

SHARP

Be Original.

How to embrace hybrid meetings successfully



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Introduction



Meetings are held for a wide range of reasons, from imparting information and decision making, to brainstorming ideas and even socialising.

Ian Barnard,
Senior Vice President Marketing and Product Management,
SHARP NEC Display Solutions Europe

While we still hold meetings for the same key reasons, the Covid-19 pandemic has drastically changed the way we meet and the very nature and location of meetings.

At Sharp our mission is to end bad meetings. Our previous research found that office workers spent on average 17 hours a month in meetings, yet most reported finding them ineffective¹. We wanted to build on these insights and better understand how office workers are now feeling about the changing meeting environment. We surveyed over 6,000 office workers across Europe to find out how they feel about the new ways of meeting and how the global pandemic has impacted the way we will meet and collaborate in the future.

One of the positives that has come out of the Covid-19 experience, and rang true in our research, is that companies have realised what is possible with technology; their employees can work from home on a regular basis and the organisation will continue to function seamlessly. Plus, people are more productive, as 55%² of our respondents stated.

As a result, we now realise that smart technology is even more important to us than ever. Technology has now enabled meetings to become more inclusive, with colleagues around the world able to connect and collaborate effortlessly. No matter your location or your role, everyone has the same experience and the same opportunities to participate.

Companies are now starting to look ahead and plan for relaxed restrictions and an eventual return to the workplace, but what will this look like and what will it mean for meetings in the future?

This report explores some of our insights on office workers' changing expectations of the way we meet, offers expert commentary and advice from workplace psychologist Dr Nigel Oseland, and guidance on what to consider when choosing meeting solutions to support new ways of seamless working and the hybrid workplace. We hope you find it useful, and we would love to hear how you have successfully adapted your meetings during the pandemic.

Contact us @Sharp_Europe on Twitter #HybridMeetings, #WorkSmartWithSharp and visit us at www.sharp.co.uk

¹ Research conducted by Censuswide for Sharp with 1,003 office workers in SMBs (100 – 499 employees) in the UK surveyed online. October 2017

² Research conducted by Censuswide for Sharp with 6,018 office workers in SMBs (10-250 employees) in the UK, France, Germany, Spain, Netherlands, Sweden, Italy and Poland. September 2020

Key insights

Sharp interviewed more than 6,000 office workers across small and medium sized businesses (SMBs) in Europe to gain insight into how office workers are now feeling about the changing meeting environment:

Virtual and remote meetings give more employees a voice

47%



Nearly half (47%) of office workers find remote meetings more productive than face to face meetings.

48%



Almost half (48%) of office workers feel more confident speaking up on virtual meetings and this rises among 21-24-year-olds (52%).

60%



3 in 5 (60%) office workers agree that more people are able to contribute during remote meetings.

Technology and training will drive collaboration

47%



47% of office workers think that if more companies adopt a hybrid working approach it will be harder to communicate or communication and collaboration technology will become more important.

68%



Almost 7 in 10 (68%) office workers said that an employer that provides the technology they need to work from anywhere has become more important to them.

47%



Less than half (47%) of office workers said they have received training on how to use the technology needed to support remote working.

47%



47% of office workers said they find it confusing having to use various different video conferencing platforms.





Predictions for a hybrid future

26%



More than a quarter (26%) of younger professionals aged between 21-24 do not think companies will have a physical office in the future.

33%



When discussing how meetings will look in the future, a third (33%) of office workers said there will be more reliance on video conferencing platforms.

74%



74% of office workers would like to see innovations including artificial intelligence (AI) in future working spaces.

An expert's view



Dr Nigel Oseland,
Workplace Psychologist

Dr Nigel Oseland, a workplace psychologist who helps companies maintain staff morale, enhance their productivity and improve business performance, explores the impacts of the insights collated by Sharp, and how office workers are feeling about the new ways of meeting.

The findings from Sharp's research certainly support the views of many businesses, with the notion that we are not going back to the old way of doing things when the pandemic is over. We will see some people opt for staggered hours to balance their other obligations, and also see more people opt for a two-three day week in and out of the office.

In the future, more meetings will be a hybrid mix of in-person and virtual. We need to be ready for variety in our office and home-working set-up, and businesses need to be equipped to support this new way of working, especially as the hybrid model will impact the very nature of meetings.

The future role of the office

Sharp's research finds that more than a quarter (26%) of younger professionals aged between 21-24 do not think companies will have a physical office in the future compared to

just 19% of 38-45-year-olds. This finding might be more a reflection of the roles those people have than their age, as younger people are digital natives and more likely to be flexible in their work, while older people are more likely to be in management and therefore need to make more presentations and meet more people face-to-face.

Regardless of the differences employment level and age might play, the future role of the office is something that must be addressed. With more time spent working remotely, many organisations are looking to reduce office space. A study from the British Council for Offices (BCO) found that the average desk space between 2008 and 2018 decreased by two square metres per person, so space reduction is always on the corporate real estate agenda and another motivating factor behind the broader adoption of a hybrid working approach.



Social power of the office

Companies should be treating this time as an opportunity to reverse the culture of squeezing people into existing premises. With lower density offices, there's a reduced risk of cross-infection, and partitions or workplace landscaping can be used to create more space for brainstorming, collaborative working and social spaces for staff to gather and share ideas. This social space is especially important for young people, many of whom may be living in flat shares with little space of their own. Work is a social space, and we must not underestimate the social power of the office.

Making meetings work in the new normal

When we think about the layout of a typical meeting room, it's easy to see who's engaged and who isn't, there's often a clear hierarchy, and so much human communication is non-verbal. These factors are harder to gauge when people are on-screen. It's really important to be able to see people's faces on screen as it helps to build trust. It's best to keep online meetings short and focused, and to help with engagement, the speaker should involve other attendees as much as possible, especially those who have perhaps been quieter during the meeting.

Sharp's survey highlighted that nearly half (47%) find remote meetings more productive. For certain roles, such as sales, you can get through a lot more remote meetings rather than spending all that time on the road. However, 17% of people feel it will be harder to brainstorm remotely if the hybrid working approach became adopted by businesses longer term. This comes down to the benefit of being together in person, to bounce ideas off one another, and physically post ideas around the room. These statistics highlight how important it is to keep remote meetings interactive and to encourage creativity because it is that much harder to come up with new ideas virtually.

Sharp's research also found that many younger people felt better able to contribute in online meetings than in-person with half (52%) of 21-24 year olds feeling more confident to speak up in virtual meetings. This confidence could be due to younger people feeling more comfortable with communicating over video calls – they will have grown up with it, after all. They also don't have the more senior characters physically in the same room, which could be intimidating for younger professionals early in their career. Sharp's study finds 60% of office workers agree that more people are able to contribute during remote meetings. In that case, perhaps online calls have democratised meetings and made them more inclusive.



Recreate that watercooler moment

Companies should also allow time for some casual conversation at the beginning and end of an online call, as you would in an in-person meeting, to make them feel more personal. Chit-chat around meetings is valuable for both extroverts, who thrive on regular human contact, and introverts, so that they feel included and are not just passive observers. Many companies recognise the value of this non-work conversation and have set up virtual coffee breaks, for example. It's just about trying to recreate the 'watercooler moment' for the hybrid environment.

Invest in training

It's surprising to see that less than half (47%) of respondents say they have received training on how to use the technology needed to support remote working. Training is going to be critical to the success or failure of hybrid working, especially as nearly a third (28%) of those surveyed think that some people may feel left out if hybrid working is adopted.

Training will help staff to not just understand how to use the technology that underpins hybrid working, but also how to run successful and productive meetings. This could include training around timings or just how to include people such as introverts and junior colleagues into the conversation, as well as tools such as interactive displays and break-out rooms.

Above all, sound leadership is going to be crucial to make meetings successful in a post-pandemic workplace. To work well, trust and respect is needed, and much of that trust is built at a social level within the work setting. Business leaders need to adapt so that staff can make their very best contribution in the new world of hybrid meetings.

In summary, here are the key things to consider for successful meetings:

- **Don't underestimate the social power of the office** – consider adapting current workspaces to give your employees the creative and collaborative spaces they need
- **Keep remote meetings interactive** – combat 'Zoom fatigue' and encourage creativity
- **Recreate the watercooler moment** – allow time for casual conversations
- **Invest in training** – on both the tools and techniques that underpin good meetings



Sharp solutions

As the expert in meetings, Sharp has developed the Synappx platform of applications and services which connect an organisation's technology, information, people and ideas to accelerate collaboration, no matter the location.

These products have been developed with the future of hybrid meetings in mind for better collaboration and working environment. It works with your current office technology to bring the convenience of smart home technology into the workplace.

Take a look at our applications below that can support the particular needs of your business:



Synappx Go – this allows you to be productive wherever you go. You can scale content easily to a large display or scan documents and release print jobs from a multifunction printer — all from your phone — right when and where you need it.



Synappx Meeting – start meetings on time so that you can focus on collaboration and sharing ideas. This lets you resolve the challenge of connecting to a big screen, starting the conferencing system or finding the right content.



Synappx mDesk – Auto-start meetings at home as Synappx mDesk brings the core of Synappx Meeting to your virtual workspace, simplifying web conferences from home or anywhere else.

Synappx is compatible with a range of our existing solutions including the Windows collaboration display, interactive (BIG PADS) and non-interactive displays, office printers and Dynabook laptops.



Windows collaboration display

The Windows collaboration display from Sharp is our next generation interactive display, with a built-in microphone, high resolution camera and IoT sensor hub. It can work seamlessly with the best Microsoft 365 collaboration tools and cloud platforms to enable more effective and comfortable business meetings.

Interactive (BIG PADS) and non-interactive displays

Our displays provide an effective way to work and share information. Our interactive displays allow you to work with data on-screen and collaborate with others. They offer an easy way to transition from using whiteboards, with an exceptionally fast and smooth touch response. Our non-interactive displays offer 4K resolution and clarity that you need to communicate fine detail to any audience.

Office printers

Our office printers offer intuitive ease-of-use, intelligent connectivity and effortless mobility. Their enhanced feature set and smart functionality help people work more flexibly and productively, and they provide a simple way to create, engage with and share information.

Dynabook laptops

Our Dynabook laptops are designed to support the enhanced workforce mobility needed in the hybrid workplace. They are engineered to deliver the outstanding quality, reliability and performance demanded by today's business and education users.

About Sharp

Sharp Europe enables small to large businesses and organisations to enhance performance and adapt for their workplaces of the future through a range of business technology products and services.

Headquartered in London, Sharp Europe serves customers in the private and public sectors, Education and Government, with a portfolio ranging from printers and advanced flat screen technologies, collaboration platforms, through to IT services.

As part of Sharp Corporation, and with the backing of Foxconn, Sharp Europe is investing and leading the industry in new areas of technology that have the potential to change the world. It developed the world's first commercially available 8K monitor and in 2019 launched the world's first certified Windows collaboration display.

To find out more about how Sharp Europe is changing the future of work, please visit www.sharp.eu

Find out more

Contact us **@Sharp_Europe** on 

Join us on **LinkedIn** 

and watch our videos on **YouTube** 

www.sharp.co.uk/hybrid-meetings

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