Effective meetings

As we begin to define our future ways of working, there are different things we need to think about when it comes to meetings.

We've all become used to meeting virtually. But with some of us in the office, and some of us at home, our meetings will start to look and feel different. This is our opportunity to experiment with new ways of interacting with each other.

As a reminder, a hybrid team is...

> A trusted and empowered team, with a healthy, realistic and fair balance of office and remote working, successfully delivering for our business.

From being talked over, to being forgotten about, meetings can disadvantage people who aren't in the office.

So, how can we use our meetings in a smarter way and make sure they are inclusive and equal for everyone attending?

What to consider before booking your meeting?

As we enter a period of experimentation, this is our opportunity to pause and be smarter about how we interact with each other.

Some discussions will work perfectly as a hybrid meeting (where some of us are in the office, and some of us are remote) but other activities may be better when we're physically together.

So, what's the best way to get together?

Do you need a meeting?
Challenge yourself on why you want a meeting in the first place. Could it be an email, or a phone call if you need a fast response?

Avoid 'meeting creep', a phenomenon in which new meetings become routine. Do a meetings audit every so often and ask yourself if each meeting is the best use of everyone's time.

What's the purpose of your meeting?

A good meeting starts with being clear about what you want to achieve. Do you want a decision? To generate ideas? To communicate something? To make a plan?

With the end result in mind, you'll be able to plan the contents, the structure and the best way you'll get the most from your attendees.

Who are you inviting?

Be thoughtful about who you invite. There is a balancing act between inviting the minimum number of people and also inviting diverse perspectives.

Hybrid working needs to be **fair** and **realistic**, so once you've planned your attendees, think about:

We all do things with a positive intent but think about the **unintended impact** if you decide to host your meeting in a certain format. To combat this, ask yourself: Where are my attendees located? What are their needs?

How long is your meeting?
We all want our meetings to be as short as possible, but for some activities like problem solving or idea generating, sometimes you need a bit more time.

Long meetings are particularly draining for remote colleagues, so a face to face may sometimes be more appropriate.

There is no one size fits all solution, and we'll need to experiment, listen and learn from each other.

Here's an example...

Three teams need to book a meeting to review their eNPS scores. They are going to discuss the results and come up with some actions together.

Team A

Team A decides to host their meeting virtually. They are on a tight deadline for another project and one team member has caring responsibilities. They agree that it's better to jump on a virtual call so they don't delay the conversation.

Team B

Team B decides to host a hybrid meeting. Some of the team are in the office and a couple of team members live far away. The remote team members don't feel they need to travel in. They've decided to experiment with the whiteboard function on Zoom so everyone can join in adding their ideas.

Team C

Team C decides to host a face to face meeting. The majority of the team are in the office on a particular day and the other team members don't live far away. They decide to combine the meeting with a social event afterwards.

All the teams

At the end of each meeting, each team reviews how the session went so they can learn from it next time.

No matter what kind of meeting you're having, consider these tips...

Before your meeting

- Plan it! It's basic but how often do we get invited to a meeting without any context? In your meeting invite, outline the purpose, agenda, and include any materials. This gives people a clear understanding of what's expected of them, so they can prepare some talking points, or choose to opt out.

- Think ahead about how you're going to structure your meeting to involve and **empower** different people. Could you assign everyone an agenda item to introduce and discuss? If it's a team meeting, could different people chair the meeting?

- Think about who you're inviting, their individual needs and if you need to do anything to make the meeting accessible for them.

- For hybrid meetings, consider including a dial in via phone to give people an opportunity to walk and talk.

- Plan meetings to be as short as possible, particularly when people are dialling in. A long in-person meeting is tiring, but worse when you're staring at a screen. Consider making your meetings 45 min or 25 mins.

- Allow 5 - 10 mins between meetings to give people time to do something entirely not work related (eg not email) to give the brain a palette cleanser. This has been proven to be important in relieving stress, preventing digital exhaustion and in boosting performance.

Having a hybrid meeting? Read this top tip

The unintended impact of a hybrid meeting can be that remote colleagues are talked over, or forgotten about.

To combat this, always think **'remote first'.**

If you think about your remote colleagues first, you'll be able to make their experience more inclusive and equal.

Effective meetings

During your meeting

When you're hosting a meeting, it's your role to empower each of your attendees and make sure they have the opportunity to speak up and be heard. Try out these tips:

- Consider the culture essential behaviours. Your role is to facilitate and **create a great environment** for your attendees.

- In hybrid meetings, ask remote colleagues go first when sharing. This ensures you don't forget about them, which is common when you're "going around the room". Ask other attendees to remind you if you forget.

- Ask everyone to join via a device, even if in the room - they can turn the microphone off. This makes sure everyone is equally represented and visible on screen for remote attendees.

- Make sure one person speaks at a time so that any remote people can hear and follow the discussion.

- Be **inclusive** by making sure each person is able **share their perspectiv**e in full. Remote colleagues can struggle with being interrupted and talked over.

- Use open-ended questions to encourage people to share their thoughts **and speak up** – even the 'hard stuff'. In hybrid meetings, you want to encourage everything to be said in the meeting, rather than saved for a 'corridor conversation' which remote attendees can't take part in.

- Make sure no one is dominating the meeting – and that you're not either.

- Poll the group every so often so you have a check-in from each person regularly. This reinforces that **each person matters** and it gives them an opportunity **to speak up**.

- At the end of the meeting, have an **open conversation** about how it went and **listen** to their feedback. We're in a period of experimentation, so this will help us to **improve** and do things even better next time.

Using technology to make the meeting an equal experience

- Rather than using post it notes, or doing a 'brown paper exercise' which remote people can't join in with, use the *whiteboard* feature on Zoom to collaborate and brainstorm ideas together. With the whiteboard feature, anyone can draw, add text and share their ideas. You can save each whiteboard as an image so you can come back to it later.
- In your meetings, suggest that people use the *raise hand* button for when they want to speak or interject so no one is interrupted
- Consider using the *Mute all* button to stop unwanted background noise. You'll find this in the Participants dialogue box.
- Also in the Participants dialogue box, you'll find options to *Mute Participants on Entry* as well as the ability to remove the *play noise when someone joins or leaves*.
- Use *breakout rooms* when you need to split up a big meeting into smaller discussion – if it's a collaboration session, why not use breakout rooms in combination with the whiteboard feature?
- If you're sharing a video, tick the *share computer sound* box on the screen sharing window so everyone can hear your sound.

Find out more by visiting the Zoom support pages.