

3.3.10: Audio Meetings

Learning Objectives

- Participate in a meeting with audio sharing components

You may find yourself planning or participating in a meeting that includes both people in the same room and people on the phone. We'll call this a hybrid audio meeting. Certainly, the same rules apply to hybrid meetings as apply to other types of group calls, but there's more to think about.

The main issue with hybrid calls is that the people in the room tend to forget about the people on the phone—literally forget they're even there. As you can imagine, this doesn't happen as easily with videoconferencing when you can actually see people's faces on a screen. So how do you avoid abandoning your remote colleagues?

- Remember to send them an agenda and any handouts or other materials in advance.
- Add extra time for technical difficulties just as you would if everyone was on the phone.
- Assign one in-person participant to advocate for the people on the phone. This is by far the most effective way to make sure that they have a chance to participate. This person should take the following steps:
 - Take the opportunity after every agenda item to ask the people on the phone if they have questions or anything to add.
 - Make sure that if anything is being shown in the room, it gets described for those on the phone. For example, if someone has a sample that just arrived, the phone advocate should describe it: "For those listening remotely, Maggie just showed us the new shopping bag prototype that arrived this morning. It's the same colors as the old one, but the design is really retro. We'll send you a picture after the call." Or if it's really important, the advocate should send a picture right away from their smartphone.
 - Explain laughter or other emotional responses that are not clear to those not in the room: "Hey phone people, the reason everyone is laughing is that the food delivery guy thought Charlie was the president of the company."
 - If possible, set up an IM chat with those on the phone. This will allow them to ask for clarification or post questions without having to interrupt the flow of the meeting. Jumping into a conversation when you're miles away is not always easy, and it can feel really awkward.
- If you have notes or an agenda for the meeting, add in "check with phone participants" at moments where it makes sense.
- Don't forget that it's a phone call for at least some of you, so go through the five stages with everyone.

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