A Simple Guide for Hybrid Events

MPI Scandinavia decided to host their first hybrid event. As all events are organised by volunteers only, resources such as time and money are therefore limited. We use our association to test formats that matter to us and our members, audience, volunteers and partners. We all learn from the experience and so we want to share our key learnings.

Some of it, we already knew in advance, but we were not aware of how much it actually mattered and we had limited time to prepare. The rest was therefore trial and error on our fellow #eventprofs.

We also realised what we needed, was a basic set of guidelines for how to host a simple hybrid event. Not flashy or expensive, simple and achievable for everyone. The questions we received during and after the event also pointed in this direction. The experts who took part did not learn anything new, but the new-comers did and needed more information. Their questions and needs were also "basic". They need help with the first steps such as picking software and platforms. They need a better overview or a checklist with the details. The events many of us would like to host are simple, such as a HQ meeting with remote offices with, for example, 30 people in the office and everyone else joining remotely.

Our white paper does not answer all the questions, for this there are experts in each area who are much better at addressing. This is therefore also a request to them to share more on their specialist topics.

Our checklist focuses on the most important things to remember for a basic hybrid event:

1. **Speaker** briefing needs to be specific and coaching is needed - if remote, lighting and sound are important, also clothes, background, number of slides (not too many) and questions for the audience.

2. You can not loose your physical audience, but the online can disappear fast. Always **speak to the online audience first**. There are less included already, so the event moderator needs to look at the camera and address them first.

3. **Engagement tools** should be available for both audiences. We should have used something like Slido. Simple, easy, for both pre and post millennials. Good alternative to slides as well as for engagement. You can pose questions, the audience can pose as well as rank each others questions, do word clouds and it is accessible to everyone right from a browser.

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4. **Sponsorship** opportunities:
Breaks - firstly, remember to schedule breaks to keep your audience. Use the 10 minutes to showcase a sponsor or through a video, take questions or chat about a topic a sponsor picks. You can also make it fun like music sponsored by a partner, just do not compromise on quality or general audience appeal.

5. The **visuals**
    Venue: Use the venue as a backdrop and make sure that it is visible.
    Simple messages: Don't do complicated slides
    Programme: We thought the online audience would look at it, but they did not. Repeat it and show it frequently.

6. **Moderators and hosts**: you need two people onsite and two online. It may sound like a lot, but it is better to be over prepared. You need to make sure the online audience can get help with technical issues and also ask questions about content. This is not ideal to only have one person for this, two is better. The same onsite. You need a support person for the moderator on "stage" so he/she can be the link between the online world and the physical world.

7. **Communication**. It really all comes down to a strong communication plan and an eye for details in communication, before, during and after. None of this will work unless there are securely established communication channels. We can not be our normal fix-it-all onsite event planner.

The next page will outline the channels of communication to help you better understand pitfalls for losing your audience. You know your audience best and will know what to put emphasis on.

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What we did not address: We did not overnight become certified hybrid experts. These are the areas that we do not feel like we did as well or where we still need more training or better ideas.

Promotion and getting people interested/registered, price point for paid hybrid events, no-shows, how much does the online moderator speak and when, more sponsorship ideas, pre-recorded segments, online speakers, audience tech-knowledge inequality, inclusivity initiatives and probably a lot more.

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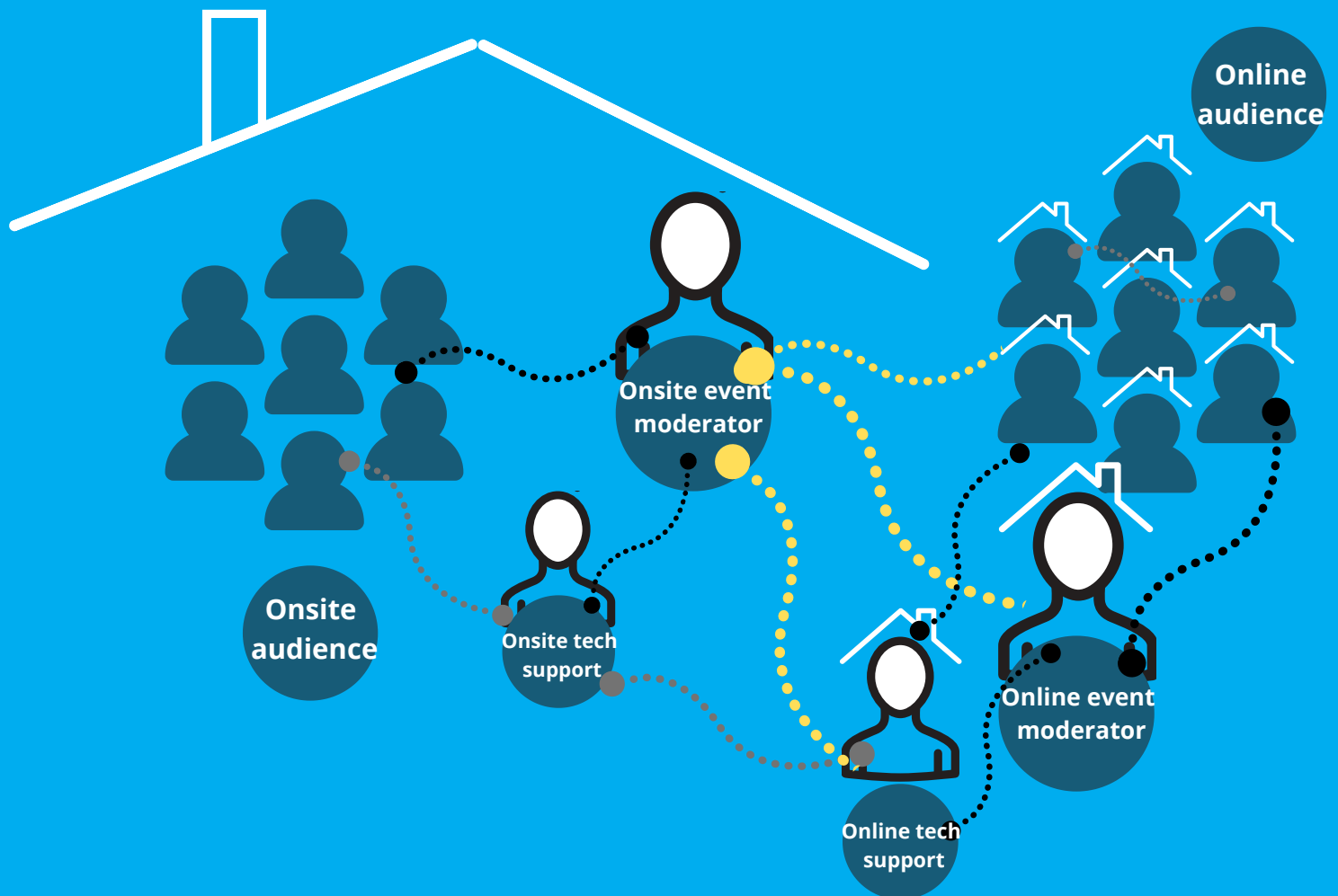
Participant communication during hybrid events

Black: two-way - no obstacles

Grey: two-way - some interruptions

Yellow: one-way - intermediary needed

For basic hybrid events, the organizers should be aware of a few pitfalls that will arise during the event when the moderator no longer is accessible to the team.

Address the following before your event:

- How will the online audience communicate with the moderator?
- How will the online moderator communicate with the event moderator?
- Should the online and onsite audience interact?
- Back-up plan or person for the online-onsite communication channel

Tools for interaction and engagement could solve some issues:

- Polls and word clouds through Slido - easy to access for both audiences
- Questions though Slido will also be visible to all audiences and can be upvoted

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