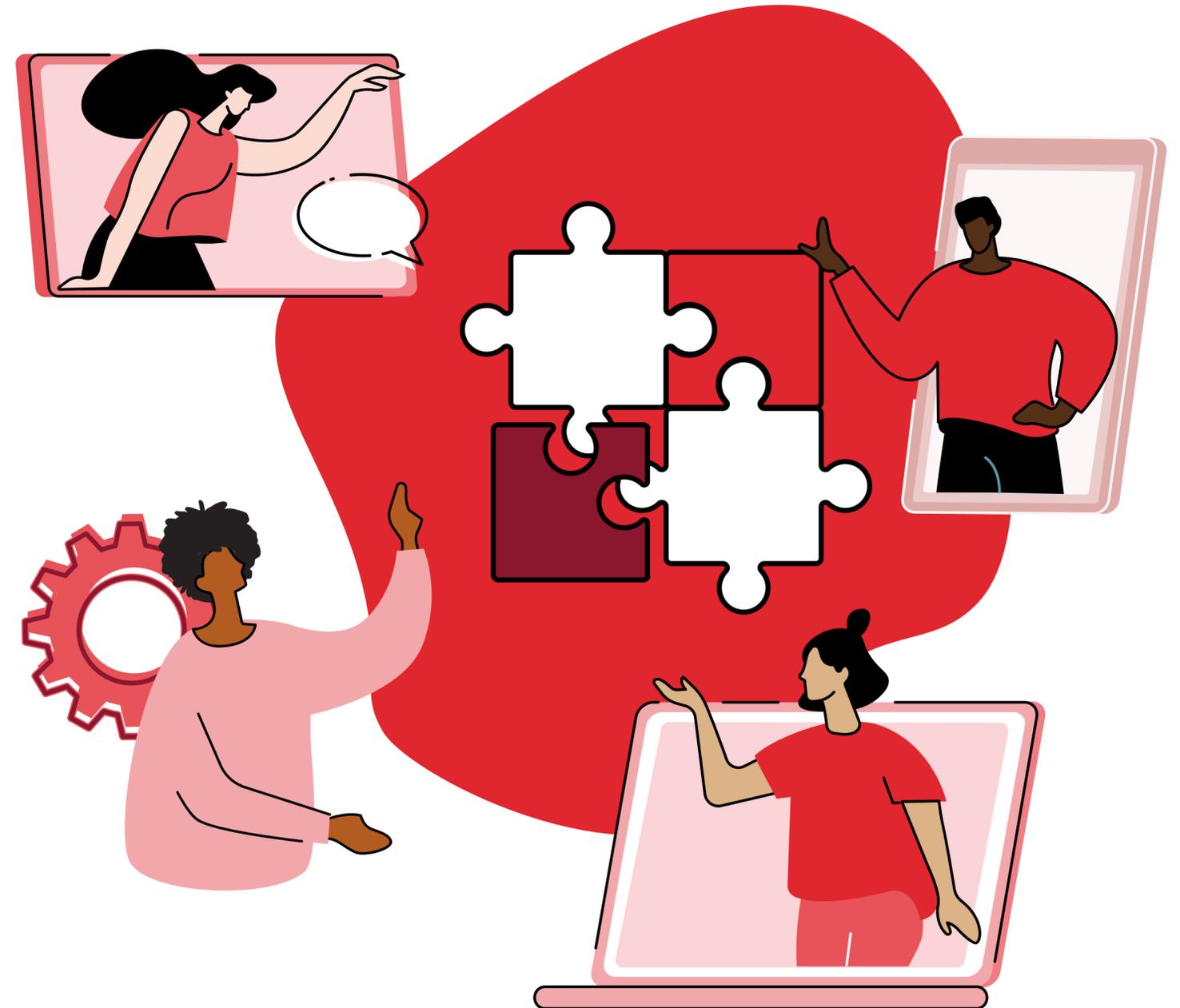


COLLECTIVE NEXT

HYBRID EVENT* BEST PRACTICES



*A 'hybrid event' is any meeting, workshop, or collaborative work session that includes both participants attending live and in person and remote participants attending virtually.



Hamilton Ray,
Senior Principal, Collective Next

The way we meet and work has gone through staggering changes over the past few years. Remote work and virtual attendance have become folded into the fabric of our professional lives in ways that, until very recently, seemed impossible. New technologies and new workplace adaptations are pushing us to figure out how to balance in-person and virtual collaboration: and figuring it all out is tough.

How do you ensure that you are engaging all of your participants equally? How are you making sure that the balance of power, the ability to contribute and make an impact during the event, is equitable for ALL of your attendees?

Regardless of how virtual our work-lives might become, it's clear that some mix of in-person attendance coupled with remote participation isn't going anywhere. "Hybrid Events," gatherings that include

in-person and virtual participants, present an array of logistical and technical challenges that most organizations simply haven't had to deal with before.

But if we take a step back, we might find a unique opportunity nestled in the tricky problems that hybrid events seem to pose. What if we could capture the energy of in-person collaboration as well as the flexibility and inclusivity made possible by virtual participation? What if this new type of meeting or event could be better than what we had before?

Collective Next has been helping teams collaborate, evolve, and **Create What's Next** for over 15 years. In the pages that follow, we've assembled some tips on how to make your next hybrid meeting not only effective and efficient, but maybe even a little bit special.

DESIGN | What's the blueprint for your event?

IT STARTS WITH YOUR AGENDA.

Presentations, conversations, activities, and transitions are all going to take more time than you might expect. Whether it be a fully virtual, entirely live, or hybrid event experience—keep it simple, and design with extra time in mind.

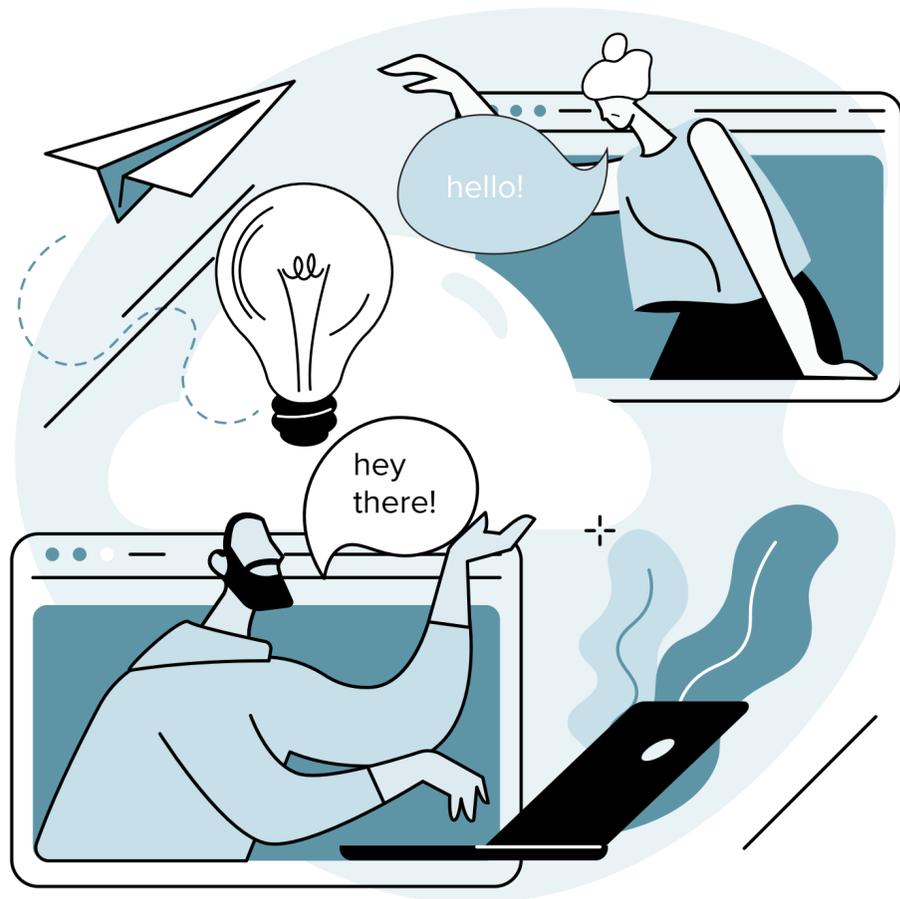
BUILD IN SOME OPEN TIME.

Jam packed days lead to burn out. Don't try to fill every minute of the agenda; plan for some open time and give your attendees room to think and reflect.





DESIGN | What's the blueprint for your event?



START THINGS OFF WITH AN ICEBREAKER.

Name games, quick intros, a quick round of trivia: get things going with a simple activity to introduce participants and break the ice. Start with small groups and rotate participants around if time allows.

PLAN FOR HYBRID FACILITATION.

In addition to your in-person event facilitator, assign and prep a virtual host who can serve as an advocate for virtual attendees. Plan which topics and agenda items the virtual facilitators will cover.

PRE-GAME | How will you and your participants prepare for the event?

PRACTICE!

Seems obvious, right? But the added variables in hybrid events make this step even more important. Test out your technology, walk through your agenda, and have your fellow organizers and facilitators experience the event as if they were attendees themselves. You'll be amazed at what you discover during this process.

ALLOW FOR FLEXIBLE ATTENDANCE.

The beauty of hybrid events lies, in part, in their inherent flexibility. Lean into that flexibility by clearly communicating the options your attendees have for participating (Virtually? In person? A mix?), and then make it as easy as possible for them to elect how they will attend. And, perhaps most importantly, be sure to reinforce the idea that all the options are equally valid and valuable.

SEND OUT PRE-WORK AND PRE-READING.

The more your participants prepare for the event themselves, the more engaged they'll be throughout the proceedings. Pre-work and pre-reading, even in the forms of introductions and short biographies of their fellow participants, will level the playing field between your in-person and virtual attendees.





TECHNOLOGY | What are the right tools for the event?

TEST, AND THEN TEST AGAIN.

Technical difficulties can arise even after all of the preparation in the world. The more you test your tools and technology, the more prepared you'll be if something does go wrong.

SIMPLE IS BETTER.

The tools and technology you select should be as simple to use as possible. Always be mindful of your least-savvy virtual attendee. The more complex your virtual tools and platforms, the steeper their learning and comfort curves.

When considering which tools are right for the event, always try to balance the features and functions that are necessary for delivering your agenda alongside the ease of use for your participants. And once you choose your tools, make sure you understand them (and their quirks) fully.



TECHNOLOGY | What are the right tools for the event?



AUDIO QUALITY IS KEY.

It's often difficult for virtual participants to clearly hear and understand whoever is speaking at an event. Pay special attention to the audio aspects of your preparations and don't skimp on plenty of high-quality microphones placed strategically throughout the in-person meeting space.

HOW WILL PARTICIPANTS SEE EACH OTHER?

Take some time to verify that all of your attendees will be able to see each other throughout the event. Will you highlight speakers through your video conference tool? How will you shine a light on someone taking the floor in person? Consider these questions and make sure that all of your attendees are able to stay on the same, visual page.

TECHNOLOGY | What are the right tools for the event?

PROVIDE A PLATFORM FOR COLLABORATION.

Whether it's a shared chat room, a collaborative online workspace like Miro, or some other communication platform, identify (and test!) some means for all of your attendees to meaningfully contribute to the event. There are many easy-to-use tools that enable true collaboration in a virtual or hybrid event, and using them provides the added benefit of forcing groups to capture and preserve their ideas while providing a mechanism for easily sharing them.



PARTICIPANT EXPERIENCE | What will it feel like to be a part of this event?



FOCUS ON YOUR VIRTUAL ATTENDEES.

Evaluate every aspect of the event with an eye towards engaging and drawing in your virtual participants. For example, consider addressing remote attendees first when asking for report-outs and feedback. Keep your remote colleagues front-of-mind as you assess how the day is going.

EVERYBODY LOVES TO GET MAIL.

Send snacks, t-shirts, notebooks, or other event-specific items via mail to your virtual attendees with the proviso, “Do Not Open Until Instructed.” Even if they open the package before the appointed time, the physical artifacts will help pull them into the proceedings and bring a little bit of the hybrid event to their personal workspaces.

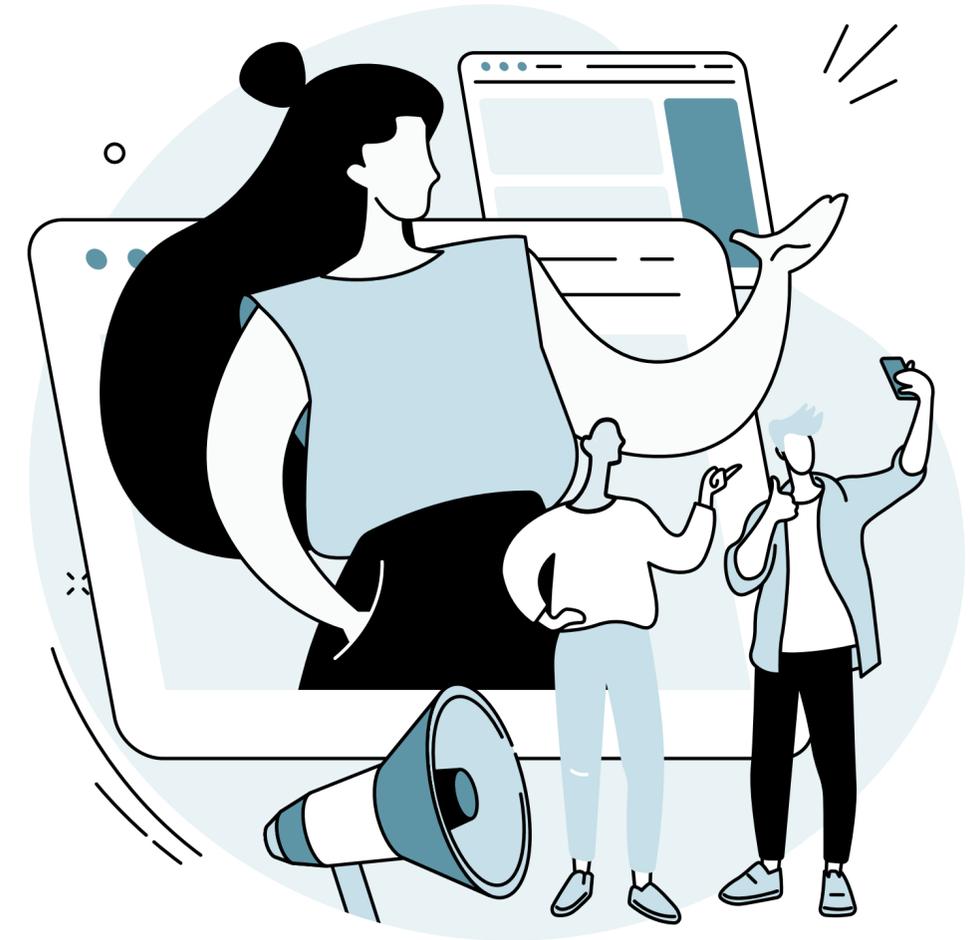
PARTICIPANT EXPERIENCE | What will it feel like to be a part of this event?

MIX UP YOUR BREAKOUT ROOMS.

Match in-person participants with virtual attendees when creating breakout spaces to balance out the experience for both types of attendees. You can also use this as an opportunity to give colleagues who don't usually work together a chance to collaborate.

QUALITY-OF-LIFE REMINDERS.

Provide a brief checklist of items for your virtual participants to ensure that the technology doesn't get in the way of their enjoying the event. Remind them that they can "Hide Self View," for instance, if they don't want to stare at their own faces throughout the event. Or that they may want to remember to take stretch breaks and get away from their screens for a few moments.



PARTICIPANT EXPERIENCE | What will it feel like to be a part of this event?



MEAL BREAKS.

Everybody loves a free lunch! Plan ahead and provide a meal to your virtual participants through food delivery services or coordinate other accommodations to help your remote participants feel included and taken care of.

THE IN-PERSON TIME CUSHION.

Remember that breaks can take a little longer for your in-person attendees as they have to, you know, actually walk around and stuff. Start bringing in-person participants back a little early so you don't keep the virtual participants wondering what's going on.

PARTICIPANT EXPERIENCE | What will it feel like to be a part of this event?

CHECK IN REGULARLY

As critical as this practice is for most meetings, checking in with your attendees takes on a whole new weight during hybrid events. Check in regularly with your audience to make sure things are working as they should on a technical level and to get a sense of the energy of the “room.”

Making adjustments if you notice an issue isn't always easy. But resolving problems that crop up starts with staying in touch with your audience.





Let's Talk!

We would love to help you imagine and deliver an amazing hybrid event.
Click the link below to set up time to talk!