

# 7 Tips for Hybrid Meetings and Presentations (#newnormal!)

Combining face-to-face interaction  
with virtual collaboration



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## Introduction

We spend an unfathomable amount of time in meetings. And we all know the stereotype of the bad meeting: It doesn't start or end on time. There is no agenda. People go off on tangents; no one sticks to the goals of the meeting—if there are any. There is unequal participation. Many people are not-so-discretely on their phones looking at emails or playing Words with Friends. Nothing actionable comes out of the meeting. They're time-sucks, and boring time-sucks at that.

And that was BEFORE the pandemic! Covid-19 forced organizations around the world to conduct a massive remote-work experiment, disrupting routines and making it even more challenging to run engaging meetings. In fact, we were only a few weeks into the initial quarantine when the term Zoom Fatigue was added to the Urban Dictionary!

While some companies are now returning people to the office full-time, others opted to continue allowing folks to work from home indefinitely. The most likely long-term situation is a combination of the two—the **hybrid work environment**.

Ahh yes... remote working and in-office working. The best of both worlds. Although this work model is not new, it will take time to adjust to a far more ubiquitous hybrid work environment. One obvious place to **start building new best practices is with hybrid meetings and presentations.**

At the risk of stating the obvious, hybrid meetings are a mix of participants physically together in a room, while others are connected via voice or video from other locations. Hybrid events can be a wild frontier, and many leaders and teams are struggling to craft high-value interactions between in-room and virtual participants. To help you navigate this #newnormal, I compiled some practicable tips that you can easily apply in your next hybrid meeting or presentation.

"Attitudes are skills, which is good news for all of us, because it means that if we care enough, we can learn."  
- Seth Godin



## Set a \*positive\* tone

Your tone should be conversational, positive, and inviting. Showing stress or cynicism about the hybrid format is detrimental to you and your audience, so be excited, optimistic, and open to experimenting with creative new tools and activities. If you're feeling a bit anxious or overwhelmed, try this simple relaxation technique - take a few deep inhales and exhales and focus on a mindset that will help you show up positively. There you go - you got this!

Set clear intentions in advance about the outcome and impact you are striving for in the meeting or presentation. Specifically, what do you want people to DO or KNOW (outcome) and how do you want them to FEEL (impact)? For example: "I want participants to be clear on their roles, responsibilities, and timelines for this project by the end of the meeting. And I want them to feel empowered by the bigger purpose of the project, confident to take initiative, and safe to admit honest mistakes along the way."

People will take cues from you as the meeting leader or presenter. When your intentions for outcome and impact are clear, you lay the foundation for creating the desired results.



## Set up for success with technology

Strong and stable Wi-Fi connections are table stakes. That is the bare minimum for your technology set up. Then work on the following:

- Cameras on for all remote participants! A visual connection encourages more conversation and interaction and discourages covert multi-tasking.
- A front-of-the-room computer setup that captures the whole space on camera and allows the “Brady Bunch”-style matrix of virtual participants to be seen easily by those in-person. Project on to a larger screen if possible.
- Change the video layout to “speaker view” if a remote participant is speaking for any length of time so they are easier for in-room folks to see.
- Move the in-room camera as needed to ensure remote participants get the view they need to see and participate effectively. For example, if F2F participants move to one side of the room to do an activity, take the computer along and reset the vantage point.
- Invest in a good microphone so the audio is robust for remote folks. Otherwise, you risk sounding painfully inaudible and/or having to frequently repeat yourself for those connecting virtually.



# 03

## Make intentional eye contact!

Make eye contact regularly and seamlessly between the people in the room and those attending virtually. Look directly at the camera to get the same effect as if your remote colleagues were in the room with you. This simple

action makes it easier for your audience to concentrate on what you're saying, and your virtual participants will feel acknowledged.



### **FUN FACT**

Humans are hardwired to make eye contact. It's more than just one of our primary modes of communication. The act itself releases oxytocin, a "happy hormone," into our brains and bodies.

The rule of thumb for eye contact is to hold it a full second longer than feels comfortable for you; otherwise, it may seem like you're scanning the room instead of making true connection.

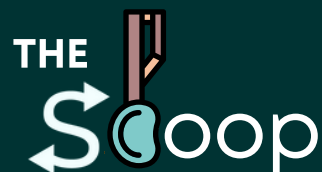
Making good eye contact will also help you pick up on non-verbal cues from those not in the room and make adjustments accordingly.



## Do hybrid-friendly activities

Plan an engaging exercise to hook your audience and promote cross-platform interaction from the get-go. See archives of [The Scoop](#) newsletter for some creative icebreakers and other fun team-building ideas. Be sure to mix virtual and in-person participants for all activities, practices, and discussions. Advise people planning to be physically present in the room to bring their laptops so they can participate in virtual breakout rooms and polls and collaborate in Google and/or other shared workspaces.

If using white boards or flip charts in-room, designate someone to capture and add ideas from people on video and/or let remote participants document their ideas simultaneously, [Jamboard](#) style. Be sure all sets of input are collected for meeting minutes, parking lot follow-ups, and other uses.



The Scoop is The LeaderShift Project's monthly newsletter full of leadership insights and team-building ideas. Subscribe on our website [theleadershipproject.com](http://theleadershipproject.com).



# 05

## Engage virtual participants proactively

Eye contact helps, but you also have to engage virtual participants proactively. To be frank, and you may already have noticed this, you have to pay special attention to your remote participants. Why? It's much easier for them to become disengaged and feel overlooked. AND, they also need to be reminded that they're not here to just watch.

- Direct questions to them.
- Invite those who haven't spoken to share their thoughts, ask questions, and reflect during activity debriefs. Some introverts won't speak up unless prompted. (but I still love you!)
- I know it can be difficult, but try not to talk over remote participants. Encourage those in the room to be mindful as well.
- Arrange in advance for a virtual participant to lead a team building activity, mid-meeting stretch, or quick energy booster.
- Ask your remote team for honest feedback after your meeting or presentation. What did you like? What do I need to work on? What do you want to see next time? Make any necessary changes to keep your virtual participants feeling engaged and appreciated.



# 06

## Make collateral materials easily available to everyone in advance

Ensure remote audiences have easy access to the same handouts, activity tools, and other collateral as in-room folks. Send those materials out ahead of time and print for anyone who needs a physical copy. Make sure you have easy access to them in case you need to resend in the moment.



### **FUN FACT**

The more senses you engage while teaching, the higher likelihood of long-term retention. Cater to different adult learning styles by using more than one modality, including visual, auditory, and kinesthetic.

If you have videos or any other media to play, make sure everyone can see and hear it. Plan ahead by testing the media out beforehand, and note that most video platforms require you to enable the “share sound” feature.

On a related note, if you're planning to serve snacks in person, it's thoughtful to send a goodie bag to remote folks so they feel included.



## Designate a “deputy” to ensure the best possible meeting or presentation

A "deputy" will be your in-room support as well as an advocate for virtual participants. It's not always easy to follow comments or hands raised on video platforms when you're also trying to present or lead a meeting.

This support system will help keep you organized in the middle of potential chaos. Deputies will step in to alert you if and when virtual participants are being talked over and make certain their comments, questions, and hand raises are acknowledged. Essentially, their job is to ensure the other six best practices outlined in this e-book are maintained in real time during hybrid meetings and presentations!



### **FUN FACT**

Research suggests that 90% of people report daydreaming in meetings, and 73% admit that they use meeting time to do other work. Give yourself better odds of engaging your team by tapping a deputy to assist you!



## Conclusion

Hybrid meetings and presentations are a whole new ballgame in many organizations and need to be thoughtfully orchestrated for those physically present and those participating virtually. I hope you find the tips here helpful as you sharpen your skills and master the hybrid workplace.

But let's not forget about pre-pandemic best practices! As I wrote in my book, *The Better Boss Blueprint*, the first tenet of holding meetings that don't suck is this: the meeting starts before the assembly itself in that the leader needs to be really clear on its purpose. Meetings should not be held to update each other about sh!t that could have come in an email or in one-on-ones. Great leaders hold meetings to accomplish the following objectives:

- Make decisions
- Move the ball forward on an initiative or project
- Communicate unusual news
- Build relationships, community, and belonging
- Inspire and/or celebrate a milestone or achievement
- Co-create (Co-creation produces something that did not exist before. This is different than tactical collaboration, which can often be most efficiently accomplished on one of many SaaS platforms.)

Need a coach to help you or your team adjust to the hybrid workplace?  
Email me at [shani@theleadershiftproject.com](mailto:shani@theleadershiftproject.com) and I'll get you there.

For ongoing leadership development tips, visit [theleadershiftproject.com](https://theleadershiftproject.com),  
[subscribe to The Scoop](#) newsletter, and follow us on social media.

# About Shani



McKinsey-style expertise. IKEA-like simplicity. Jon Stewart-esque irreverence. This is what you get when you work with Shani Magosky.

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ON [LinkedIn](#)**

After many years of diverse leadership experience across multiple industries, Shani started her leadership development consulting and executive coaching practice, The LeaderShift Project. Having worked for venerable institutions and unknown startups, in a range of economies from bubble to recession, and in revenue-producing, advisory, and senior leader roles, Shani's broad experience enables her to help executives and teams achieve "BHAGs" (Big Hairy Audacious Goals) at a wide range of Fortune 500 and private companies, startups, universities, trade groups, and non-profits.

In addition, Shani designs and facilitates breakthrough team coaching and other highly interactive workshops that are relevant, fun, and memorable so learning has the best chance of being retained and applied on the job. She is also the author of *[The Better Boss Blueprint](#)* and host of *[The LeaderShifter Show](#)* podcast.