

MORTAL FOOLS

GETTING THE BEST OUT OF DIGITAL COMMUNICATION

INTRODUCTION

BY KIZ CROSBIE, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, MORTAL FOOLS

We've all been thrown into a new way of working. With very little warning, our working lives have been thrown upside down, inside out and back-to-front and we're all trying to find our way through it.

You may have already discovered benefits from working through digital platforms – we've been very successful in convening our large associate team, for example. Something we'd always struggled to do with any regularity in the ways we were used to working.

You may be finding working in this way frustrating, tiring and unsatisfactory – and be putting all your efforts into holding on tight and waiting for 'normal life' to resume.

Or you may be some combination of them both.

But like it or not, working through digital platforms is going to be here to stay (in some form, at least) for some time to come. The world is changing around us in immeasurable and uncontrollable ways, and those who actively work to find ways to adapt, reinvent and re-imagine are the ones most likely to prosper in all this.

Most humans are never fully present in the now, because unconsciously they believe that the next moment must be more important than this one.

But then you miss your whole life, which is never not now.

And that's a revelation for some people: to realise that your life is only ever now.

–

Eckhart Tolle

As someone who is so used to (and who positively thrives on) face-to-face meetings, sessions and events, I'm finding interacting with people through digital platforms unfulfilling by comparison. And that got me interested in exploring why I was feeling that way, how I can influence it and what the result of that would be.

This led us at Mortal Fools to fast-track the launch of our CONNECT training programme, with workshops designed to share our learning and support other people to learn skills, rebuild their confidence and find more fulfilment in their work.

This pack is a snapshot of that training, with ideas, hints and tips and further recommended resources to help you along the way.

But if you want to book on our training, email rachel.horton@mortalfools.org.uk for more details.



WHY IS ALL THIS SO DIFFICULT?!

For many of us, delivering activities – meetings, workshops or pitches – through digital platforms is quite new. And doing new things makes us vulnerable – learning something new is always vulnerable – and it's especially difficult when we're doing that new thing publicly.

“Vulnerability is the birthplace of innovation, creativity and change.”

DR BRENE BROWN

If we want to increase our confidence with anything, it's important to recognise that confidence is not the absence of fear – confidence is the ability to wade through those feelings and not let them stop you. Try to remind yourself of this when you hit a hard patch – treating yourself with the same spirit of generous support that you would likely give to someone else. This is new for all of us. We're going to make mistakes and we're going to find some things difficult – but if you stick with it, it will get better.

THE COMFORT ZONE



IT'S JUST NOT LIKE IT IS IN PERSON

No, it's not. That's just the way it is. We need the presence of other human beings to make authentic connections, relationships and shared experiences.

But there are things we can do which make it a little better. Some tips we suggest are:

- **Do your preparation**

Rocking up to any meeting underprepared is likely to lead to a result less than you'd hoped for, so:

- Write a plan for your meeting or session – so you have something to follow to stay on track and you've thought through what you want to achieve
- Practice your activities, key things you want to say and the functions of your chosen platform – trying out these things with friends, family or trusted colleagues before you go live. Get them to give you some friendly critical feedback about how you look, sound and come across through the tiny digital window.
- Spend a few minutes before your session getting yourself into the right mindset – shake off some nervous energy, try some controlled breathing and organise what you need for your session (more preparation exercises available at the end).

"If you fail to prepare, you are preparing to fail."

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

- **Utilise ways to make you more engaging on a digital platform**

We may not be face-to-face, but we can use what we all know about these types of interactions to help us be more engaging to others. For example:

- Make sure you can be clearly seen and heard on screen – showing head and shoulders so people can read your body language, with your face clearly lit (but not too brightly) so they can read your facial expressions
- Cheat the illusion of eye contact by looking directly into the camera on your device as much as possible. Remember you're naturally more likely to look at people's pictures when you address them – so this takes a bit of practice.
- Practice giving people your full attention by keeping your 'self view' on. You'll soon notice if you look disinterested or distracted – and can adjust.

- **Remember to involve everyone**

It's harder for everyone to stay engaged on a digital platform. It's too easy to slyly check social media or send a quick email when we're not in a room together. Keep everyone engaged by:

- Set rules of engagement to start with, so everyone knows how they can get your attention if they need to and that their input is wanted
- Making sure everyone has a chance to speak e.g. through 1-minute introductions or timed feedback from activities
- Mix up your delivery with whole group and smaller breakout groups if you can.

NAMING THE FEAR (10 mins)

We can learn to tame our fear if we can first name our fear. Try this freewriting exercise to help you identify your fears and choose things to help with it. Freewriting is allowing an uninterrupted and unedited stream of consciousness to come out onto the page.

If you cannot think of what to write, you can write: I don't know what to say... blah blah blah... anything to keep that pen moving until the thoughts start flowing again.

What you'll need:

- A quiet place where you can write without disturbances or distractions
- Pen, plain paper and something to time with

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Set a timer for 5 minutes and write the words
“Working on digital platforms most scares me because...”

Start the timer and freewrite for 5 minutes.

Then spend 3 minutes reading back over what you've written, underlining anything that stands out to you.

Finally spend 2 minutes noting down what activities you can think of to help with the fear(s) you've identified

REFLECTING AFTERWARDS - WAS IT AS BAD AS I THOUGHT?

(20 mins)

When we're learning something new and it's stressful, taking time to reflect is extremely useful to embed the learning and identify key development points.

What you'll need:

- Somewhere quiet to think
- Pen and paper

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Spend about 1 minute answering each of the following questions:

- What made me feel good and why?
- What was difficult and why?
- How did others respond?
- What was surprising?
- What did I do that I was proud of?
- What would you do again?
- What might you change?
- How do I feel now?

Spend up to 5 minutes identifying no more than 5 Key Development Actions

E.g. Action 1: Write and practice my descriptions of exercises so I am more fluent.

Action 2: Practice speaking into the camera on my device.

MY POWER PLAYLIST (25 mins)

Music is a great tool for managing our emotions, energy and mindset. As part of your preparation, especially if you're feeling nervous or tired, taking some time away from your screen and even going for a walk with music of your choice can have a profound effect.

What you'll need:

- Pen, paper to write with
- A phone or device to create playlist and play it

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Write down up to 10 words that describe how you feel before delivering on a digital platform. Divide them into two main themes e.g. high energy, low energy...

Now prescribe yourself at least 5 songs that will temper the two themes you've identified – perhaps calming songs for high energy and energised songs for low energy.

Set these up as a playlist on your preferred platform. Listen when needed.

NB. Make sure this works for you. Sometimes singing loud to something can expend high energy and have a better calming effect than listening to calm music. I have a high energy playlist called 'Getting Shit Done' which helps me power through tiresome tasks.

NOW REWARD YOURSELF DAMMIT! (As long as you like)

This is all really damn hard. We want to be productive, we want to be creative but sometimes just keeping going is all we can muster – and that's okay. So when you do something that you're proud of or pleased with, reward yourself dammit!

In a Mortal Fools team meeting, we spent some time considering what small things that we do regularly are helping keep us sane. Some of those included:

- Taking time eating one expensive chocolate with a cuppa – it's a daily treat
- Sewing and making clothes
- Coffee – especially my frothy coffee maker
- Sports
- Listening to music

So what's yours?

And how will you remind yourself to do it?



FURTHER RESOURCES WE RECOMMEND

READING

The Gifts of Imperfection, Daring Greatly,
Rising Strong, Braving the Wilderness
BRENE BROWN

The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse
CHARLIE MACKESY

The Chimp Paradox
STEVE PETERS

Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World
That Can't Stop Talking
SUSAN CAIN

Authentic – How To Be Yourself and Why It Matters
PROFESSOR STEPHEN JOSEPH

Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway
SUSAN JEFFERS

Find Your Voice: The Secret to
Talking with Confidence in Any Situation
CAROLINE GOYDER

You're Not Listening:
What You're Missing and Why It Matters
KATE MURPHY

Thanks for the Feedback:
The Science and Art of Receiving Feedback Well
DOUGLAS STONE

WATCH

Watch Brené Brown talk about:
Vulnerability

Watch Carol Dweck talk about:
Growth Mindset and How to Cultivate One

Watch Julian Treasure's TED talk about:
Using Your Voice to Influence

Watch a **short film** about how the flight, fight,
freeze, faint or feign/fidget (5Fs survival response)
affects our body and mind

Watch Philippa Perry talk about:
Bids for Connection / Attention

Watch Robert Winston talk about:
How We Learn: Synapses and Neural Pathways

Watch Susan Cain talk about:
**The Unique Contribution Introverts Make
in Workplaces**

Mortal Fools playlist of short videos:
Advice and Support