

HIGHER ROI, SMALLER COSTS: **5 WAYS TO SUPERCHARGE YOUR (REMOTE) MEETINGS**

Everyone is talking about the “new normal,” and almost everyone agrees that a more remote business world is here to stay.

Remote workers are often more productive[1] and a (more) remote workforce helps cut capital expenditure. Working remotely certainly saves a lot of time in commuting, and during this pandemic, staying remote feels safer, too.

The flipside of that is a growing weariness with the digital life. People crave real-life interactions and experiences, managers struggle to maintain engagement with video calls alone, and sales teams worry about the potentially negative impact on their results. After all, it was somewhat of an unwritten rule: “Get in front of a potential client as soon as possible!”

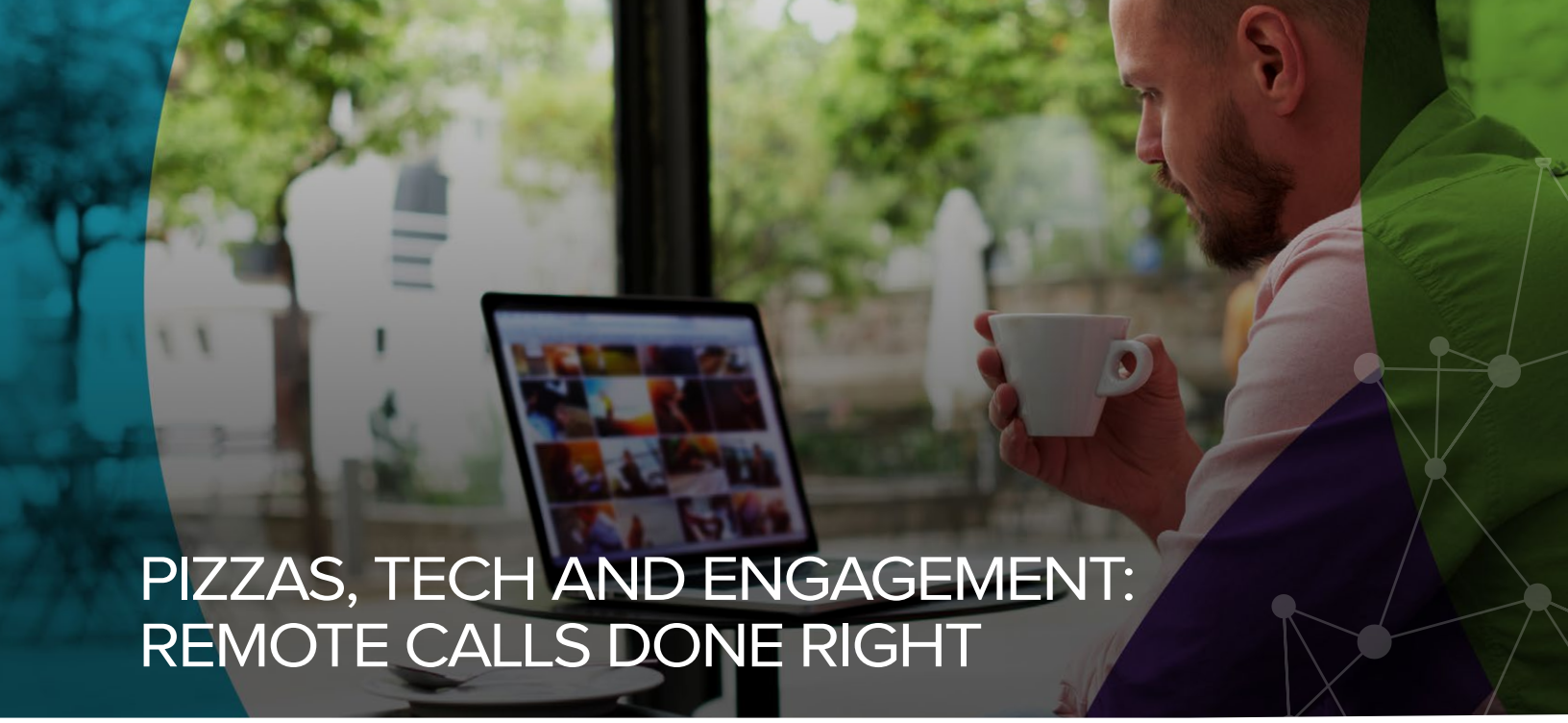
Before the pandemic, meeting rooms were already underused. Technology was often another challenge, with 10% of an IT manager’s time spent resolving issues with meeting room technology.[2]

If remote is here to stay, how do we tackle these challenges? How do we make meetings and remote calls more productive? In short, how do we make the best of the hybrid remote/office world?

Let’s “zoom in” on meetings and video conferencing—the one pillar supporting the various aspects of business operations, from internal team collaboration to sales and customer services. This one key aspect can either falter or boost cooperation and team productivity.

1 *Gartner, How Employee Engagement Drives Growth*

2 *The Meeting Room Marathon—A Waste of Corporate Time*



PIZZAS, TECH AND ENGAGEMENT: REMOTE CALLS DONE RIGHT

Imagine your usual video conference. There are five or more people on the call, often joining in from different cities and countries. Questions like “Can you give me permission to share my screen?” and “Can you see my screen now?” seem inevitable, and some attendees keep their microphone and camera off leaving others to wonder whether all their attention is truly on the call.

Sometimes there’s not enough time for all the decisions that need to be made. Other times you sit there wondering whether you really needed to be there at all. And that’s not to mention the follow-up notes and emails that take a few more hours out of the day.



15% of a company’s collective time is spent in meetings which, when not productive, amounts to considerable costs for the business. Meanwhile, a weekly executive meeting alone amounts to roughly 300,000 hours a year,[3] with unproductive meetings costing companies $37 billion a year in the US alone.[4]

That’s not surprising when you consider that around 90% of people admit to daydreaming in meetings, and 73% actually do other work during that time.[5] HBR has even released a calculator[6] to help companies estimate the true cost of their internal meetings.

Companies are taking different steps to tackle this problem, from taking meetings out of the agenda almost entirely[7] to limiting their size to as many people as can be fed with two pizzas.[8] Neither step might be the right one for you, especially with the rise of remote work.

That is why we have put together this list of five not-to-miss keys to successful meetings, on-site and online.

3 *HBR, This Weekly Meeting Took Up 300,000 Hours a Year*

4 *Inc.com, How Much Are Meetings Really Costing Your Company?*

5 *HBR, Why Your Meetings Stink—and What to Do About It*

6 *HBR, Estimate the Cost of a Meeting with This Calculator*

7 *J. Fried, Status meetings are the scourge*

8 *Inc.com, Jeff Bezos’s Odd-But-Effective Meeting Strategy*



FIVE NOT-TO-MISS KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL MEETINGS, ON-SITE AND ONLINE.

1. Plan for success: the fundamentals

Success starts with making sure everyone is on the same page.

- **Send the agenda** with any relevant documents attached ahead of the meeting.
- **Go through the agenda at the start of the meeting**, emphasising the key considerations and decisions that need to be made by the end of the meeting.
- **Introduce newcomers to each other.**
- **Send a meeting summary with follow-up tasks** to ensure nothing has been missed or misunderstood.

Beyond that, there are of course the fundamentals of a meeting etiquette: no multitasking, no looking at your phone, turning off notifications, tested audio, video and WiFi quality, and using headsets to tune out the background noise and improve the overall audio quality.

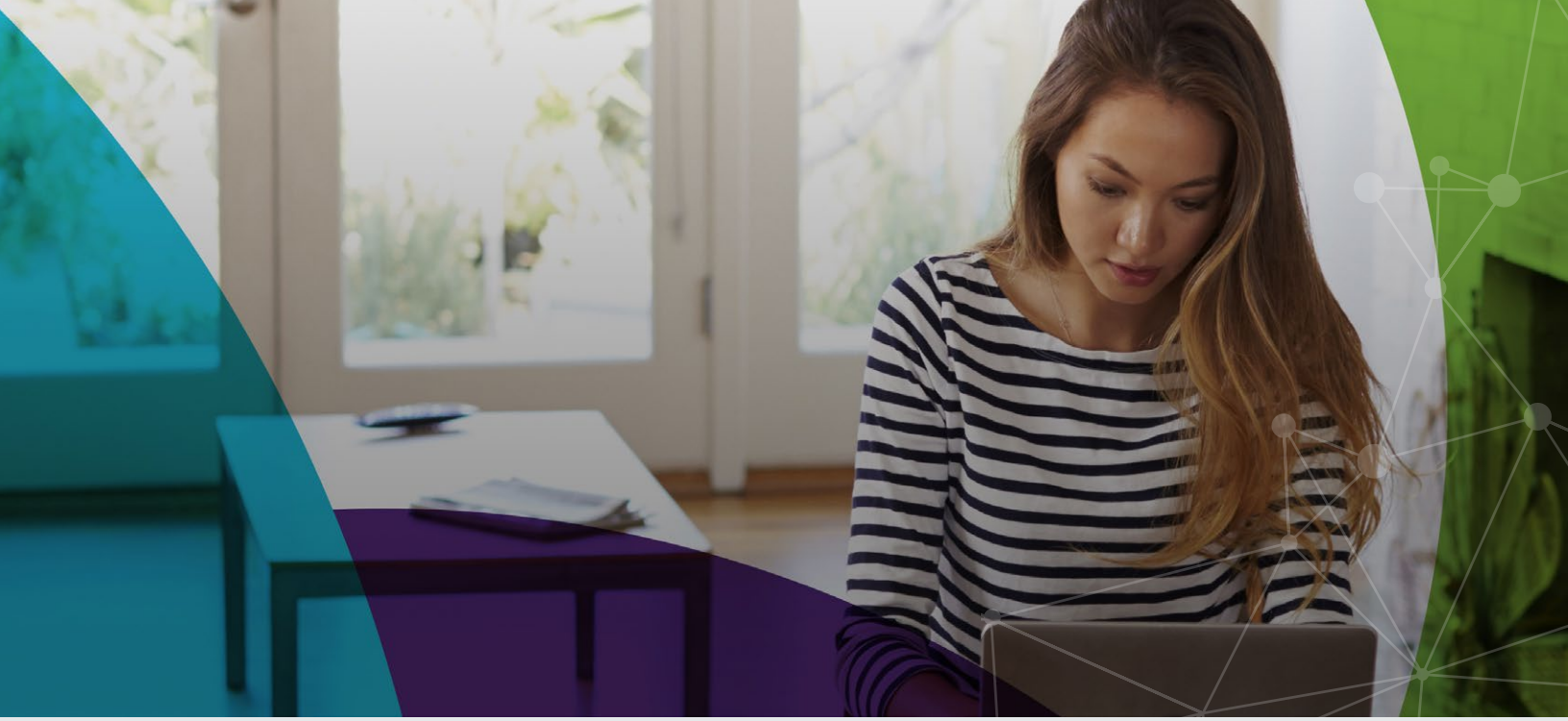
At its core, a meeting should be seen as a way of speeding up the necessary processes. If it's not, it may be worth considering whether that meeting is in fact necessary.

2. Prepare to engage

Having a plan and good meeting etiquette in place is just the starting point. A truly productive meeting also needs an action plan for engagement.

- **Start with a short casual conversation:** it will engage the audience from the start, build rapport, and pave the way for a more collaborative conversation when it turns to business.
- **Eliminate passive listening as much as possible.** Every meeting should ideally have a facilitator who not only puts the agenda together, but also asks questions and manages discussions.
- **Use tools like interactive displays** that increase engagement and speed up conversations, whether on-site or online.
- Assign each participant a to-do or a talking point for the meeting. That way, you'll make sure everyone understands their role and is actually fully engaged from the start. This will also ensure that the more introverted team members are heard.

Want to take it a step further? Introduce an anonymous quarterly feedback survey or opportunities for candor to understand whether your team(s) feel heard and evaluate where there might be space for further improvements.



3. Make them small: the rooms and the meetings

Research suggests that the smaller the meeting, the more effective it will be. Think around 7, and no more than 10 people.[9]

The global average meeting room utilization amounts to only 30%,[10] while even before the COVID-19 pandemic, 54% of meetings included remote participants and UK businesses were spending more than £10 billion a year on under-used office space.[11] This presents a significant opportunity for real estate savings, as well as team efficiency.

If a larger meeting cannot be avoided, using the breakout rooms feature of video conferencing tools (for instance, to facilitate topic-based idea generation) can be an efficient way of speeding up the process.

9 *Bob Sutton, Why Big Teams Suck: Seven (Plus or Minus Two) Is the Magical Number Once Again*

10 *Density, We Have a Space Problem: Benchmarks Reveal $150 Billion in Office Waste*

11 *Abintra, Businesses blow billions on wasted office space*

4. Automate, automate, automate

The world is not slowing down. Luckily, there are many ways to streamline and automate many of our day-to-day tasks, including video conferencing.

- **Frequent emails can be turned into templates**—both Gmail and Outlook offer this feature.
- **Text expander apps** can help you reply to emails within seconds.
- With **tools like Zapier, IFTTT and Automate.io**, new webinar registrants can be automatically added to your email marketing tool and campaigns.
- **Colleagues can be notified** of upcoming video calls via Slack.
- A **new event in your calendar** can trigger a template Google Document for the meeting's agenda, to name but a few of the things to take off your to-do list.
- More **advanced tools like a SMART Board®** will even let you save your notes, plans, and final sketches in your preferred format straight from the board.



5. Upgrade your meeting experience with the right technology

There is a simple solution to increasing productivity and engagement during meetings and video calls: technology. Choosing the right tools can make or break a successful meeting, particularly in an increasingly remote world where efficient use of real estate and technology is paramount.

At **SMART Technologies**, we often speak to companies that know they can make the meetings better, yet are unsure of the best approach to that.

One of the biggest aids to a meeting can be a digital whiteboard that enables collaboration across locations and devices. It is also a tool that can help eliminate the so-called “Zoom fatigue.”



SMART Board® Pro interactive displays, for example, allow people to collaborate as if they were in the same room. Instead of losing time and attention on turning screen share on and off to switch between tabs, windows, and users, you can add as many different files, images, and links to the board as you need.

There’s no need to wait for input either. Whether you’re collaborating with your team members, showing a demo to a lead, or presenting the latest sketches and plans to your clients, an interactive display enables instant feedback right there and then. While one person makes notes, others can add their observations in a different color, write over videos and into PDFs, erase files, and move objects around the board all at the same time.

To top it all off, there’s literally no learning curve, and no need to say goodbye to other tools either. SMART Board Pro integrates with Microsoft Office and Google Drive, any Android, Apple and Windows device, and even any video conferencing platform. A SMART Board Pro display is a way to enhance your existing tools rather than replace them.





6. Bonus tip: experiment

If COVID-19 has reminded us of something, it's that life is fluid. Nothing can ever be taken for granted. The more flexible and innovative we are in the face of a challenge, the better the outcome.

The same can be applied to business operations. Although centralized systems and processes certainly benefit the overall company productivity, there is also a need for more agility in order to adapt to challenges more easily.

Here are a few unconventional methods that are known to yield great results:

Silent brainstorming

Practitioners of design thinking and design sprints are no strangers to silent idea generation. Its effectiveness in yielding more creative, innovative ideas is also supported by research.[12] A popular method is "How Might We"[13] exercise during which the team silently brainstorm and note down various solutions to a formulated challenge and vote on the best one.

[12] *Paulus, P. B., & Yang, H.-C. (2000). Idea generation in groups: A basis for creativity in organizations. Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 82(1), 76–87.*

[13] *DesignKit by IDEO.org, How Might We*

Stand-up meetings

Stand-up meetings are another way of ensuring well-paced interaction and faster decisions.

Creative warmups

Whether an exercise or a 10 second dance break, creative warmups are expanding as an alternative way of kick-starting a well-paced meeting of collaboration.

ABOUT SMART® TECHNOLOGIES

SMART Technologies comes with more than 30 years of innovation. Our hardware and software solutions have garnered more than 20 awards worldwide in the last 5 years alone.

SMART Technologies is the inventor of the SMART Board® interactive display and the developer of SMART Notebook®, the world's most popular collaborative learning software, and part of the SMART Learning Suite.

Our mission is to provide simple, intuitive, and connected solutions to help our customers inspire greatness in themselves and the colleagues and teams they interact with. SMART Business solutions—SMART Board Pro and business software—are therefore designed to speed up cooperation, so everyone can contribute from any location or device.

We make collaborating in person and remotely as easy as meeting over coffee.

SMART Board® Pro

SMART Board Pro interactive displays enhance team productivity by enabling collaboration across devices, offices, and time zones. With lag-free, pressure sensitive writing, automatically turning on in reaction to ambient light sensors, saving files straight from the whiteboard to your computer, and iQ embedded computing that lets you switch between showing a video and writing on the whiteboard with a simple tap, these digital displays take the meeting experience to a new level.

SMART TeamWorks™

SMART TeamWorks software gives your teams the ultimate end-to-end collaboration experience, from any device, on any conferencing platform. It launches web-based conferencing with a single touch at the display, using any conferencing solution, enables parallel collaboration, and lets you email, save, or erase the whiteboard with a simple voice command.

SMART Meeting Pro®

SMART Meeting Pro gives teams the opportunity to capture ideas in a virtually unlimited interactive workspace. Add as many images, files, and links as you need, have your colleagues write as many comments and notes as they want. This workspace will keep expanding to fit your needs.

SMART Remote Management

SMART Remote Management software gives the ability to manage, control, and secure devices from any web browser. It saves you time by automatically sending messages and pushing updates, running diagnostics, and tracking user status.



With **SMART** Business solutions come:

Ease of use: It integrates seamlessly with any existing software and video conferencing platforms. Change them as often as you'd like—the SMART experience remains the same.

Collaboration, not just conversation: Switch between tabs and windows in one shared screen, type notes, and read documents from several locations and devices all at once.

Secure and easy installation: Windows setup wizard that takes only a few minutes, password protected settings, and support and guidance during installation.

The ROI you're looking for: From cutting costs to improving workplace experience and employee engagement. Discover flexible, forward-thinking, anywhere business solutions.

Find out more: **smarttech.com/business**

Authorized reseller:

SMART Technologies
smarttech.com/contact

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