

## Face-to-Face Meetings Generate Most Ideas, New Study Finds

IMEX and Meetology Group research finds greater creativity comes from in-person events

The best brainstorming sessions take place in person during face-to-face meetings, according to a new scientific study.

Conducted by the IMEX Group in partnership with the Meetology Group, the study involved an experiment that was designed to test the question, “Does meeting face-to-face improve creativity compared to virtual meetings?” As part of the experiment, pairs of participants engaged in brainstorming sessions face-to-face, over the phone, and via video chat. The results showed that face-to-face sessions generate more ideas, a “marginally” higher quality of ideas, and greater variety of ideas than either phone or video chat.

“A face-to-face meeting between two people who do not know each other resulted in more creative ideas than the other two methods,” said Dr. Paul Redford, a consultant psychologist who led the experiment. “The statistics show there is a significant difference in the number of creative ideas generated, a marginal but notable difference in the quality of those ideas, and also a greater variety of ideas produced. These results were all the more notable given that the participants didn’t always share the same language and did not necessarily know each



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Carina Bauer, IMEX Group

other before the experiment.”

On average, face-to-face pairs generated 30 percent more ideas than virtual pairs. Likewise, in face-to-face conditions, the highest number of ideas generated by any pair was 29, which was 50 percent more than the number generated under voice-only conditions and 70 percent more than the number generated under video conditions.

“These findings are very exciting for the whole industry and their implications are wide-ranging for meetings and event planners, particularly those responsible for developing future direction and strategy,” said IMEX Group CEO Carina Bauer. “As with many research studies we are left with outstanding questions, which all need further ex-

ploration. However, these results appear to suggest that if you are a company or organization that needs to generate a large quantity of fresh, new ideas, then getting a group of staff or other people — perhaps stakeholders or customers — together in the same room will produce measurably more than other methods. This is not to discredit the part that other methods can play, especially in this age of crowd-sourcing, for example, but it does suggest that if creativity or innovation is the aim, then face-to-face collaboration is more efficient and productive.” — *Matt Alderton*