**Effective hybrid meetings**

A hybrid meeting is one in which some of the attendees are in the workplace where others are attending remotely, probably from home. In hybrid teams, it is essential to have good meeting arrangements to support effective communication. It is also essential to strive for equal participation.

Meetings where some people are in a meeting room and others attending remotely can be difficult. It can lead to an experience known as ‘presence disparity’. This occurs when people who join a meeting remotely have a different experience to those joining in person (usually a reduced experience with less opportunity to contribute). Generally, it is better to avoid meetings where some attendees are all in a meeting room and others are remote unless there is a high-quality video-conferencing system available that everyone can use.

Meetings can generally be thought of as falling into two categories:

**Convergent meetings**: these meetings generally include information exchanges, general updates or discussing topics for the purposes of making a decision. These meetings should as a default take place online (via Zoom or MS Teams). This allows everyone to take part wherever they are, and contribute equally.

**Divergent meetings**: these meetings are about creating new ideas, collaborating or exploring subjects. These meetings can be held online using a range of tools (such as whiteboards or breakout rooms) but may benefit from being held when all staff are in the office and can take part.

For effective meetings of a hybrid team:

Avoid:

* Meetings where someone joins by phone / one laptop where everyone else is in a physical space.
* Scheduling too many convergent or update style meetings. Many meetings can be replaced with collaborative (or asynchronous) online work. Aim to reduce the number of meetings held where possible.
* Meetings without a clear purpose or agenda. Having clear objectives will allow everyone to participate and make the meeting effective – reducing unnecessary time online.
* Sharing documents that might be hard to see on a shared screen. Where appropriate send them in advance so that the attendee can open them on their own machine and adjust size to suit their needs.

Do:

* Use asynchronous tools which may avoid the need to meet at all (or reduce the length of meetings) these might include MS Teams channels or Slack.
* Consider Zoom or screen fatigue when scheduling online meetings. Build in breaks and don’t hold over-long meetings.
* Set expectations at the beginning of meetings. For example, how do people signal that they want to contribute/speak? How or where should questions be asked?
* Make sure everyone has all relevant documents, agendas or papers for review and discussion.
* Encourage every attendee to have their camera on and remain on mute unless speaking.
* Provide some brief time in the meeting, such as at the beginning, for informal chat.
* Make sure that everyone gets the chance to speak and contribute.
* Allow time for pauses just in case any attendee is experiencing a time lag due to connection issues.
* Watch for signals someone wants to speak and make sure to acknowledge them (using electronic ‘hands’ functions can avoid the need for this).

For more tips on effective communication within hybrid teams, please see our Managers’ Essentials Toolkit.