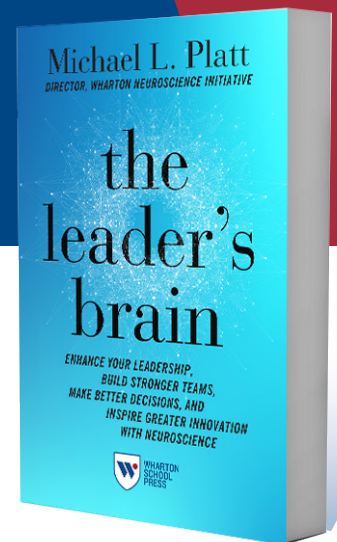


# Tips for Getting the Most Out of Your Virtual Meeting

Michael L. Platt

*The COVID-19 pandemic has led to many drastic changes in our personal—and work—lives. Perhaps the most glaring daily reminder for those who have shifted to working remotely are meetings that now take place on Zoom, BlueJeans, or other videoconferencing software. The same goes for our social lives—virtual happy hours have become a consistent feature. But the consequences of these severe disruptions are keenly felt in our natural longing to be together and make a connection. As I explain in my new book, The Leader's Brain, neuroscience can help us navigate the COVID-19 “new normal.” Here are some tips to consider in your next virtual meeting.*



ADAPTED FROM  
MICHAEL L. PLATT'S NEW BOOK

## The Leader's Brain

Enhance Your Leadership, Build Stronger Teams, Make Better Decisions, and Inspire Greater Innovation with Neuroscience

- 1. Observe others' facial expressions.** The reason we make facial expressions is to communicate with others. If you spend Zoom meetings looking at your phone or another window instead of the people around you, you're starving your social brain network of the information it needs to make sense of others.
- 2. Look someone in the eye.** It says, “I think you're important!” Where you look matters. When you're leading a virtual meeting or speaking with a client, be conscious of your gaze and use it to shape the conversation. Be aware of the location of the camera: Paradoxically, you have to look into the camera to meet the gaze of others on the call.
- 3. Take breaks from videoconferencing and rely on purely audio conference calls instead.** Although you'll miss out on some of the nonverbal cues we normally rely on to navigate communication, you'll get a mental break from trying to read and interpret distorted visual social information.
- 4. Hold the occasional “social Zoom.”** Virtual office social activities can help workers get to know one another better and appreciate the realities of remote working for each member. As we moved to remote work, every Friday my teammates and I have gathered on Zoom to play online games. It seems silly, but it works—and no one skips Friday check-in.
- 5. Experiment with different Zoom backgrounds.** Okay, so this one isn't actually backed by any scientific studies, but who says a fun Zoom background won't spur some conversation and connection? Try this [photo](#) of monkeys on Cayo Santiago, also known as “Monkey Island.” I've been studying these monkeys for more than two decades to get some clues about how our own brains work.



Photo copyright © 2020 by Lauren Brent