

Guide to Hybrid Club Meetings

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As some clubs want to return to in-person meetings, it becomes vitally important to not lose any of the new members we have gained (or regained) during this pandemic, because Zoom calls were a practical way for them to participate in our meetings, whereas an in person attendance may not be acceptable to them. This could be for various reasons, such as different risk tolerance, being in a higher-risk group due to age or health conditions, geographic distribution, or simply less of a desire to spend 1 ½ hours to have breakfast or lunch together and more focus on service.

We want to make sure that our clubs are inclusive and do not alienate those new members, and the best way to achieve that seems to be the approach to Hybrid Club Meetings.

Essentially, there are many ways to conduct hybrid meetings that cater to both an in-person and an online audience, and we'll discuss a few approaches in this document, ranked by ease of implementation, but not necessarily by convenience for the attendees. Please review these as a starting point, but feel free to check out the additional resources at the end and find an approach that works for your unique situation in your Rotary Club!

[1. Alternate Meeting Schedule](#)

The easiest and least technically challenging way to achieve a hybrid club experience is to alternate meetings between in-person and online. For example, a club could meet in person twice per month and online twice per month and different subsets of members would likely want to participate in each of those modes. Some may have “Zoom-fatigue” and will predominantly show up to the in-person sessions, whereas others may prefer the online meetings due to health or safety concerns.

While this approach is the easiest to implement and doesn't have any technical requirements, it carries with it the danger of splitting the clubs into two separate cliques or groups, so it needs to be carefully monitors.

All the remaining ideas in this document require some technology and especially need an Internet connection for the laptop that is being used. This could be provided either by a Wi-Fi network available at the meeting location, or if that place doesn't have a Wi-Fi network, then one person in the club would need to create a Hotspot on their Smartphone to allow the laptop to connect with the Internet.

2. Bring a laptop

The next option is to simply bring a laptop to any in-person meeting and run Zoom on that laptop and allow people to participate online. The tricky bit about this is the placement of the laptop and how to ensure that people who are online do not feel like 2nd class citizens. Think of the people on Zoom as a group that is sitting together at one (virtual) table, and make sure to include them in your Happy Dollars and Announcements, if/when you do those.

While the in-person group of your club is going to the buffet or being served breakfast/lunch/dinner, consider having a table chair on Zoom lead the discussion at the virtual table – especially if you have visitors to your club, you can ask them to introduce themselves and this helps the virtual members all feel more included. During that phase of the meeting, consider using Gallery View on Zoom so that the in-person group can see all the faces of all the online attendees.

While there is a speaker at the podium (could be the president or a guest speaker) the laptop should be placed so that the camera faces the speaker. That way the speaker will see both their in-person and online audience and can make eye-contact alternatingly with each subset of the population.

During other parts of the meeting, for example happy dollars or when a committee chair gives a report from their table rather than the dais, it would be ideal if the laptop could be turned to face the person speaking or – even better – could be brought close to the table where the person is speaking, so that all who are online can also hear them well.

Similarly, if any online members would like to say something, it would be great to bring the laptop to a place where all in-person members can hear the online speaker well. This could potentially be done by placing the laptop onto the dais, if the club has a microphone and PA system there, which could pick up the sound from the laptop. At that point in time, make sure you switch Zoom to Speaker View so that the person speaking will be shown as the main focus on the laptop screen.

3. Bring a laptop and use a projector (or large screen TV)

If the physical meeting facility is a meeting hall that has a large screen TV available, or if your club or the meeting facility has a projector and screen, then the experience for in-person attendees can be greatly enhanced, by connecting your laptop to the projector or large screen TV. This will put the Zoom call with all the online faces on a much larger display surface and make it easier for the in-person attendees to see all the online attendees, which creates a greater sense of community. For most of the meeting, you will want to use Gallery View in Zoom, so that the in-person attendees can see all virtual attendees.

As mentioned in #2 above, make sure to include the online attendees in Happy Dollars and Announcements, and think of them as just one more table in the room. If possible, designate a table leader for the virtual group to lead the discussion while the in-person group goes to the buffet or is being served breakfast/lunch.

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Ideally, the laptop should also be able to send the sound output to the large screen TV or projector so that when people on the online side are talking, the in-person attendees can hear them a lot better, than if the sound only came out of the laptop speaker. Usually, any HDMI cable connection from the laptop to the TV or projector will carry both the audio and video signals.

This setup also would allow a speaker to be an online attendee and to easily present their PowerPoint slides to both the online participants and the in-person meeting participants at the same time. When you get to the portion of the meeting, where you have online attendees speak to the entire group – either as the speaker of the day, or even just for Happy Dollars, consider switching Zoom to Speaker View so that the in-person group can better see the face of the person who is currently speaking.

We have several clubs in our district, who have already used this approach successfully. For example, both the Greater Salem, NH Club and the Haverhill Rotary Club have used this approach for several meetings and presentations, including the annual DG Visit. If you want to see an example of how this can work really well, consider visiting one of their upcoming meetings...



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4. Bring a laptop, use a projector (or large screen TV), and a webcam

This is similar to #3 above, but instead of utilizing the laptop's built in camera, which doesn't always have a great resolution, and also can only be pointed in the direction that the laptop screen is facing, this approach uses an external webcam – typically connected to the laptop via USB cable - that can then be placed on a tripod so that online participants can get a better view of the room and all in-person participants.



Such an external webcam can be placed on a tripod so that it provides a stable view of the meeting room to show both participants and also any speakers that may be at the dais, such as the club president, committee chairs giving their reports, or an in-person speaker present at the physical meeting location.

Usually, Rotary Clubs will already have used laptops and projectors in the past, so this option only represents a small additional investment into buying a webcam and a tripod. If you are planning to buy a webcam, make sure it supports 1080p resolution at a minimum.



5. Utilize a specialized remote-attendance / conferencing device

There is a host of remote-presence and hybrid meeting devices available for the corporate world, and some of those could easily be repurposed for a Rotary Club environment. Two of the most common devices being used in the corporate world are:

Logitech Meetup

The Meetup is basically a webcam on steroids. It would be used similar to the approach discussed in #4 above, but instead of a regular consumer-level webcam, the meetup is a much larger device that typically would get mounted underneath the large scale TV or the screen that the projector points to.

An example of how a Meetup setup could look like is this:



To learn more about Logitech Meetup, go to this page:

<https://www.logitech.com/en-us/product/meetup-conferencem>

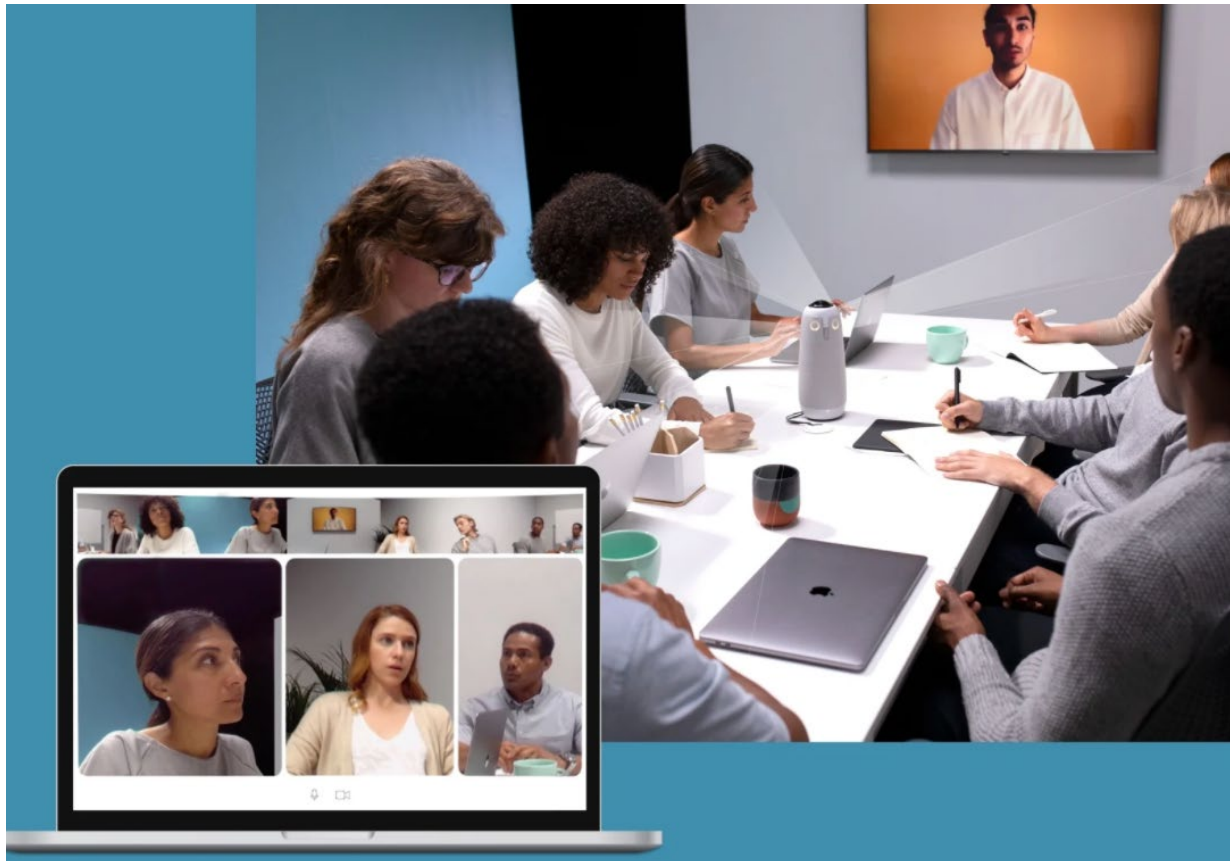
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Meeting Owl

While both a webcam and a conference-cam like Meetup are great for capturing the video view of a group of in-person participants, the Meeting Owl goes one step further. It is designed to be placed in the middle of the in-person group of participants and will take a 360 degree view of the meeting room and intelligently cut it into separate pieces for the different people in the room, and will automatically highlight the one currently speaking:



It still needs a laptop and a large screen TV or projector, so it's just an extension of the #3 approach, but it could provide a more immersive feeling of the club experience to your online participants.

To learn more about the Meeting Owl, go to this page: <https://www.owllabs.com/meeting-owl>

Other Resources

For more complex hybrid setup ideas (including local presenters, 2 laptops, and 2 AV operators), please see this document put together by Rotary Zones 33&34:

https://www.rizones33-34.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Hybrid_Rotary_Meetings_Technology_Guide.pdf