

Super- Connected In Self Isolation

Let's experiment with new ways of virtual working that keep business running today and set us up to be future-ready for tomorrow.

Our Top Tips for Virtual Engagement and Learning

During the toughest months of the last recession, start-up activity actually surged. Globally in 2009 we saw the highest increase in entrepreneurship in 14 years. Economist Christopher Freeman, found evidence that innovations don't just accelerate, but pile up during economic downturns. They are then unleashed as the economy begins to recover, ushering in powerful new waves of technological change.

At *?What If! Innovation* we strongly believe in the power of constraint to unlock new & meaningful innovation. In fact, after the recession, we painted the Rahm Emanuel quote *Let's Not Waste A Good Crisis* on our office window. By its very nature, crisis implies the need for radical change - it shifts expectations, opinions & demand.

Today the Coronavirus is 2020's downturn. Fueled not by the economy but in an environmental twist of fate,

mother nature is now grounding us. This is triggering fear and tragedy around the world, turning the everyday mindless conveniences of air travel, instant delivery and co-locating into risky choices with the real power to hurt ourselves and others. It is forcing us to re-think all the travel conveniences we take for granted, how we work and live.

In parallel, many leading perspectives on where and how we'll be working in the future are often contingent on digital interaction and a remote dispersed workforce. While this transition has been slow to globally take hold, now is the moment to take a brave **step towards our digital future, and actively experiment with new virtual ways of working.**

At *?What If! Innovation* we use and train digital methodologies to enable you to communicate, collaborate, and learn as effectively as face to face. But it's bigger than that. Trying out these techniques now will help us learn and de-risk how we digitally collaborate, innovate and run business for the 21st century, while also taking a more meaningful step forward to reduce our carbon footprint on our planet.

We've compiled some our favorite ways to turn digital interactions into meaningful moments of impact and momentum. These are the methods we are using to keep our innovation business running in our rapidly changing world. They cut across:

one

**High-Powered
Virtual Teams**

two

**Captivating
Virtual
Workshops**

three

**Agile Digital
Customer Research
& Experimentation**

High-Powered Virtual Teams

What if you can keep your teams fresh and super-connected after weeks of self-isolation?

Turn on your camera

Seems obvious but we've always been amazed at how resistant teams can be to show some camera love. Be the first one to turn on your camera on every call, and get your face up close. You will see others faces start to pop up.

Show you care

Love boxes sent out to teams at home are great way to show you care. These packages of compassion don't need to be fancy – snacks, candles, hand sanitizer, a hand-written note – all go a long way. A recent study found that 93% of employees say they are more likely to stay with an employer that demonstrates empathy (Business Solver, 2019).

Set up a team Spotify

If you can't all be in the same place, you can at least feel like you are. A team playlist that everyone is adding and listening to creates a sense of sensory connection across distance.

Create new traditions

Virtual collaboration presents the opportunity to introduce a whole new set of team rituals. Does everyone wear red on Wednesdays? Do you have a virtual lunch hang out where everyone starts with a coffee in their favorite mugs? Do you kick off each call with an energy check and yoga stretch?

At home with...

How can you take advantage of everyone being in their own habitat? Ask people to hold virtual tutorials on their business or personal skills (cooking lesson anyone?). Ask for a video tour of your colleague's home to get to know them better?

Resist the email trap

The biggest danger in virtual teams is losing the impact of tone and emotion on the slippery slope of email or IM as the main communication. Voice notes, video memos get the same messages across but in a human way. What about a 'virtual coffee machine' every day at a certain time?

Hyper-setting expectations

Agree response times. If you are in the office, you SEE that the other person is in and out of meetings and under stress and you accept longer response times. For home working you might not recognize this and it's critical we over communicate state and expectations.

Get viral

Things can get all too serious in the land of virtual. What is your team's version of the no make up selfie, the Harlem Shake or the white/gold dress? What about a daily digital caption competition?

Captivating Virtual Workshops

What If you could gather dozens of your colleagues together to convene, learn, and make decisions virtually?

Decide well

One of the challenges of screen life is the absence of proximity to discuss and make hard decisions. Consider pre-work/ pre-reads so participants arrive with a more considered opinion and templates to aid discussion. In the moment, use visual scorecards (numbers or icons) held up to screen to offer a visual pulse of the group's opinions. Leave time - discussions and decisions will take longer.

Set the scene

It is more important than ever to send an invite explaining how the session is going to feel and commitment required i.e. you're not just dialling in to listen, it is not drop in, drop out.

Prevent slide fatigue

Don't hide behind the slide share. Create 'mini-flips' held up to camera.

Dress your set

Compose and light your background in a striking way. Try using creative backdrops. At very least, if at home, get rid of the overflowing bin or dirty clothing and replace with a plant and stack of books. Never call from bed even if your headboard could conceivably be a sofa. You'll never live down a shameful glimpse of the pillow!

No silent partners

Sometimes it's hard to remember who is on the call. Put their pictures up on your wall to remind you whose voice you should be hearing so you can encourage and facilitate them.

Harness the sense of sound

Don't forget that music travels across all digital platforms. Play music at specific moments, and during breaks for the right effect.

Get 'appy

Chat functionality on video calling platforms should be used to encourage input & discussion. There's also a host of websites and apps to further enhance interactivity. *Menti* and *Sli:do* have Q&A functions and live voting and polls. *Seenit* enables people to submit bite-sized films to cut together to a digital scrapbook. Smart Notepads enable sharing of written notes and scribbles.

Don't forget the standard flow

Don't forget our tried and tested workshop must-dos still hold true. Start with Purpose, Process, Payoff. Align on behaviors and agreements. End each meeting on a high!

Break up

Breakout groups are still possible! Assign each breakout group a dial in link to separately dial in together. Have a leader in each group who owns toggling the group in and out of the main dial in, on time.

Embrace the virtual Noodle

The Noodle is a walk and talk meeting you can do in almost any setting - even virtually. In real life you pair up and walk shoulder to shoulder in the same direction, like you're strolling to get a coffee. Virtually you still do all this but you have your buddy on the phone rather than physically next to you.

Energize virtually

Energy management is more important than ever when lagging behind screens. Energizers we know work digitally include *Dad Dancing*, *Shaky Stevens*, *Mexican Wave* & *Superhero Power*. Keep activities, even energizers, short.

Be real

Don't hide about tech not being ideal, signal up front that this could be messy but we'll make it work. Be prepared that some things won't work and have a plan B. One person on the team should be assigned to answer IT/logistical queries.

A typical ?What If? Workshop in a box
A mini kit of props and printed materials



Agile Digital Customer Research

What If you could gather deep emotional insight on your people or your customers, without sitting next to them?

At *What If!* we use our *Learning Lab* to learn about our consumer needs and de-risk our ideas quickly. Many of our *Learning Lab* methodologies are digital, which means we can speak to more people in diverse locations and at scale, getting us to better insights than ever. Here are a few of our favorite methods!

Empathy Scan

(i.e. Social Listening)

In a time of less travel and an obsession with news outlets, our customers are spending more time browsing and posting online than ever. This is the perfect time to tap into the millions of live online conversations to uncover human truths about what people value, the person they aspire to be, or to uncover the Zeitgeist of the time.

Quick Pulse

(i.e. Mobile Surveys)

Face to face conversations are not necessary for rapid fire feedback on human problems, insights or ideas. Send out quick mobile Pulse Surveys to a digital panel and get rich feedback within a number of minutes.

Digital Immersions

You don't have to be sat in the same room physically to get into deep and personal conversations with consumers or to have rich observational learnings. Using virtual live chat interviews can feel just as intimate and allow you to get to qualitative depth, while video feed immersions enable you to see just how people live and behave.

AI Hotshops

(i.e. Digital focus groups at scale)

Building up concepts or prioritizing them does not have to take place in focus group facility. Speak to hundreds of consumers in a matter of minutes through using virtual artificial intelligence. Have a real open-ended conversation with them, and then the AI machine helps quickly identify group opinion and consensus to deliver both rich qualitative insights and quantitative direction at scale.

And when it comes to learning more about your customer's needs and behaviors, now is a better time than ever.

Coronavirus is forcing a cultural moment that will impact decision making, values and behavior.

Here are a few hypotheses of how we believe Coronavirus could shift customer behaviors in favor of undertaking digital research right now.

The Lipstick Economy

As we saw after the banking crisis in 2009, the broader economy slowed and people felt unable to make the larger, more significant purchases (car, house, vacations etc.). However, the economy for smaller luxuries, such as lipstick, boomed. Economists put this down to the fact that even in a tumultuous economy, people need outlets in which to treat themselves and to demonstrate self-expression. The behaviors of people during this current period of global confinement will create shifts in product choice, service delivery, retail format, delivery mechanisms and supply chains.

What if you digitally experimented with new solutions and offers built for a world of increased isolation?

Opening up to online

In times of global unease people venture online to get a bit angry and also a bit scared - comfortably expressing their vulnerability in the semi-anonymity provided by digital spaces. Longer confinement will also mean we'll see more people turn to online for social interaction and conversation.

What if you harnessed the heightened emotional and open-book conversations of the current digital world to uncover deeper human problems and truths?

Craving creative outlets

With constraints on travel and socialization, many frustrated cutting-edge consumers will be craving new creative outlets.

What if you tapped into the brainpower of our buzzing Hive or Influencer Panel to launch a virtual kick around on new to world concepts?

Why is **NOW** the right time to start experimenting with new ways of working?

We have an opportunity to truly demonstrate that there is another, more sustainable, way.

Many of us are still holding true to the belief that the only way to get things done or to learn about people is to get in a room with them. But with growing pressure on our planet, it is becoming less realistic and less responsible to fly around the world at the drop of a hat in the name of collaboration or research.

Further, many of our clients have many public commitments to enabling greater flexibility for their workforces, but as yet have struggled to make this promise a reality.

The truth is that we can effectively work together, learn about our customers and create incredible ideas by harnessing the power of our digital methodologies. Even better is that this can be done in half the time, energy and money from our own living rooms.

Crises like the one we're currently facing provide us a crucial moment of reflection and experimentation, a time to look to our collective humanity and resourcefulness for answers.

Let's take this time to learn from the gaps and shifting needs of today, to build a better tomorrow.

Want to know more? Let's set up a video-chat.

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