

# FACE-TO-FACE IS THE BEST HUMAN COMMUNICATION

Whether it is for our soccer meetings or for education purposes the ultimate communication setting is personal. Face-to-face is the best approach in the following three situations:

1. **To capture attention**, particularly when you want to initiate something new or different;
2. **To insure a positive emotional climate**, as a way to catalyze collaboration, innovation and performance; and
3. **To build human networks and relationships**, realizing that information can increasingly be shared virtually whereas the greater value is in people networks and relationships.

## CAPTURING ATTENTION

There can be a significant temptation to multitasking during virtual meetings that is distracting and has an impact on the meeting objectives being achieved. It is a real problem when the goal is to initiate something new. New learning or a new set of priorities require a shift in attitude and action. Face-to-face is the most effective vehicle when you need to capture attention and focus so that people will learn and do something differently. The lack of a focused and attentive human mind is one of the greatest limiting factors in effectively executing strategy.

## SWITCH-TASKING

Multiple tasks – “switch-tasking” as the brain is forced to toggle back and forth between tasks. Despite the brain’s impressive complexity and processing power, it is limited in its capacity to absorb new information. Switch-tasking is an inefficient process. Learning takes place in the hippocampus portion of the brain. Switch-tasking doesn’t light up that part of the brain. The brain relies heavily on existing “archived” information and patterns to filter and interpret new information and situations. The bottom line is that learning which happens when someone is multitasking cannot be extrapolated and applied back at the job.

## SWITCHING OFF AUTOPILOT

Face-to-face meetings are a way to break through autopilot. Compared to single sense experiences when people are engaged with information in multisensory environments, they are more likely to remember the information. Face-to-face meetings allow for more focused attention, effective and engaged learning, and a novel, multisensory experience that is difficult to achieve in the virtual environment.

## INSPIRING POSITIVE EMOTIONS

Personal meetings generate emotions in support of learning and collaboration. Even with the best video conferencing tools one human element is missing. That key element

is inspiration. Face-to-face is the most effective vehicle when we want to inspire people and energize a positive emotional climate. This positive emotional climate enhances everything, including collaboration, relationship-building, creativity and performance. Managing individual and collective emotions that make up a group's emotional climate is a significant aspect of effective knowledge work.

## EMOTIONAL CONTAGION

Research has confirmed that emotions, attitudes and moods do ripple out from individuals and, in the process, influence not only other individuals' emotions, thoughts, attitudes and behaviors, but also the dynamics of the entire group.

## MIRROR NEURONS

These neurons fire in response to intentional and visible actions. For example a speaker's body language causes the stimulation of mirror neurons in the brain of the listener. The listener's brain is mimicking the brain of the person doing the action. This response happens below the level of conscious recognition. Large-group meetings are a powerful tool to inspire and motivate people while also strengthening a positive emotional climate that has a ripple effect way beyond the meeting.

## BUILDING HUMAN NETWORKS AND RELATIONSHIPS

Face-to-face meetings provide the best environment for the chaotic process of networking, reconnecting, story-telling and relationship building to occur.

## SOCIAL CAPITAL

It is the quality of the relationships between the individuals in an organization that provides the collective resilience, agility and will to succeed that is necessary for success. It is through regular large-group face-to-face forums that people are able to connect to one another and to the association in such a way that a sense of collective identification and energized commitment to shared purposes and goals is instilled.

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Broad Need	Examples of Specific Needs
Capture Attention for Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initiate a new strategic direction for the association</li> <li>• Launch a new program, course or event</li> <li>• Renew focus and attention on an existing strategy</li> </ul>
Inspire a Positive Emotional Climate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual meetings to energize people around association goals, values and priorities</li> <li>• Recognition events to celebrate top-performing individuals and teams</li> </ul>
Build Human Networks and Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual meetings to enable cultural cohesion and relationship building</li> <li>• For dispersed workforces, a regular rhythm of face-to-face meetings to build trust and effective working relationships</li> <li>• Professional community conferences</li> <li>• Dynamic knowledge-sharing and innovation summits</li> </ul>