MY WORKSHOP TOOLS™




FACILITATOR GUIDE

# PARTICIPANT COMMUNICATIONS GUIDE

*What you send before the workshop shapes what happens inside it*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# Overview

Most workshop problems start before anyone enters the room. Participants arrive confused, resistant, or unprepared — not because they don't care, but because they didn't know what to expect. An unclear invitation, a missing agenda, or silence in the days before a session can quietly undermine everything you've worked to build. Communication anxiety travels fast in teams, and when people don't know what a session is about, they fill the gap with assumptions — and those assumptions are rarely positive.

This guide gives facilitators a complete communication playbook: what to send, when to send it, how to write it, and how to manage anxiety, expectations, and attendance before the session begins. It covers invitation emails, expectation-setting language, reminder messages, pre-session preparation prompts, strategies for managing resistance, and a complete timeline for your communication sequence. Whether you're running your first workshop or your fiftieth, this resource will help you walk into the room with participants who are informed, at ease, and genuinely ready to engage.

NAVIGATION

# Table of Contents


Starting Here....3
The Purpose of Pre-Workshop Communication....4
Invitation Emails....6
Setting Expectations....10
Reminder Messages and Pre-Session Preparation....13
Managing Anxiety and Resistance....16
Attendance Communication....18
Pre-Workshop Communication Checklist....20
Key Takeaways....21
Quick Reference....22

INTRODUCTION

# Starting Here

Here's a scenario that will probably sound familiar. You've spent days preparing for a workshop. You know your material cold. You've thought through the activities, the timing, the breakout questions, the possible moments of friction. You're ready. Then the session starts — and within the first ten minutes, it becomes clear that at least half the room had no idea what they were walking into.

Some people thought it was a training course. A few assumed they were there because something had gone wrong. One or two are visibly guarded, arms folded, already deciding how much they're willing to share. And somewhere in the back, someone raises their hand and asks: "Is this going to be recorded?"

None of this is a facilitation failure. It's a communication failure — and it happened before you said a single word.

This guide is for you if you're new to facilitation, or if you've been facilitating for a while but haven't given much thought to what happens in the days and weeks before the session. What participants receive in their inbox — and when, and how it's written — is not a logistical detail. It's the first act of your workshop. It sets the tone, shapes expectations, and either builds or erodes participant confidence before anyone walks through the door.

Think of pre-workshop communication the way an experienced facilitator does: as a facilitation skill in its own right. The words you use in an invitation, the reassurances you offer in a reminder, the language you choose when framing the purpose of a session — these are not admin tasks you pass off to a coordinator. They are deliberate choices that directly affect participant behavior, engagement, and trust.

Throughout this guide, you'll find ready-to-use email templates, sample language, comparison tables, and a complete communication timeline. Take what works for your context. Adapt freely. The goal isn't to script your communications to the letter — it's to help you communicate with the same intentionality inside the room that you bring to the room itself.

**A Note on Tone**

The templates and examples in this guide are written for a professional workplace context. They are designed to be warm without being casual, clear without being cold, and informative without being overwhelming. Adjust the register to match your organizational culture — but always err on the side of transparency and warmth.

SECTION 1

# The Purpose of Pre-Workshop Communication

## What Participants Need to Know Before They Walk In

When someone receives a workshop invitation — or worse, just a calendar block with a title and no context — their brain immediately starts generating questions. What is this for? Who called this? What will I be asked to do? Will my manager be there? Do I have to participate? Is this about me? These are not paranoid thoughts. They are normal, human responses to ambiguity in a professional setting.

Participants need to know five things before they walk into any session: what the session is about, why they specifically are attending, what will be expected of them, what will be done with any information they share, and the basic logistics of time, place, and format. If any of these five things are missing, participants will fill the gap — and the stories they tell themselves will almost always be worse than the reality.

Your pre-workshop communications are the only tool you have to shape those narratives before the session begins. Use that window deliberately.

## The Four Jobs of Pre-Session Communication

Good pre-session communication does four things, and it needs to do all four simultaneously:

- **Inform:** It tells participants the essential facts — what the session is, when it happens, how long it runs, what format it takes, and what (if anything) they need to bring or prepare.
- **Prepare:** It gives participants enough context to arrive with the right mindset — curious and open, rather than defensive or bewildered. Preparedness reduces resistance.
- **Reduce anxiety:** It proactively addresses the fears that participants are most likely to carry in with them, without making those fears the focal point of the communication.
- **Build buy-in:** It makes the case — briefly and without overselling — for why this session matters and what participants stand to gain from being there and engaging genuinely.

These four jobs are not in competition with each other. A well-written invitation accomplishes all four in the space of a few short paragraphs. It's specific enough to inform, framed carefully enough to prepare, reassuring enough to reduce anxiety, and purposeful enough to generate buy-in. The sections that follow will show you how to do exactly that.

## What Happens When You Don't Communicate

When participants receive no meaningful communication before a session, predictable things happen. Attendance drops — particularly among the people who feel most uncertain or most resistant. Those who do attend arrive guarded, which creates a slower, harder start to the session. The facilitator spends the first twenty minutes doing work that should have been done in an email three days earlier. Trust takes longer to build, because it has to be built from zero.

In sessions on sensitive topics — belonging, psychological safety, change, performance — the cost of poor pre-communication is even higher. Participants who arrive without context tend to assume the worst about the session's purpose. That assumption can calcify into resistance that's genuinely difficult to shift once the room is live. Every minute you spend recovering from a poor start is a minute you're not spending on the work itself.

## Communication vs. Over-Communication

There is such a thing as too much information before a session. If your pre-workshop communication arrives in five separate emails, includes a lengthy pre-reading document, and asks participants to complete three preparatory activities, you've created a workload — not a welcome. Participants are busy. Treat their time and attention with the same respect you'd want in return.

The right level of communication is typically: one clear invitation, one reminder, and one brief morning-of message. That's it. Each message should be short enough to read in under two minutes. Save depth for the session itself. Your job, before the workshop, is not to deliver the content — it's to make participants feel ready to receive it.

SECTION 2

# Invitation Emails

## What a Good Invitation Actually Does

An invitation is not just a notification. It is the first impression your session makes on every participant. It signals whether this session is going to be worth their time, whether the facilitator knows what they're doing, and whether it's safe to show up and engage. A poorly written invitation — vague subject line, no explanation of purpose, no acknowledgment of what participation looks like — tells participants that the session itself may be equally unclear.

A good invitation creates a small but important psychological shift: from "I have to go to this" toward "I understand what this is and I'm willing to give it a chance." That's not a small thing. That shift makes your job inside the room significantly easier.

## The Anatomy of an Effective Workshop Invitation

Every strong workshop invitation contains the following elements, in roughly this order:

- **Subject line:** Clear, specific, and non-threatening. Avoid corporate jargon. Include the session name and date.
- **Opening:** One or two sentences that orient the reader. Acknowledge who is sending the email and why they are the one reaching out.
- **What this session is:** A brief, plain-language description of the session. What is it called? What is it broadly about? What type of experience is it (workshop, conversation, assessment, learning session)?
- **Why you're invited:** A sentence that explains the participant's connection to this session. This reduces the anxiety of wondering "why me specifically?"
- **What to expect:** Two to four sentences describing the format, the tone, and what the experience will actually feel like. Is it interactive? Small group? Does it involve anonymous responses? Will there be a presentation component?
- **What's required of you:** Be clear and honest about participation. Is it voluntary or expected? Do they need to prepare anything? How much time will it take?
- **Logistics:** Date, time, duration, location or virtual link, and any platform-specific instructions. Keep this to bullet points.
- **Sign-off:** Warm, brief, and inviting of questions. Include contact information for anyone who wants to reach out before the session.

## What NOT to Put in an Invitation

- A list of rules or behavioral expectations (save these for the session itself)
- Lengthy background reading or pre-work documents attached without explanation
- Corporate language like "synergize," "leverage," or "deep dive" — it reads as hollow
- Vague language like "a conversation about our culture" with no further explanation
- Anything that implies participants are being assessed or evaluated
- Excessive enthusiasm that doesn't match the actual tone of the session

## Subject Line Examples

Strong subject lines are specific, welcoming, and free of corporate buzzwords. Here are six examples ready to adapt:

1. Your invitation to **[Workshop Name]** — **[Date]** — What to expect
2. Joining us on **[Date]**: **[Workshop Name]** — a quick overview
3. **[Workshop Name]** | **[Date]** — Here's what the session looks like
4. Before we meet: your guide to **[Workshop Name]** on **[Date]**
5. A note before **[Workshop Name]** — what you need to know
6. **[Team Name]** | **[Workshop Name]**, **[Date]** — session details inside

The “Sample Invitation Email — Sensitive Topic Workshop” template should be used for sessions on topics such as Belonging at Work, Psychological Safety, Change Readiness, or team conflict. Adjust language to emphasize safety, voluntary participation, and confidentiality.

## Sample Invitation Email — General Workshop

**TO: [Team / Participant Group Name]**

**FROM: [Your Name / Facilitator Name]**

**SUBJECT: [Workshop Name] — [Date] — What to Expect**

Hi **[First Name / Team]**,

I'm reaching out to share some information about an upcoming session you've been invited to attend. I want to give you a clear sense of what it's about and what you can expect from the experience.

**About the session:**
**[Workshop Name]** is a **[duration, e.g., 90-minute]** interactive workshop focused on **[brief, plain-language description of topic — e.g., "how our team communicates across different working styles" or "building a stronger foundation of trust and psychological safety"]**. It's designed to be practical, participatory, and straightforward — not a lecture, and not a performance review.

**Why you're included:**
You've been invited because you're part of **[team / project / department]**, and your perspective matters to making this work genuinely useful. There's no prior knowledge or preparation required.

**What to expect:**
The session will include a mix of short group discussions, individual reflection, and some structured activities using the My Workshop Tools™ platform. Responses are collected anonymously — you won't be asked to put your name to anything you share. The tone will be conversational, and participation is meant to feel accessible, not intimidating.

**What's needed from you:**
Your honest engagement is the most important thing you can bring. No preparation is required ahead of time. Please plan for the full **[duration]** — the session works best when participants are present for the whole thing.

**Session details:**

- **Date: [Day, Date, Month, Year]**
- **Time: [Start Time – End Time, Time Zone]**
- **Location / Link: [Room / Building / Virtual Meeting Link]**
- **Platform access: [Any login or device instructions, if applicable]**

If you have any questions before the session, feel free to reach out directly at **[Email Address / Contact Method]**. I'm happy to answer any questions you have.

Looking forward to the session,

**[Your Name]**
**[Your Title / Role]**
**[Organization / Contact Information]**

## Sample Invitation Email — Sensitive Topic Workshop

**TO: [Team / Participant Group Name]**

**FROM: [Your Name / Facilitator Name]**

**SUBJECT: [Session Name] on [Date] — A Note Before We Meet**

Hi **[First Name / Team]**,

I wanted to reach out before our upcoming session to give you a genuine sense of what it is — and what it isn't.

**What this session is about:**
**[Session Name]** is a **[duration]** facilitated conversation exploring **[topic — e.g., "how included and supported people feel in their day-to-day work" or "how our team is experiencing the current changes"]**. The goal is to create space for honest reflection — not to assess individuals, not to generate a report card, and not to identify problems to blame on anyone.

**A few things worth knowing up front:**

- Participation is **[voluntary / expected as part of this process]**. If at any point during the session you prefer not to respond to a particular question, that's completely fine.
- All responses collected through the My Workshop Tools™ platform are **anonymous**. No one — including your manager — will be able to see individual responses linked to you.
- The session is not a performance evaluation. What you share contributes to a collective picture, not an individual profile.

**What the experience is like:**
The format is low-pressure and conversational. You'll be prompted to reflect on some questions individually, and there may be some facilitated discussion in small groups. Nothing is graded, scored, or attributed. The session is designed to feel more like a supported conversation than a structured exercise.

**Session details:**

- **Date: [Day, Date, Month, Year]**
- **Time: [Start Time – End Time, Time Zone]**
- **Location / Link: [Room / Building / Virtual Meeting Link]**

If anything about this session feels unclear, or if you'd like to speak with me before we meet as a group, please don't hesitate to get in touch. I can be reached at **[Email / Contact Method]**.

I'm looking forward to working with this group, and I'll do my best to make sure the time feels well spent.

Warm regards,

**[Your Name]**
**[Your Title / Role]**
**[Organization / Contact Information]**

SECTION 3

# Setting Expectations

## People Fear What They Don't Understand

This is not a criticism of participants — it's a description of human psychology. When people are asked to attend something they don't fully understand, their imaginations fill in the blanks. And because most workplace experiences involving a facilitator, a structured agenda, and a group of colleagues tend to carry some kind of stakes — a performance dimension, a leadership decision, a change that's being managed — participants assume that this session will too.

That assumption isn't irrational. It's based on experience. The antidote isn't to dismiss participant concern; it's to replace the unknown with the known, before the session begins.

## What "Setting Expectations" Actually Means

Setting expectations is not about giving participants a list of rules. It's not a terms-and-conditions briefing, and it's not a disclaimer. Setting expectations means giving participants a clear, honest picture of what the session will be like — what it will feel like, how it will run, what kind of engagement it calls for, and what they should and shouldn't anticipate.

Done well, expectation-setting is reassuring rather than bureaucratic. It tells participants: I know you have questions, and I'm going to answer them before you have to ask. That's what this section is about — not laying down ground rules but building clarity and confidence.

## The Three Things Every Participant Should Know Going In

**Before any session begins, every participant should be able to answer these three questions:**

1. What we're doing
2. How it will run
3. What's expected of me

These three questions should be answered in your invitation and confirmed in your reminder. If you can check all three boxes, your participants will arrive ready to engage rather than ready to defend.

## Clarity Helps

**These should be clear from the start:**

The topic, purpose, and intended outcome of the session — in plain language, not corporate framing.

The format: interactive or lecture? Small group or full team? Anonymous responses or open discussion? How long? What technology is involved?

Is attendance voluntary? Is there any preparation needed? Will I be asked to speak in front of the group? What does "participation" actually mean here?

## Language That Invites vs. Language That Intimidates

The words you use matter — not because participants are overly sensitive, but because professional environments are loaded with language that has accumulated negative associations over time. "Mandatory session" lands differently than "we'd love for you to join." "Your responses will be evaluated" lands differently than "your responses are anonymous and collective." The table below offers direct swaps for some of the most common language traps.

| Intimidating Version | Better Version |
|---|---|
| "This session is mandatory for all staff." | "We're asking everyone in the team to participate — your perspective is part of what makes this valuable." |
| "You will be assessed on your responses." | "There are no right or wrong answers. This isn't an evaluation — it's a conversation." |
| "Your results will be shared with leadership." | "Responses are collected anonymously and reviewed as a group picture — no individual responses are attributed." |
| "Failure to attend may affect your performance review." | "We're hoping you can make it — your input genuinely matters to how we take this forward." |
| "This is a culture intervention session." | "This is a facilitated conversation to understand how our team is doing and how we can support each other better." |

## Managing the "Is This Mandatory?" Question

You will be asked this. Plan your answer before the session, not during it. There are three honest answers to "is this mandatory?" — and each calls for a slightly different approach.

If the session genuinely is mandatory, say so directly — but frame it with purpose, not authority. "Yes, we're asking everyone to attend because the value of this session depends on having the full picture. Every voice matters here." If it's voluntary, say that too, and mean it. "Attendance is your choice. We hope you'll join us — here's why we think it'll be worth your time." And if it's somewhere in between — expected but not enforced — be honest about that as well. Ambiguity on this question breeds resentment. Clarity, even when the answer is "yes it's required," is almost always better received than evasion.

SECTION 4

# Reminder Messages and Pre-Session Preparation

## Why Reminders Matter (Beyond Logistics)

Reminders aren't just calendar nudges. For many participants, a well-written reminder is the communication that prepares them for the session — because it arrives close enough to the date that the session feels real, and it gives them one more chance to mentally ready themselves. The invitation planted a seed. The reminder helps it germinate.

A reminder also signals that the session is happening, that it's organized, and that someone cares enough about the participant experience to follow up. That professionalism communicates something about the quality of the session itself. Don't underestimate the persuasive power of a thoughtfully written reminder — it reduces no-shows, reduces the mental load participants carry into the room, and reinforces the tone you want to establish.

## The 48-Hour Reminder — What to Include

**SUBJECT: Reminder: [Workshop Name] — [Day] at [Time]**

Hi **[First Name / Team]**,

Just a quick reminder that **[Workshop Name]** is coming up on **[Day, Date] at [Time, Time Zone]**.

**Where: [Room / Virtual Link]**
**Duration: [Length of session]**

No preparation is needed — just bring yourself. The session will be interactive and focused on **[brief topic description]**. As a reminder, all responses collected through the platform are anonymous.

If anything has come up and you won't be able to attend, please let me know as soon as possible at **[Contact Email]**.

See you **[Day]**,

**[Your Name]**

## The Morning-Of Message — Short and Warm

**SUBJECT: Today: [Workshop Name] at [Time]**

Good morning **[First Name / Team]**,

Just a quick note to say I'm looking forward to seeing you today at **[Time]** for **[Workshop Name]**.

**[Room / Link reminder in one line]**

Nothing to prepare — just come ready to engage. See you shortly.

**[Your Name]**

## Pre-Session Preparation: When and How to Ask Participants to Prepare

For most SFTO workshops, participants don't need to prepare anything in advance — and you should say so explicitly, because the assumption that they do creates unnecessary anxiety. However, for some sessions — particularly those focused on change readiness, team dynamics, or personal reflection — a short framing prompt sent one to two days before the session can meaningfully deepen the quality of participation.

The key word is *short*. A pre-session prompt is not an assignment. It should take no more than five minutes to engage with — ideally less. Its purpose is to get participants into a reflective mindset before they arrive, not to burden them with homework. Send it no earlier than 48 hours before the session and make it clear that responding to it is optional, not required.

## Sample Pre-Session Prep Prompt

**SUBJECT: A quick reflection before [Workshop Name]**

Hi **[First Name / Team]**,

Before we meet on **[Day]**, you might find it useful to spend a few minutes thinking about the following question. There's no need to write anything down or bring anything with you — it's just a prompt to get you thinking.

***[Insert reflection question — e.g., "Think of a time in the past six months when you felt genuinely supported at work. What made that moment stand out?" OR "What's one thing about how our team communicates that you think is working well — and one thing you'd change if you could?"]***

That's it. No right answers, no preparation required. I'll see you **[Day]**.

**[Your Name]**

## What to Do If Attendance Is Uncertain

If you're approaching the session date and haven't heard from several invitees — no confirmation, no decline — don't wait. Send a direct, friendly message asking for a simple response. Keep it brief and non-accusatory: "I just want to make sure you have the details for Thursday's session and that it's still on your calendar." This is not a chase — it's a check-in. It also gives people who have concerns a low-stakes opening to raise them privately before the session.

**Facilitator Tip: The "One Person Missing" Problem**

If a key voice in the room is uncertain about attending — a team lead, a long-tenure employee, someone whose credibility will affect how others engage — consider a brief one-on-one conversation rather than another email. Sometimes a five-minute call does more than three reminders. More on this in Section 5.

SECTION 5

# Managing Anxiety and Resistance

## Why People Feel Anxious About Workshops

Workplace anxiety about facilitated sessions is real, and it's worth taking seriously. Most of it comes from one of three sources: past negative experiences with sessions that felt performative or poorly run, a fear of being exposed — of saying something that comes back to them in a professional context — and uncertainty about what the session is really for and who called it. In organizations going through change, these anxieties can be particularly acute.

None of these concerns can be eliminated in advance. But they can be significantly reduced with the right communication — specifically, by being transparent, specific, and honest in everything you send before the session.

## Common Participant Concerns

| Concern | What They're Really Thinking | What to Say (in Pre-Comms) |
|---|---|---|
| "Will I have to speak?" | I don't want to be put on the spot in front of my colleagues — especially if the topic is sensitive. | "The session includes group discussion, but you'll never be cold-called or required to share anything you're not comfortable with." |
| "Is this a performance review?" | Is this session a way of assessing me? Will what I say be used against me? | "This is not a performance evaluation. It's a facilitated conversation to understand our team — not individual behavior or performance." |
| "What will be done with my responses?" | Who sees what I say? Where does it go? Could it cause problems for me? | "Responses collected through the platform are anonymous and will be reviewed as a group picture. No individual responses are attributed to anyone." |
| "Do I have to share personal things?" | I don't want to be asked to be emotionally vulnerable in a work setting. | "The questions are professional in scope. You'll never be asked to share personal information, and the depth of your participation is entirely up to you." |
| "Will my manager see my answers?" | If my manager knows what I said, it could affect how they see me — or my opportunities. | "Your manager does not have access to individual responses. All data is reviewed at the group level, not the individual level." |

## The My Workshop Tools™ Anonymity Advantage

**A Genuine Reassurance — Not Just a Talking Point**

One of the most meaningful things you can tell participants is that the My Workshop Tools™ platform collects responses anonymously. This is not a compliance statement — it's a real feature that directly addresses one of the most common barriers to honest participation. When participants know that their individual responses cannot be traced back to them, they engage more openly, more honestly, and with less self-censorship. Include this in your invitation, confirm it in your reminder, and repeat it at the start of the session. It earns trust quickly — because it's true.

## What to Say to Skeptics

Skeptics are not your enemies. In fact, a well-managed skeptic often becomes one of your most valuable participants — because their willingness to push back shows honest engagement for the rest of the room. The key is to meet skepticism with honesty rather than defensiveness, and to make space for doubt rather than trying to overcome it.

In pre-workshop communications to groups where you expect resistance, try language like: "If you have questions or reservations about this session, I genuinely want to hear them. Reach out before we meet — I'd rather address concerns now than have them get in the way of the work." This kind of openness is disarming. It signals that you're not trying to manage participants, and it gives skeptics a private channel to voice concerns before they become room-level resistance.

## One-on-One Pre-Workshop Conversations: When to Have Them

For most sessions, your pre-workshop communication can do the necessary work at scale — through well-written emails that reach everyone at once. But in some situations, a brief one-on-one conversation before the session is worth every minute it takes.

Consider a direct conversation when: a specific participant has significant influence over how the rest of the group will engage and their resistance is known; when someone has had a bad experience with a prior facilitated session and you want to reset their expectations; when a participant has a particular stake in the topic being discussed; or when HR or leadership has flagged that a specific team member may be feeling particularly unsettled. These conversations don't need to be long — five to ten minutes, a genuine check-in, an invitation to ask questions. Done well, they convert a potential source of resistance into a quiet advocate.

SECTION 6

# Attendance Communication

## Communicating About the Session After It's Booked

Once your session is confirmed and invitations are sent, your communication work isn't finished — it shifts. The period between booking and delivery is when most attendance uncertainty happens, and it's when a facilitator who's paying attention can head off the biggest problems before they arrive. Stay visible without being overbearing. One brief touch point per week is enough for a session that's more than two weeks away. As the date approaches, increase the frequency and the warmth.

## When to Follow Up on Non-Respondents

Send a brief, personal follow-up to any invited participant who has neither confirmed nor declined within five to seven business days of the original invitation. Make the message direct and free of passive aggression: "Hi **[Name]** — I just wanted to make sure the session details reached you. Are you planning to join us on **[Date]**?" That's all that's needed. A simple, low-pressure nudge. Most non-responses are the result of a busy inbox, not a deliberate choice to ignore the invitation.

## Handling Last-Minute Cancellations

Last-minute cancellations happen. Plan for them, rather than reacting to them. If a participant cancels the day before or the morning of, your response should be calm and gracious — even if their absence creates a real problem. "Thank you for letting me know — I hope we can find a way to include your perspective in a future session." Do not guilt, pressure, or express frustration in writing. The way you handle a cancellation sends a message to everyone who hears about it.

If the cancellation is from someone whose presence is essential to the session's purpose — a key stakeholder, a team leader whose participation the group is expecting — it may be worth a brief phone call to understand whether the session should proceed, be rescheduled, or continue with a modified scope.

## What to Do When Key People Can't Attend

There will be sessions where someone critical can't make it — a manager whose team is participating, a HR leader whose sign-off matters, an executive who commissioned the work. In these cases, be transparent with the group. Acknowledge the absence without over-explaining it and be clear about what the session will still accomplish and what will be communicated to the absent party afterward. Participants are more forgiving of absence than they are of silence about it.

## Post-Workshop Communication: Setting Up the Follow-Up

The session doesn't end when people leave the room. Participants need to know what happens next — what will be done with the insights gathered, when they'll hear back, and what form any follow-up will take. This doesn't need to be extensive in your pre-workshop communication, but a brief line acknowledging that a follow-up process exists goes a long way toward demonstrating that the session has purpose beyond the moment. For detailed guidance on post-workshop communication, see **Resource 5: Facilitator Follow-Up Guide.**

## The Communication Timeline

| Timing | Action | Purpose |
|---|---|---|
| **2 weeks before** | Send formal invitation email with full session details | Inform, prepare, reduce early anxiety |
| **1 week before** | Follow up with non-respondents; send pre-session prep prompt (if applicable) | Confirm attendance; begin mental preparation |
| **48 hours before** | Send 48-hour reminder with logistics and brief session overview | Reduce no-shows; reinforce low-pressure tone |
| **Morning of** | Send brief, warm morning-of message with link or room reminder | Final nudge; signal readiness and warmth |
| **Day after** | Send post-session thank-you and brief note on next steps | Close the loop; maintain trust; set up follow-through |
| **Within 24 hours (if applicable)** | Reach out to key participants who missed the session | Maintain inclusion; capture missing perspectives |

SECTION 7

# Pre-Workshop Communication Checklist

**Pre-Workshop Communication Checklist**

*Print and use this checklist for every session you facilitate. Check off each item as it's completed.*

## Two Weeks Out

☐ Invitation email drafted, reviewed for tone, and sent to all participants

☐ Subject line is specific, clear, and non-threatening

☐ Invitation explains what the session is, why participants are included, and what to expect

☐ Anonymity of responses confirmed and stated clearly in the invitation

☐ Contact information provided for pre-session questions

☐ Any high-resistance individuals identified for potential one-on-one outreach

## 48 Hours Out

☐ 48-hour reminder sent with date, time, location/link, and brief session overview

☐ Non-respondents followed up individually with a friendly check-in message

☐ Pre-session reflection prompt sent (if applicable for this session type)

☐ Any last-minute logistical changes communicated clearly

☐ One-on-one check-in conversations completed with any high-resistance participants

☐ Any last-minute cancellations noted and acknowledged graciously

## Day Of

☐ Morning-of message sent; brief, warm, logistics reminder only

☐ Virtual link or room details confirmed and included in the morning message

☐ Any confirmed absences acknowledged — plan for session adjusted if needed

☐ Post-session follow-up communication drafted and ready to send within 24 hours

☐ You have a contact number for a key attendee in case of last-minute tech or location issues

# Key Takeaways

- **Treat pre-workshop communication as a facilitation skill** — not an administrative task, and not something to delegate without oversight.
- **Send communications in three stages:** a detailed invitation two weeks out, a reminder at 48 hours, and a short warm message the morning of the session.
- **Answer the five core participant questions** in every invitation: what the session is, why they're included, what to expect, what's required of them, and the basic logistics.
- **Use language that invites rather than intimidates** — choose warmth and clarity over authority and jargon at every opportunity.
- **Name the anonymity guarantee explicitly** — the My Workshop Tools™ platform collects responses anonymously, and saying so directly is one of the fastest ways to reduce participant anxiety.
- **Address the most common participant concerns proactively** — in writing, before anyone has to ask. Don't wait for the room to surface fears you could have neutralized in advance.
- **Keep reminders short** — a reminder is a nudge, not a second briefing document. Two minutes to read. That's the target.
- **Follow up with non-respondents personally** — a brief, non-judgmental check-in resolves most attendance uncertainty before it becomes a problem.
- **Handle last-minute cancellations with grace** — the way you respond to a cancellation signals your professionalism and affects how participants talk about you to colleagues.
- **Plan for what happens after** — close every session with a clear message about next steps, even if the details aren't yet finalized.

# Quick Reference

## Participant Communication

### Invitation Essentials

- Clear subject line with session name and date
- Plain-language description of what the session is
- Explanation of why this participant is included
- Honest description of what participation looks like
- Explicit confirmation that responses are anonymous

### Language That Works

- "Your perspective genuinely matters here."
- "There are no right or wrong answers."
- "Responses are anonymous — no individual answers are attributed."
- "You'll never be asked to share more than you're comfortable with."
- "This is a conversation, not an evaluation."

### Managing Anxiety

- State upfront that the session is not a performance evaluation
- Confirm anonymity of responses in every communication
- Clarify that participation depth is the participant's choice
- Invite questions and concerns before the session, not only during
- Use one-on-one outreach for high-resistance individuals

### Communication Timeline

**2 weeks out:** Send full invitation email

**1 week out:** Follow up with non-respondents; send prep prompt if applicable

**48 hours out:** Send logistics reminder

**Morning of:** Send brief warm message with location/link

**Day after:** Send thank-you and next-steps note

***A well-informed participant is a willing participant.***