



# Planning engaging online events and workshops

Key questions to bring intention & interaction into your gathering

## Creating meaningful online experiences

*'The way we gather matters. Gatherings consume our days and help determine the kind of world we live in, in both our intimate and public realms. Gathering - the conscious bringing together of people for a reason - shapes the way we think, feel and make sense of our world.'*

Priya Parker

What comes to your mind when you think about online events and workshops? Connecting with different people around the world from the comfort of your couch? Energising and insightful experiences? Or rather digital fatigue and yet another screen share presentation? Whatever your experience so far, we do believe that creating meaningful events online works. And it all starts with how we design our event or workshop.

### How to use this checklist

Planning an event or workshop can be daunting as there are so many details to think about. That's why we've put together this **list of questions which we ask ourselves and our clients when we design a gathering**. Of course it is not exhaustive, yet our intention is to guide you through the process of planning while keeping the key aspects of your event in mind. You might like to print it out and write down your answers to the questions, or add your own questions which are important to you. We hope it supports you to create more intentional, interactive and enjoyable online experiences for yourself and your participants.

### Want to dive deeper?

We work with organisations to **design and facilitate digital events, workshops and meetings** with a focus on creating participation, collaboration and connection online. Our experienced event designers and facilitators can work with you to plan and host your workshop or meeting, or to support your organisation to build facilitation capacities internally through our hands-on **digital facilitation training**.

Every month we run **free online workshops** on our core topics: digital facilitation, purposeful leadership, empowered teamwork, systemic impact evaluation and more.

**Sign up to our newsletter** or **follow us on LinkedIn** to stay up to date with future workshops, programs and resources.

Happy planning!

The Unity Effect Team

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Unity Effect, April 2022. [www.unityeffect.net](http://www.unityeffect.net)

## Purpose and Intention

What is the purpose and intention of the meeting or event?

What outcome do you want (for yourself/the organisers and for the participants)?

Who is the target audience for your event?

Is the intention to:

- Share information
- Enable learning
- Work on something together
- Create connection in a group
- Reach joint decisions and clarity on next steps
- Other

*Tip: try to limit it to 1-2 key intentions per event (or sections of a larger event) to stay focused.*

## Format and Length

Which formats will you use in your gathering?

- Interactive workshop
- Webinar
- Panel discussion
- Fishbowl
- Peer-to-peer exchange
- Barcamp
- Working group
- Networking event
- Other

How much time is needed to achieve the intention?

How will you include a break (if longer than 1.5 hours)?

If you were a participant, how much information would you be able to take in? When would you need a break?

## Tools and Methods

Which platform suits the needs of the format you've chosen?  
*E.g. is the focus on using breakouts and a large gallery view?  
Or on streaming a keynote speech and creating a more professional experience?*

Which methods and elements help shape your event?

- Check-ins and check-outs
- Energisers
- Presentation/expert input
- Q and A session
- Small group discussions
- Writing in the chat
- Polls or quizzes
- Working together, e.g. on a digital whiteboard
- Listening circle
- Individual reflection, e.g. journaling
- Breaks
- Other

Which digital tools support these methods?

*E.g. whiteboard tools, polling tools, documentation tools, etc.*

Which tools can you get rid of to not overload the participants?

*Tip: try not to switch between different tools too often.*

### Looking over your planned activities and tools, check:

Do your plans still align with your intention?

Do you keep it, kick it or adjust it to better fit the intention?

How much time should you allocate to it so it is really useful to participants? How would you experience it as a participant?

Where can you build in buffer time, and which part would you be willing to skip or shorten if you run out of time?

How have you included breaks and how many breaks?

How will you transition between input, Q&A, group exchanges, etc.?

## Participants

### Before

What information or links do you need to share beforehand so that the participants arrive feeling prepared?

### During

How do you want participants to arrive? What feeling do you want to create at the beginning of the gathering?

How can you build in interaction?

If you were a participant, what would you need to participate and engage?

How do you want them to leave? What feeling do you want them to take with them?

What outcomes do you want to harvest?

Are there action steps you want them to take?

### After

How will you follow up afterwards?

### Diversity and Inclusion

Thinking about your event, whom does this affect?

Who has expertise in this topic?

Is there a way to include these people/groups in the planning process and/or throughout the event?

How can you ensure diversity when selecting speakers, moderators and inviting participants? (gender, origin, age, disability, etc.)

How can you make sure different voices are heard?

Which time zones are your participants in and is there anything to consider (e.g. regional public holidays) when planning the time of your event?

## Accessibility

Will your participants join on laptops or phones?

Do they have access to reliable internet?

What level of digital literacy do they have?

Do you need to adjust your tools and methods to make sure everyone can participate?

## Roles

Who will take on the following roles (note: one person can fulfil multiple roles):

- Facilitator/host** - gives the participants clarity about what is happening, takes care of the atmosphere, guides the conversation back if it goes off topic, keeps an eye on the time and agenda and supports all voices to be heard.
- Co-facilitator** - facilitates certain activities within the event
- Technical host** - operates the break out rooms, posts information & answers questions in the chat, mutes people and lets people in from the waiting room
- Time & theme keepers** - makes sure the event stays on time and on topic. Can be the facilitator or another person
- Minute-taker/harvester** - takes notes (this can also be the participants collectively, e.g. via a survey or shared document)

## After the Event

What went well?

Did we fulfil our intention and achieve the outcome we wanted?

What did we learn?

What would we do differently next time?

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To stay updated, sign up to our **monthly newsletter** and follow us on **LinkedIn**.

To learn more about our work, visit **[www.unityeffect.net](http://www.unityeffect.net)** or get in touch via **[info@unityeffect.net](mailto:info@unityeffect.net)**