News & Journals › COVID-19 › Members-Only Webinars and Articles › Virtual Summer Programming: Resources and Best Practices

# Virtual Summer Programming: Resources and Best Practices

By Grover Cleveland

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Because Seattle, my hometown, had the misfortune of being first in the United States to experience an outbreak of COVID-19 many weeks ago, I began reconfiguring live summer programs for webcasting. I reached out to the filmmaker who designs my PowerPoint decks and the A/V studio where I recorded my audiobook. And I began regular outreach to law firm talent professionals about emerging needs and concerns. I have been inspired by the tireless work of so many recruiting professionals to save summer. This article is devoted to insights and resources for recalibrating to a virtual summer.

## Programming and Social Resources

Although **pulling off a virtual summer program is a unique challenge,** recruiting teams have risen to the occasion and many resources are available. I concluded weeks ago that if the Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra can play Beethoven from home, our NALP community can do anything!

For social activities, many companies such as "paint night" providers are offering virtual options. And firms have already been extremely inventive with online activities like yoga classes and cooking competitions.

Museums and other cultural attractions throughout the world offer virtual tours that firms can incorporate into summer associate programming (see this list of virtual tours). For something slightly less highbrow, there are a slew of free karaoke sites on YouTube, such as the Sing King channel.

Meditation and stress management apps that I recommend include Insight Timer, Good Blocks, and Thought Diary.

My bespoke live webcast programs at www.lessonsforsharks.com/programs include Bring Your Virtual Best (resilience and stress management) and Ace Your Cyber Summer (working and networking virtually). I have also teamed up with Ross Guberman, Christine Clapp, Jeena Cho and Joe Regalia on a package of on-demand "Power Summer" programs. Topics include writing, networking, communication, working virtually, mindfulness, and technology. Firms are also corralling resources from PLI and other CLE providers.

## Fostering Engagement in Training

**Presentation best practices for live programming are even more critical for virtual training**. When participants are viewing a screen, compelling images are key and bulleted lists are verboten. Wiley, the publisher of DiSC assessments, has created a useful Virtual Facilitation Best Practices Guide and many similar resources are available on the web, including Tom Ford's advice for looking good on camera in *The New York Times*.

**A clear overview at the beginning of a program** helps virtual participants follow along. A step-by-step structure is ideal. I also use worksheets to bolster engagement in virtual summer programs. Because summer associates may not have printers, worksheets should be simple and something that summer associates can recreate with pen and paper. Including a cross reference on slides to the corresponding part of the worksheet helps summer associates keep track.

**If you are working with existing materials, make sure they are still relevant**. Images of people shaking hands, for example, now seem incongruous and become a distraction. And while videos are usually compelling, they may cause problems for students without robust Internet service.

### Polling and Competitions

**Polling is great for promoting virtual interaction**, and the leading video platforms have built-in options. One example is Poll Everywhere, which shows real-time results and allows many types of questions. The screen sharing feature will integrate Poll Everywhere into your video platform. Showing a text poll before programming will help ensure that everyone's technology is working and provides immediate interaction. Scrolling trivia questions before a program also promote engagement. And screen sharing enables an array of opportunities to use gamification and competition sites such as Kahoot.

### Other Video Platform Features

**Other features on your video platform also provide new opportunities for interaction**. Consider asking summer associates to select a photo for a virtual background and then to share the reasons for their choice. During programs, virtual breakout rooms provide engagement possibilities. One recent summer program webcast, for example, combined the platform's chat feature with a game show element. Participants will solve puzzles using the chat feature. Prizes, of course, need to be mailed.

### Scavenger Hunts and Bingo

In addition to ensuring engagement in virtual training programs, **integrating summer associates and helping them learn about firm culture is key concern**. To address both issues, you can create a virtual scavenger hunt using the Scavr app. At the beginning of a workshop, summer associates will learn that the program content will help them in a later scavenger hunt. Pay attention! Scavenger hunt challenges can also include an array of team-building activities such as having summer associates submit video "resumes" or interviews with firm lawyers. Firms have also created bingo cards to promote virtual interaction.

### Training Content

Because we are in new territory, none of us will be able to divine every summer associate need or concern. But **recruiting teams are doing a great job communicating with summer associates**. And that information can help firms adapt their programming. I am working with one firm to develop a survey to gather summer associates' questions about succeeding in a virtual summer program. We have set aside time in the workshop to answer those questions.

And recruiting professionals do not have to bear the entire burden for programming and activities. **Summer associates are smart, resourceful and adept with technology**. Firms can ask summer associates to work together to develop creative ideas for networking, socializing, and learning about the firm.

Not surprisingly, popular topics for virtual summer programming include building resilience, managing stress, and networking virtually. Helping summer associates receive and complete assignments virtually is also key this year. Programs on writing and communications have generally kept spots in the summer curriculum. And because most summer programs will be shorter and virtual, **summer associates need guidance on how to make the most of their time**.

DiSC workplace assessments can also provide a valuable virtual programming component. Summer associates receive an individual DiSC profile. They discover their own work styles and ways to interact more effectively with others. An online feature lets summer associates compare results, providing more opportunities for interaction.

Summer associates are understandably anxious. But they must now learn how to maintain focus in the face of challenges. That skill will serve them well in practice.

I hope everyone stays safe and healthy as we navigate these uncharted waters. And to summer associates: If things seem daunting, just keep swimming.

**About the Author**

Grover Cleveland (grover@lessonsforsharks.com) is the founder and principal of Lessons for Sharks LLC and the author of *Swimming Lessons for Baby Sharks: The Essential Guide to Thriving as a New Lawyer*. He is a former partner at Foster Garvey in Seattle, where his clients included the Seattle Seahawks. He is not related to the 22nd and 24th President of the United States.