

DON'T PANIC

the trainers guide to going virtual

You're a seasoned learning professional. At the top of your game. You create fantastic learning experiences, glide through conference centers and airports like you're on castors, own the coffee area. But virtual? That's a whole new galaxy.

DON'T PANIC. You just need the inside track on operating in the virtual space. I've been designing, delivering, re-imagining and exploring in virtual learning for over a decade. These are my 7 virtual delivery survival tips.

Put people first. In these difficult times, aim to meet your learners where they are in their day, week or emotional journey. Everyone is juggling additional responsibilities and a bit frazzled. So set your learners up for success with great joining instructions. Then build in time for a relaxed welcome. Turn your camera on to put them at ease...I know, I know....but give them the gift of your gorgeous, smiling face! Get them familiar with the platform functionality they'll be using and regularly check in on how they're doing. You're going to meet a lot of kids and dogs and it will be fantastic.

Be an ambitious amateur. So you don't know much about the tech and everyone else is a pro? Relax. I still learn something new every day. Download the software and click on everything. Let your imagination run wild on how you could use it. You can edit your ambition for the practicalities of time and budget later.

Play to your strengths. Maybe you're a great storyteller, or you're incredible at feedback, or coaching group work. Whatever it is, take it into the virtual space. Figure out a way to use the tools available virtually to replicate the experience. Focus on being authentically you. And practice. A lot.

Stay action focused. The technology can be distracting. But whatever the platform, great learning experiences create value for people and businesses. What you want participants to do differently should still be at the heart of your learning design.

Plan meticulously...then go with the flow. Virtual delivery doesn't need to be linear and rigid. Build in flexibility to your materials so you can flex the timings and order. Allow buffer time for deeper discussions and learning rich detours. So you don't get lost, have a timetable and clock close at hand and give clear instructions and prompts to learners so they know where they are and what's expected.

Engage purposefully. Whatever platform you use, there'll be some great interactive features that can help drive engagement. Think of them as a toolkit – at their best when used for the right job and with purpose. You'll have your favorites (mine are chat, screen annotation and breakouts) but all of them can be very powerful if wielded wisely.

Embrace the fear. Be prepared for the worst. The tech will break. Don't panic. It will break in a new and interesting way. Still don't panic. Knowing the platform and running a backup login regularly save the day. As can a great producer or co-facilitator. If you're still in trouble, break the glass on your emergency phone-a-friend list. Breathe deeply, reboot yourself and dive back in.

Above all, **don't forget your headset.**