

# Behind the Scenes in Designing a Virtual Presentation

By Jackie Bell

As with teaching, when facilitating, there are many moving pieces that make it all come together. Some elements you experienced were very intentional on my part, some may have happened “in the moment,” and some may be ones that occurred serendipitously. Here is the “inner” voice of the decisions I intentionally made, as well as why that choice would best support the learning experience.

<b>Facilitator Move or Structure</b>	<b>Components of ALT</b>	<b>Rationale</b>
<p><b><u>Wow * Worry * Wonder</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Breakout groups</li> <li>● Directions in session guide</li> <li>● Interactive slide deck for capturing</li> </ul>	<p>Relevant Practical Active Positive</p>	<p>There are 3 types of openings you might employ to kick off a PD:</p> <p><b>Grounding</b>--to connect to prior learning  <b>Team/community building</b>--to connect to others; build trust  <b>Check-In</b>--to connect with how everyone is feeling</p> <p><i>Wow * Worry * Wonder</i> serves all three purposes. During these stressful times, a check-in is really important, as it allows people to name some of their stressors and hopefully set them aside to be more open to the learning. In the virtual environment, break out groups increase the level of conversation and engagement among participants, and it can be comforting to know that other people are feeling similarly.</p> <p>Using an interactive slide deck allows participants to “see” everyone’s thinking. For the facilitator, it also affords the opportunity to gauge prior knowledge and what concerns might prevent openness to learning so</p>

		that those can be addressed early on.
<b><u>Session Guide</u></b>	Practical Active	Having all materials in one place gives an “anchor” for the learning. It reduces possible frustration when there are different applications or tabs being accessed. It also allows for more processing modalities for directions and information.
<b><u>Parking Lot</u></b>	Practical Active Positive	<p>Having an ongoing place for participants to place their questions allows the facilitator to answer throughout the session, or afterwards as time allows.</p> <p>I like to have an external place (either a Google App or a Padlet) over the chat feature for a few reasons. If I am solo facilitating, it can be a lot to always monitor the chat feature and present. Depending on the group, the chat can move fast, so questions might get buried. It can also escalate stress--one question might trigger all of the questions that weren't fully on topic but then participants start to panic. The external parking lot mitigates a lot of that. Another benefit of the external parking lot is that the questions will not disappear, so the presenter can follow up or use the questions to guide future sessions.</p>

<p><b><u>ALT Word Cloud</u></b></p>	<p>Relevant Practical Active</p>	<p>To honor participants’ past experiences, I wanted an activity that would take a constructivist approach. Originally I had considered replicating Jot Thoughts through the use of Jamboard. This is a really fun platform and is great for the “wow” factor. However, to set everyone up for success, it would entail another break out group, lengthy directions, and modeling how to use the technology. In order for participants to reach the outcome, it would take at least 20 minutes. It would have been Active and Positive, but it would have taken away from the learning and application time later on.</p> <p>As I thought through my facilitator tools, I came to the idea of word cloud. This would be much more immediate and allow everyone to see trends that would help to construct a definition of Adult Learning Theory, while taking a total of no more than 5 minutes.</p>
<p><b><u>Application Time</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Choice</li> <li>● Breakout Groups</li> <li>● Poll</li> </ul>	<p>Relevant Practical Active Positive</p>	<p>This application time is where you can ensure that participants will walk away with something immediate to use.</p> <p>Also in our current context, it allows for dedicated time and space to think through, plan, find resources, etc. (Too much asynchronous work can be challenging for time management purposes.)</p> <p>This structure honors different processing preferences. While collaboration is a great way to learn and connect, some people are more comfortable having independent time to make their own meaning. This structure allows participants to choose which works best for them.</p> <p>Embedding this time within a session provides the comfort of others being available as thought partners, even if people chose to work</p>

		<p>independently. There is someone there to answer a question if it arises; you can work alone without working in isolation.</p> <p>To facilitate the process, there were several specific virtual facilitator moves I made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● <b>Poll:</b> Using the Poll Feature helps to gauge the needs of the group, and know if additional rooms may need to be made to keep sizes small</li><li>● <b>Video</b> for muting Zoom (or other preemptive measures depending on platform): providing videos to mitigate possible technological concerns saves time and manages the wide range of expertise</li><li>● Google Meets for <b>choice groups:</b> the power of this structure is in providing choice in the spaces. Some platforms allow for participants to self-select the group they join, but it can be time consuming if people are not familiar with how to do so. If you do not know the technological comfort level of the group, making Google Meet spaces in advance is the most time-efficient way. The groups are clearly labeled in the session guide so that people may easily join groups as meets their needs.</li></ul>
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## **Some of the “invisible” thinking that you did not see:**

### **Breakout Groups**

These need to be used judiciously. Too many breakout groups can get clunky, take up a lot of time, and can shut down participants. When applicable, having some visible product, such as an interactive slide deck, to help to keep breakout groups focused. It also allows the facilitator to monitor the groups easily.

In most platforms, once you are in a group, the main facilitator's audio goes away. The presentation may go away as well. Providing a session guide is a way to mitigate that. Including all of the directions there support groups with additional processing time to ensure they understand the tasks.

Assigning roles is a good way to get all group members involved. In the virtual environment, the time keeper and chat monitor roles are particularly important. The chat feature is still visible even when the facilitator's audio is gone in groups, so time warnings and a countdown can be seen to reduce the jarring nature of abruptly ending groups.

### **Applications for Engagement**

Within the platform, encouraging the hand raise and microphone, the chat feature, and emojis are great ways to make the presentation feel more dynamic. Emojis, reactions, and polls are simple (and quick) ways to check in with the whole group.

Google Apps (Docs, Slides, and Sheets) are all great ways to capture the thinking of the group. These can be very simplistic or as fancy as you want to make them. Depending on group size, it can be challenging to get all of the voices in the room, so these spaces can invite more to share.

Additional applications that lend themselves to collaboration include Jamboard (a Google App), [www.menti.com](http://www.menti.com), and [www.padlet.com](http://www.padlet.com). I try to avoid any app that requires the user to login or create an account, as it can slow down the activity. I also try to take into account how complicated an app may be based on what I know about the audience. If I do not have that prior knowledge, I err on the side of simple. Technology can quickly frustrate people when it does not go as planned, which can then shut down thinking.

### **Visual Supports/Presentation Design**

In the virtual environment, your presentation design is your nice outfit! You want to make or find a slide deck that is aesthetically pleasing with a little bit of your personality in there. Some sites offer many templates, including [www.slidescarnival.com](http://www.slidescarnival.com) and [www.slidesgo.com](http://www.slidesgo.com). Take into consideration, though, how busy some of them might be. Given how much screen time we are all experiencing, we don't want there to be too much going on. Fresh and clean is always a great starting place.

Using high quality photos can really elevate the presentation. Some of my favorite sources for royalty free pictures are [www.pexels.com](http://www.pexels.com) and [www.unsplash.com](http://www.unsplash.com). In face-to-face and virtual presentations, it's best practice to not have too much text on any slide. White space is a good thing.

### **Blended Learning**

To maximize our time together, I wanted to prioritize you experiencing many elements of an engaging virtual PD and having processing time to apply your thinking. I also wanted to include, though, space where I could explain the decisions I made and allow you to hear the metacognitive process that went into designing today's learning. The time we had together would not be enough. Even if there was more time, though, many learners would have been "full" by the end of the application breakout groups. Having an asynchronous post-reading (this document) was my solution. Knowing we will be meeting again in a few weeks, you have additional time to process and generate questions that were not answered in this.