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Featured: Editorial Advisory Board Virtual Meetings

Editorial Advisory Board Virtual Meetings

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A recent discussion on the International Academy of Nursing Editors (INANE) email update list revealed editors' experiences with virtual meetings. The discussion was reminiscent of a distance school nursing education program study published years ago using teleconferencing.¹ The study reported on the uptake of course program objectives and the use of a teleconference strategy. Students were in place at the university and at a distance across the state. The syllabus contained a weekly study guide with topical content, reading material, and objectives for the week. The class began with an introduction and presentation from faculty, followed by discussion. The class protocol included speakers introducing

themselves before speaking in the discussion with the intent to become familiar with all class members.

The study of the teleconference program preceded an online program. The assessment and adoption of new school nursing strategies were evaluated and revealed that the strategies were adopted similarly among students regardless of the mode of content delivery. The experience with teleconferencing among learners in place and at a distance revealed a few issues. Students reported satisfaction with the content of the class and the format of a short presentation followed by discussion. They reported that the pace of the teleconference class needed to be slower to allow ample time for discussion. There was some dissatisfaction with the use of technology among in place students—they reported it was bothersome to be required to introduce themselves before speaking.¹ That evaluation provides some direction for editorial board advisory board meeting assessments for editors. Consider: What is the purpose of the meeting and the expected outcomes? How do participants rate the meeting?

JOURNAL OF SCHOOL NURSING EXPERIENCE

The *Journal of School Nursing* Editorial Advisory Board and Editorial Panel meetings are held throughout the year and have several purposes. For example, the first meeting (one hour in length) is introductory and serves as an orientation to the role of members. Another hour-long meeting is scheduled to select winners of the writing awards. To prepare for this meeting, members rate the nominated authors' work using specific criteria. The ratings are discussed at the meeting and the award decisions are finalized. To facilitate the participation of all members, two meetings times are scheduled, thus the editor conducts two award meetings. For 10 years (from 2010 to spring 2020), these meetings were held online, using the National Association of School Nurses subscription to GoToMeeting. Editorial board members are in Europe, Africa and across the United States so we had to be

mindful of time zones across the world.² Considering that, this series of meetings were scheduled at 9 am, Pacific time.

Prior to June 2020, the third meeting of the year was in-person and scheduled during the annual conference. It was 4 to 5 hours in length and included a meal and snacks. The in-person meeting agenda included issues arising throughout the year, such as recruitment and retention of reviewers, the frequency of declined review invitations, and the response time for requested reviews. At the face-to-face meeting, there was lively discussion and lots of great ideas and advice were generated. For example, one member recommended shortening the stated turn-around-time for reviewers, suggesting that people wait until the reminder email is sent out—so, give them less time and send out the reminder sooner! We have also discussed letters received by the editor, with responses crafted by the Editorial Advisory Board. This came up recently when the editor shared a private email she received on the topic the interprofessional rosters of authors in the journal. The letter writer had a concern that the focus on *school nursing* in the journal might be lost. The editorial advisory board was eager to respond to this issue. Unfortunately, the author of the letter declined the invitation to publish the letter and subsequent response from the advisory board. An interesting opportunity was missed. Discussion of this issue, and strategies to prevent a re-occurrence are on the agenda for the next Editorial Advisory Board meeting.

EXPANDING VIRTUAL MEETINGS

A continuing problem with the face-to-face meeting is exclusion of the members, particularly those who live outside of the United States, because of travel expense. A teleconferencing option for these members was not available at the face-to-face meeting, primarily because of logistics and the expense to set up such a meeting in a hotel conference room. Still, international members provide important perspectives on school health and school nursing research and subsequent school

nursing implications that benefit readers and might not be apparent to editors and reviewers and we were eager to involve them as full participants. Now with readily available and affordable online meeting services, the inclusion of international members can be offered in the future. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, this year's meeting was held virtually, as the Annual Conference was postponed. From this experience, we learned a great deal.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

With any virtual meeting platform such as GoToMeeting, Skype, Microsoft Teams, or Zoom, there is the risk of technical difficulties.^{3,4} The screen sharing feature of many platforms requires practice and a bit of know-how. For example, in Zoom, a person has to be a host or co-host to be able to share their screen.⁵ Editors and board members recognize that expertise may not be equal, thus you should consider if the content to be shared during a meeting should be provided in advance. This can minimize technical difficulties at the time of the meeting and give members the opportunity to prepare in advance. Ideally, one board member should manage the screen sharing feature, and you, as editor should lead the meeting. Virtual meeting technologies all offer recording functions that allow the meeting to be viewed later by those who cannot attend. Of course, watching a recording and not being able to participate in the discussion is not the same for a participant, but it is better than not attending at all! Conducting a dry run can help to avoid annoying connection issues and delays for stressed and busy board members.⁶

Like distance education, virtual meetings require careful planning. The geographic distribution of members will guide your scheduling options.² You can check with participants in advance about their experience with virtual meetings. Try to anticipate difficulties members may experience and plan accordingly. Agendas and meeting materials should be sent in advance. Many people are

suffering from “Zoom fatigue,” so more frequent, shorter meetings are an alternative that you should consider.^{3,7} While there are reports from Zoom attendees that being continually “on camera” is intrusive, others complain that posting one’s photo to provide a break indicates disengagement. Negotiating camera participation and allowing times with cameras off in advance alleviates tension and fatigue.³ Keep in mind that having the camera/video on uses more bandwidth. If you are having problems with “freezing” during the meeting, you might ask all participants to turn their cameras off. Likewise, it is a best practice to ask all participants to mute their microphones unless they are speaking. This eliminates background noise and feedback.

As an editor, you should choose and shape the meeting space just as you would for an in-person meeting. Lighting should be arranged so your face is clearly visible to participants.⁶ The camera and screen should be at eye-level so you are looking straight ahead into the camera. If the camera is down low or at the bottom of your screen (a notorious feature on certain older Dell computers⁸), then prop your computer up on some books to get the camera in the right place. Sit close enough to the screen so that your head and shoulders fill the screen.⁹ Similar to preparing a conference room prior to a meeting, your screen background should be tidy and uncluttered.⁹ Consider where you are sitting and what’s behind you, and use a virtual background if necessary. If possible, sit in a private space/room so that family members, colleagues, or co-workers are not walking behind you, particularly if they are in a state of *déshabillé*.

To encourage participation of all members, open up the meeting 15 minutes early and prompt casual conversation among those who log in.⁶ Start the meeting by asking participants how they are doing or consider an ice-breaker activity.¹⁰ Online platforms offer the option of assigning the participants into different “rooms” to collaborate on issues more suited to a smaller group; participants can

then report on their discussion to the larger group. Start on time and avoid lengthy overviews before getting to the heart of the meeting.⁶ Follow the agenda and keep the meeting moving. These are all best practices for face-to-face meetings—just because you are online, some things don't change. These standards still apply.

CONCLUSION

While in-person meetings offer many opportunities for meeting leaders to “read” participants, use of technology has necessitated communication approaches that stimulate our creativity. Preparations for hosting an online meeting that is efficient, engaging, and cost-effective are the same as those for an in-person meeting. You must plan carefully, provide content prior to the meeting, start on time, stick to the agenda, and use strategies that promote collaboration. All crises accelerate innovation, and the COVID-19 pandemic has permanently changed how business is accomplished. Going forward, the lessons learned from mastering virtual meeting technology will enhance inclusivity, flexibility, participation, and productivity of Editorial Advisory Board meetings held virtually or in-person.

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