LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT
TWO-DAY VIRTUAL EVENT

HETI Case Study: Our Learnings

During COVID-19, the Health Education and Training Institute (HETI) delivered a completely virtual two-day Leadership Development experience, reshaping an immersive two-day face-to-face experience into a transformative digital event.

The experience of the virtual learning world provided participants the opportunity to apply their facilitation, communication and collaboration skills in a new way.

The program objective was for participants to work in small teams and practise providing a consultancy service to another organisation. By meeting with key stakeholders in another organisation and learning their key challenges, participants spent time workshopping some approaches to respond to the areas identified. These were presented back to the organisation.

There was a lot of enquiry-based learning during the sessions which had traditionally been experienced in a face-to-face environment.

The agenda included the following components:

- Key speaker presentations with whiteboards and slides
- Entire cohort discussions and reflections
- Small working group breakouts to work on strategic challenges
- Immersive visits to virtually ‘meet’ and get to know clients
- Presentations back to clients
There were key lessons learnt in making the transition from fully face-to-face to fully virtual. These included:

**THE RIGHT EQUIPMENT**

It sounds simple, but having great technology to support a virtual delivery is a must. Using speaker systems with high-quality audio, ceiling microphones, touch screens for whiteboarding, large screens so all participants were visible at once, and high-quality cameras provided a rich visual and audio online experience.

The lecture room was set-up so that the facilitator could stand and move. This added both an element of familiarity (similar to what it would be like in person) and an element of physical movement making the presenters more dynamic.

**DESIGN AND DELIVER FOR INCLUSIVITY**

Virtual meetings offer a wonderful environment where every voice can be heard. Host functions (including ‘mute’) can invite and sustain individuals’ voices, minimising interruptions. Breakout room features are an effective way to get people to connect with each other and have meaningful conversations in small groups.

For maximum impact each participant should use dedicated technology (even if they are in the same office) so they can be put into various breakout rooms throughout the session.

**GET PEOPLE MOVING**

As well as the facilitator, it was also important to get participants up and moving. This was achieved by encouraging learners to move during breaks.

The facilitators also integrated ‘state-changing’ movement activities and body language prompts. This was as simple as asking participants to show how they were feeling by using a word and a body shape, or to agree on a range of hand signals to demonstrate a response such as ‘I agree’ and ‘tell me more’. This was important to enable everyone to contribute, at times simultaneously, while leaving the audio channel for one voice.
ENSURE VISUALS ADD RICHNESS TO THE EXPERIENCE

Enable the visual functions in your experience such as video, virtual backgrounds and photo sharing. For example, participants started using the background image setting to show how they were feeling about the program throughout the experience and as a way of checking out at the end of the session.

Sharing visuals added richness to stories and quickly built personal connection in an online environment where affinity connection might have otherwise been traditionally low.

MAKE USE OF SHARE FEATURES

Share screen features are common across many digital platforms and can be used for much more than presenting slides, for example:

- Share live polling platforms to invite multiple voices into the space.
- Put up word puzzles for participants to work on together while they are waiting for everyone to come back from the breaks.
- Don’t underestimate how two minutes of waiting online seems much longer than in a bricks and mortar room.
- Whiteboard features can be annotated on by multiple parties at once, so you can use it for much more than capturing themes.

These tools can also be an effective way to replicate a continuum line check in, for example, 'on a scale of one to ten, how do you think today went?'

HETI has seized the opportunity to transfer face-to-face programs into highly enjoyable, dynamic and impactful online experiences so that participants can continue to move at pace, work as high-performing virtual teams, and deliver on their strategies.