Conducting Successful and Safe Virtual & Online Activities
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Technology Tips
- Identify the most appropriate platform for your particular idea: is it Zoom, Facebook, Insta, Twitter, Flipgrid, another platform? A combination of many?
- Verify if your Program or users will need a license or account to conduct and participate? Think about number of users / participants / capacity the platform can accommodate (and at free or pro account levels).
- Cerate an easy "how to" guide (1-pager or video) for people new to using the technology. If the intended audience is athletes, keep this in mind when explaining and use accessible language and concepts.
- Provide virtual/online etiquette tips for all users to help ensure everyone has a good experience. Read this Forbes article with tips: https://www.inc.com/guides/2010/12/5-tips-for-conducting-a-virtual-meeting.html
- For Board meetings, ensure your Program's bylaws provide for the use of electronic technologies and that all Board members understand any associated "ground rules" around participation, discussion, voting, privacy, etc.

Providing a Safe and Appropriate Experience
- Have ground rules / behavioral expectations available on platform (if possible). Use accessible and athlete-friendly language. Examples: if using Facebook page or group, include ground rules as a pinned post at the top and under Announcements or another appropriate area. If using Zoom, WebEx or similar platforms: go over ground rules verbally at top of activity/meeting.
- Monitor daily, multiple times throughout each day (7 days a week)!
- Curate, curate, curate all content posted!
- Set security and security/profanity/inappropriate content filters to higher/highest levels
- Add automatic filters for certain keywords if platform allows
- Ensure all live events/meetings/activities are moderated and monitored by someone with a good enough working knowledge of the platform and ground rules (staff, volunteer, athlete leaders – anyone in charge of the technology) who can block users, remove inappropriate comments, etc., in real time and immediately.
- If you experience inappropriate online behavior or posts, document the user name and/or email address (if possible) so you can block them from future participation, or if a low-level infraction, coach/warn them about said behavior.
- Get screen shots in serious cases in the event you may wish or need to work with authorities in particularly egregious incidents.
- Ask your platform's customer support about options to block IP addresses and not just user accounts, as trolls easily and often just create new profiles.
- Ask your platform's customer support if they can tell if inappropriate posts/content were done by bots or individual user accounts

Tips to help avoid "Zoom-bombing" from Zoom:

Change screensharing to "Host Only"
- Disable "Join Before Host" so people can't cause trouble
- Disable "File Transfer" so there's no digital virus sharing
- Disable "Allow Removed Participants to Rejoin" so booted attendees can't slip back in

Read more:
- https://www.forbes.com/sites/kateoflahertyuk/2020/03/27/beware-zoom-users-heres-how-people-can-zoom-bomb-your-chat/
- https://blog.zoom.us/wordpress/2020/03/20/keep-the-party-crashers-from-crashing-your-zoom-event/

Sample Messaging / Social Media Statement from a Program who experienced "Zoombombing" and inappropriate post(s):

"Our attempt to include as many athletes as possible in a live virtual workout this morning was compromised by someone who took advantage of our open community platform, now sometimes being referred to as "zoombombing."

The actions of this individual and the external content that was posted is in no way endorsed or supported by Special Olympics XYZ. We have contacted the authorities and will conduct an investigation into this upsetting and unfortunate incident.

Our dedication to connect with our athletes during this time is unwavering. They need us and we need them. Special Olympics XYZ remains committed to creating a virtual environment where we can engage with our athletes and our community while formal sports training and competition is suspended.

We thank all of our athletes and coaches for joining us today for our virtual workout. We apologize that we had to cut our time together short due to this unacceptable behavior.

We send our sincerest apologies to those who attended and encourage organizations like ours turning to virtual outreach to be aware of disruptive practices such as "zoombombing" and "botbusting" that seek to disrupt well intentioned content."

Fun Ideas and Ways to Engage Participants
- Live polls
- Surveys
- Photos / videos of people participating