything yet and be respectful of their participation pace. Create a list when there are more participants raising their hand. Consider having a shared document for additional questions and reflections. This can be particularly useful if the discussion gets heated and there are important issues being raised while approaching the end of the session.

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