

A guide to “hybrid” meetings



The purpose of this short guide is to provide practical advice and good practice tips to ensure meetings in a hybrid working environment continue to be engaging and meaningful whilst delivering against purpose and objectives.



It's worth remembering that extended periods of virtual working serve to deplete trust. Every day we are constantly negotiating with others as people – even through glances – leading and following, getting things done. We build trust naturally via physical proximity and our brain recognises others as part of our ‘tribe’. Without this, conflict can be driven underground and resolution postponed.



Therefore, careful planning and consideration should be given to hybrid meetings to build trust, enable participation and ensure a forum for meaningful dialogue.

Meetings in hybrid working arrangements

 **Before** setting up a meeting

Decide whether a meeting *is* indeed necessary. Remember there are other tools such as email and Microsoft Teams that can be useful for information sharing and online collaboration.


If a meeting is necessary, consider whether it can take place with participants either all face-to-face or all virtual.

It's often a more effective meeting, and a better experience for participants and the facilitator, if everyone is using the same method to contribute.

If you cannot avoid having some people located together in the same place whilst others join virtually, this can be known as a hybrid meeting. Facilitating a hybrid meeting requires careful consideration to ensure an effective and meaningful meeting for all. It's also important to ensure everyone gets the opportunity to contribute to minimise any feelings of inequality.


Meeting types that can *work well* as a hybrid meeting include:

- Regular team meetings, updates and progress checks
- Planning meetings
- Well-facilitated project / agile team meetings where the core content is accessible to all in advance of and during the session
- Information presentations and dialogue, including in larger groups



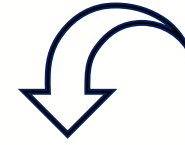
Meeting types that can *work less well* as a hybrid meeting include:

- Development sessions including training, action learning and coaching
- Complicated or sensitive conversations
- Longer meetings such as committee meetings



Remember to always consider the impact of a hybrid meeting on anyone who may have a disability.

General good meeting practice



Meeting roles

These can be one person, or you can share the responsibilities.

Meeting checklist



- Have clear scope and purpose
- Set aside time to prepare
- Have a clear agenda
- Agree ground rules
- Be familiar with and test equipment
- Share responsibilities
- Encourage participation
- Consider ways to engage
- Listen and be present
- Capture outputs / minutes
- Log decisions
- Stick to time
- For longer meetings, include a comfort break



Facilitator

The person in charge of ensuring everyone gets the most from the meeting and keeping the conversation on track



Timekeeper

The person in charge of keeping track of time



Notetaker

The person in charge of gathering notes, outcomes and decisions



Tech Support – for online meetings

The person in charge solving / seeking support on technology issues

Additional considerations for hybrid meetings

For participants in the room...



- Engagement in digital communications (e.g. chat/menti) may be less for those in the room unless they have their own individual connection
- There may be a feeling of more than one discussion as a result of side or private conversations
- If facilitator is present in the room, participants in the room may feel more connected (leader proximity)
- There may be some `return to work` anxiety as people experience a face-to-face work environment for the first time post-pandemic

For participants joining virtually...



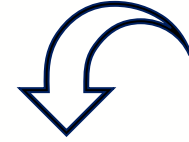
- Engagement in verbal discussion may be less
- It may be difficult to hear the voices of those in the room
- It may be difficult to see any visual equipment in the room e.g. a white board, post-it notes
- To lessen `zoom fatigue`, people may wish to hide `self view`
- It may not be obvious if there are any biases or power dynamics at play in the room
- To limit depletion resulting from multi-tasking, request that colleagues joining virtually shut down unrelated tasks and switch off notifications

⚡ Always check in with everyone at the start of the meeting – ask what might have the potential to distract them – this helps set everyone at ease. Also, set yourself a reminder to regularly check with all participants at intervals throughout the meeting that audio and visuals are working well, this will allow you to make any necessary adjustments to ensure the meeting stays on track.

Hybrid meeting good practice

In addition to general good meeting practice, here are some tips to help you get the best outcome from your hybrid meeting:

- ❑ Decide on the best communication methods (open dialogue / chat) and activities e.g. break-out groups
- ❑ Ensure people in the room are visible to those joining virtually (and vice versa)
- ❑ Ensure any visuals in room can be seen by those joining virtually (or take photos and share digitally)
- ❑ Ensure appropriate technology is booked and set up prior to meeting
- ❑ Ensure sound equipment is adequate to enable effective communication between those in room and those joining virtually
- ❑ Maintain equal eye contact with both virtual and physical members of meeting
- ❑ Limit in-room / private conversations
- ❑ Rotate contributions and try to ensure everyone gets the chance to be heard



**Arrangements
to plan in advance**



Structure and activities

Set up activities in advance of meeting e.g. timings, use of chat, polls, menti, whiteboards, verbal discussion, break outs. Don't forget to test.



Physical space

Book a large enough room to have everyone in room visible to those at home and a screen showing virtual participants to those in room.



Technology

Internet connection, meeting platform e.g. Zoom, cameras, microphones.



Ground-rules and behaviours

Facilitate dialogue between those joining virtually and those in room. Avoid turning away from screen and continually check-in to make sure everyone is following.