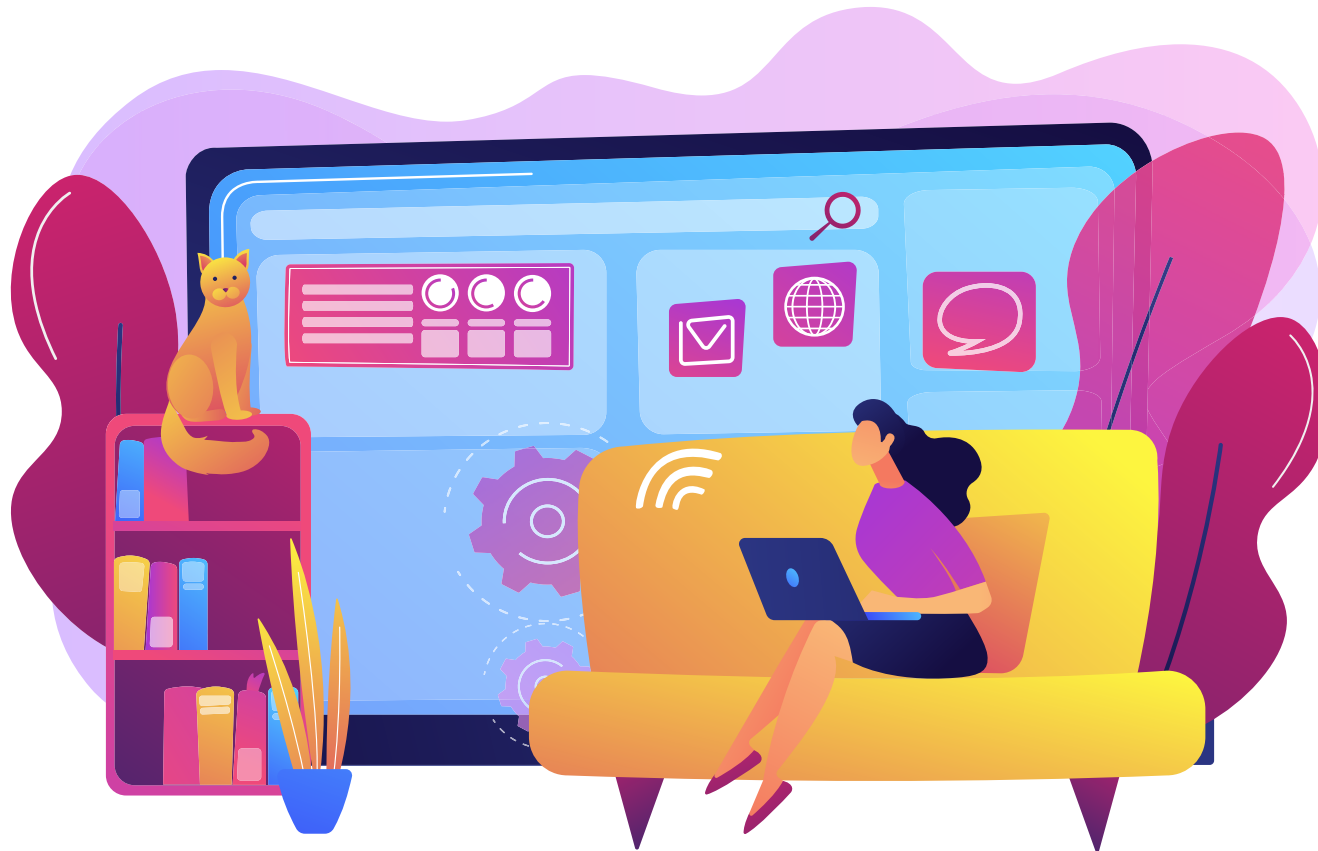


Hybrid working etiquette



Introduction

Research has shown that 81% of workers would prefer to work hybrid – to split their time between the office and elsewhere during their working week.

So it's likely everybody now needs to get used to hybrid in some shape or form. Yet this style of working calls for different approaches to communication.

This handbook is a simple, practical guide to communicating in a hybrid setup. The following rules will help everyone understand what's expected of them, so they feel comfortable and safe during hybrid meetings. Feel free to share it with your colleagues.



What type of communication is best suited?

Each type of communication has its own strengths and weaknesses. Before you get in touch with someone, ask yourself: “What’s the goal of this communication?” Then pick the method that’ll work best.

TIP:

ASK ABOUT THE PREFERRED COMMUNICATION CHANNEL.

Ultimately, everyone has a different communication channel they prefer-especially leadership. Likewise, don’t hesitate to tell people how you like to interact.



Phone call

Time-sensitive communication with one person to get approval or make a decision.



Email

You need to communicate something concrete with a deadline that isn’t today. Always include the level of urgency or a call to action in the subject line to ensure it gets the attention it requires.



Chat

You need to communicate something with a deadline of today.



Video

You need to discuss something in-depth and want real-time input.

How to hold a productive online meeting?

Hybrid meetings are a new concept. So use the 'rules' detailed here. Based on research-driven insights into non-formal meetings, they'll ensure all your colleagues feel comfortable.



1. If you are the host, make sure you do these things before the meeting:



Include the link to the remote meeting in your invitation

Most meetings can be remote. If you prefer otherwise, validate explicitly with your colleagues that they can attend in person.



Send the agenda and materials beforehand

During the meeting ensure you have all relevant paperwork close at hand. Most video conferencing software has a screen share option for sharing digital material.



Test devices before the session starts

It is your responsibility to make sure that everything works well from the very start of the session. Take 15 minutes before the start to check your microphone, camera and other devices. If your meeting requires multiple devices or teleworking tools you are not familiar with, involve your internal IT.

2. During the meeting



Turn on your camera

Make sure that your camera is on at least at the beginning and at the end of the meeting. If you are interacting with people you do not know that well (e.g., new colleagues, external partners), it is always better to have the camera on during the whole session.



Always favour the remote speaker

When two people start speaking at once during a hybrid meeting, favour the remote speaker to the one present in the office because they have less context and less presence in the room.



Take breaks

If your meetings are longer than forty-five minutes, consider taking a break. Especially for the remote participants. Staring at a screen for prolonged periods of time can cause virtual fatigue. A short break will help everyone come back refreshed and ready to engage.



Mute your microphone when you are not speaking

This helps minimise disruptions with unexpected noise, especially in large meetings where many people online can create feedback sounds that are extremely disturbing.



Avoid distractions

Research says that most people also text and check emails during remote meetings. Avoid this by creating a less tempting environment by placing your phone out of your visual area and turning off notifications on your device.

3. After the meeting

Circulate a set of notes along with a clear action plan as soon as possible after the meeting and, ensure these are followed up on. You can use the chat channel generated by the meeting platform. This is particularly good if it is a recurring meeting, as it keeps all correspondence on that topic in one place.





TOP TIPS



MAINTAIN EYE CONTACT

Maintaining eye contact with the people on the screen is an important part of remote work etiquette. Seeing others' faces contributes to building mutual trust. On the other hand, video calls can be rather tiring because it is difficult for our brains to interpret nonverbal signs in remote settings. After the introduction, you can turn the camera off if you agree on it with the other meeting attendees. However, it is always good to turn it on again at the end to say farewell in a more personal way.



BE AWARE OF A DISTANCE BIAS

"Out of sight" truly does mean "out of mind," and there's a name for it: distance bias. It's when we prefer people or things closer in space or time than what's farther away. Using strategies like conversational turn taking and active listening will help all your colleagues contribute, feel valued and ensure you are capturing all their ideas. Distance bias applies to tasks too. Tasks that appear difficult to tackle remotely can be put on the back burner, left until you are able to meet in person or kicked into the long grass. To overcome this, brainstorm with the team to come up with strategies to deliver the task or project remotely. Think about using technologies such as the whiteboard function in MS Teams to capture the team's innovative ideas.



HAVE FEWER MEETINGS

One of the keys to working remotely is being more conscientious about how we use our time. You should evaluate whether you really need a meeting or if the conversation can be held asynchronously. For example: For status update meetings, perhaps post using an app instead? For presentations, consider recording a video and sending it for the participants to watch before the meeting starts. Instead of brainstorming together on a call, consider posting ideas to an online whiteboard before the call to give everyone a chance to think on their own time. Using a combination of communication types can also help give everyone a chance to speak up in a different way.

Conclusion

This handbook provides a simple, easy-to-understand approach to hybrid etiquette. The better people understand and buy into this way of working, the more comfortable they'll be and with a higher level of effectiveness, productivity and wellbeing.

Want to learn more about creating hybrid setups? Looking for better ways to strengthen your culture, achieve your goals and ensure work has a positive impact on your colleagues' wellbeing?

Contact our hybrid expert at Origameo.



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