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New ways of work – using Zoom for Board meetings

As we all adjust to this new reality, we need to find new ways to connect and ensure good governance of our organisations whilst supporting the government's public health advice. One way is to utilise Zoom video conference.



Board meeting of The Arts Council, 18 March 2020, Photo by Kevin Rafter

If you don't have a subscription, you will have to limit your minutes to 40 minutes – although Zoom have lifted this limit for some groups and organisations. I have had a subscription for the past year and have found it good value – even more so in recent weeks. As a first step, you need to set up a Zoom account basic (up to 40 minutes) or a pro account (€13.99 per month) or business (€18.99 per month).

The next step is to sign in to Zoom and 'Schedule a Meeting'. Zoom gives instructions on how to do this, but here are some tips:

- Allow others to join before the host (recommend you use a password)
- Mute all participants
- Put video on for all
- Consider using option to add a password for entry or enable a waiting room
- Ensure you give the meeting a name relevant to all e.g. Organisation Name Board meeting
- Under 'Audio' ensure you add the option for a dial in from Ireland (default is set to the USA only)

I would strongly encourage the use of video where possible as it helps the dynamics of the meetings and allows for increased engagement. If a Board member(s) can only join via audio, then use the chat feature to alert the chair you wish to speak.

If everyone uses video, with your mic on mute, it cuts down on background noises. When you wish to speak, raise your hand or take the mic off mute. Using video is handy as it allows for Board members to nod in agreement with the chair or a member can raise their hand to input.

Like any board meeting, ensure you have a clear agenda, front load items needing decision and be clear about the purpose for each agenda item. It is good practice, if the chair at an early point in the meeting, does a 'tour de table' as this allows everyone to be comfortable with how the meeting will operate. Set a definite start and end time. If needed, schedule an additional meeting.

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When you get more advanced you can change your background, you can record the meetings (ensuring you have meetings permission) and you can share files via Dropbox and make presentations. Within weeks, I imagine we will all be experts and adjust to this new way of work. I encourage organisations to give it a good and am happy to chat one-to-one if I can help or assist anyone with your initial steps.

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Honoured to work with Carmichael training by providing consultancy services to their members