

Breaking Free from Phone Distractions: Maximizing Engagement in Meetings and Workshops

by [Jack Reimon](#), an International Partner of [Trivium](#)

Isn't it ironic how our devices, intended to boost productivity, can sometimes turn into the greatest enemies of focus and active participation? This is a recurring concern among some clients who are apprehensive about the potential impact of mobile distractions during an important workshop or meeting.

Our world is intertwined with technology, and the pull of constant notifications has birthed a habit that often disrupts the flow of human connection and communication. We tend to underestimate how these micro-disturbances can impede memory formation, stifle creativity, and ultimately, limit our potential, therefore not allowing us to perform better.

Even more concerning is that seasoned senior-level professionals often fall more into this trap, possibly due to an ingrained sense of knowing more or having 'bigger fish to fry'.

Holding the space for them to engage without distractions is an opportunity for self-contemplation and growth.

Here are some guidelines on how we can tackle this issue:

Set Expectations Early: Let attendees know beforehand that phone usage will be openly addressed if noticed during the session. This isn't about shaming; it's about creating an environment conducive to engagement and growth.

Own the Space: As a facilitator, it's vital to feel comfortable leading the group and owning the room. This confidence creates an atmosphere of respect and attentiveness, making it easier for attendees to leave their devices aside and engage fully in the session. Remember, your conviction sets the tone for the entire event.

Lead by Example: It's important to remember that as a facilitator, we must lead by example. So, try not to reach for your mobile phone during the session. Participants often mirror the behavior they observe, and our actions can set the tone for a focused and distraction-free environment.

Tech Breaks: Regularly schedule short intervals for people to check their devices. This will not only reduce their anxiety but also provide an outlet for the habitual urge to stay connected. And create space for documenting and taking pictures (I know that in my workshops most people would like to)

Craft a Purpose: Engage attendees with a well-crafted purpose. When everyone feels involved from the beginning and understands the 'why', it becomes easier to stay focused.

Keep It Short & Interesting: Long, unstructured talks can induce boredom, triggering people to seek distraction.

While placing phones in a basket may work for some, I believe it can feel a bit overbearing. Instead, let's remember that it's a habit we are all trying to break. Let's show empathy and make the change together.

On a final note, the surge of smartwatches can pose an even greater challenge to our fight against digital distractions. Their inconspicuous nature and constant availability on our wrists can make it even harder to disengage and maintain focus.

After all, aren't our workshops and meetings aimed at fostering connections and ideas, rather than fueling our digital addictions?

Technology should serve us, not the other way around.

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