

Meeting Smarter

Greg Whateley

October 2024



Irrespective of your industry or sector (mine happens to be Higher Education) meetings are an essential fabric of both compliance and governance – and provide essential communication within and across the organisation. In my most recent roles, it was not unusual to have at least five or six formal meetings a week – whether it be dealing with operational matters, risk management, work health and safety, student well-being and/or compliance in general.

The pandemic created a new model that has application post-pandemic (remember COVID-19 is still with us – it is just that the media has lost interest) using a range of technology and health solutions that we would be wise to consider as we move forward.

F2F Meetings

There will always be a place for the standard Face-to-Face (F2F) meeting, where people gather-together and enjoy a degree of socialising and contextualising. This is of particular benefit for new employees who need to get to know those with whom they work – especially if the business is located on multiple sites and states. The F2F element provides recognition and context. It is troublesome in terms of cost and health risks.

Online Meetings

The surge in the online option was a direct result of the pandemic and the technology developments have been extremely useful. The mode is incredibly time saving and highly cost-effective and I suggest it will remain with us for some time – if not forever.

Hybrid

The hybrid mix (F2F and online options) provides the best of both worlds in that we are enabled to F2F with our closer colleagues and interface online with those from a distance. The mode works extremely well at present – it is engaging, time efficient and cost-efficient. With the right technology in place, this can be the most effective opportunity moving forward.

Other alternatives including outdoor meetings

However, there are many other alternatives to in-room and/or online meetings, including sharing a cup of coffee offsite; strolling through the local park chatting along the way; phone conferencing; and during a workout.

The health benefits of outdoors (where possible) and moving about are considerable. Fresh air is always a good thing in a Vitamin D deficient public as it is known to increase our levels through outdoor activity. Walking releases endorphins which in turn has a positive spin on your own well-being and positivity.

When moving about (walking through the city or a park), the distraction from taking phone calls and texts is diminished and the focus on the key topic/s can be enhanced considerably, and issues can be dealt with and sometimes solved. The distance planned can also provide you with the necessary start–middle–end of your meeting sequence.

Worth considering.

Meetings are an essential aspect of our work – but using creative options and strategies can be very worthwhile with some very positive outcomes, if thought through carefully and used appropriately.

Emeritus Professor Greg Whateley was until recently held the positions of Deputy Vice-Chancellor (UBSS) and Chief Executive Officer (GCA). He is currently an independent consultant with AGE.