

Hybridization

Many groups are considering going hybrid. This is where an in-person meeting uses technology to have online members join in. This is a difficult task to pull off effectively and there are several important things to consider. Keep in mind that a group's primary purpose is to share the message of recovery. If you cannot provide a good experience for those online and in person, a hybrid format may not be appropriate. Discuss with your group on whether you can achieve this effectively.

Will the meeting be able to reliably provide the technology to host the online meeting?

- A hybrid meeting in its simplest form requires a microphone, a speaker, a camera, a streaming device, and an internet connection. While one member may be able to offer these things for use in your meeting, be sure to consider a backup plan. What if that member cannot attend one week, how will you still provide a good experience for those attending online?
- Consider the cost of the tech needed. If your group wants to purchase these things, can your 7th tradition provide for it?
- Will the meeting be able to provide a stable internet connection throughout the entirety of the meeting? In order to provide a good experience for the online members, it is important to maintain a strong internet connection! Drop-outs and lag could severely hinder your group's ability to spread the message to its online members.

Will you be able to use this technology to create a good and effective experience?

- How will you display the online attendees on a screen? You can use a projector, a TV monitor, or if it is a small enough meeting, just a laptop screen.
- You will need to ensure that both online members and in-person members can clearly hear each other. You will need a speaker and microphone set up that is appropriate for the size of the room. Just using a phone is likely to be insufficient.
- If more than one device is logged on at the in-person meeting, feedback can be an issue. To avoid feedback, all devices should be muted and silenced except for one. Consider using an integrated system for both microphone and speaker.
- What the camera sees is also an important consideration. Some meetings have someone operating the camera to show who is speaking while others use a podium-style camera setup.

How will your meeting's structure change in order to work successfully both online and in person?

- One of the great things about going hybrid is that it likely creates more commitments for members to take on! You will at least need someone in person to manage the technical aspects of the call. Having someone separate from the secretary to do this will make things far less complicated. Consider if you have enough member support to successfully manage a hybrid meeting.
- We have heard of meetings where every in-person member was also logged onto the virtual meeting. This was chaotic and difficult to manage. We recommend having a single point of communication managed by one member. You can even request in your announcements that members stay off their phones.
- In our personal experience, logging on to a hybrid meeting for the first time can be confusing, especially if the meeting has not started. We recommend creating a simple “sign” to display to the virtual room, either by screen-sharing it as a document or setting it as a profile picture on one of your squares. The sign can have important information such as how the meeting is run, its rules, or anything else!

Has the meeting considered creating a commitment to help maintain the atmosphere of recovery for the online portion of the meeting? Consider the scenario of the virtual meeting being “bombed” or subject to harassment, how can the meeting ensure this situation can be addressed in a timely manner?

- Consider creating an online co-secretary commitment for managing the call as we do in virtual meetings.
- Virtual Software settings are useful tools in preventing problems, like turning off direct messaging, muting participants when they enter a room, unmuting by request only, turning off recording and disabling screen sharing.

Will the meeting ensure to the best of its ability that addicts attending in person are not privileged over those that are attending online?

- Consider alternating shares between live and online participants during your sharing portion or use some other system to make the sharing opportunities equal.

Some addicts have expressed concern with anonymity while being on camera during physical meetings, how will you address these concerns?

- Podium-style sharing is a great way to mitigate this issue. The camera will only be pointed at the sharing spot and a sharing member can choose to be on it or not. Virtual Software settings are useful tools in preventing problems, like turning off direct messaging, muting participants when they enter a room, unmuting by request only, turning off recording and disabling screen sharing.
- Splitting the room can be another way to handle this. Perhaps one side of the room agrees to being on camera while the other does not.
- A simple warning may also suffice. You can make an announcement at the beginning of the meeting that it is hybrid and there will be a camera for streaming purposes only.