

Hybrid Meetings

Moderation Techniques

The future of work is hybrid. According to current projections, 98% of future meetings will include at least one remote participant.

We'll show you how to master hybrid.

98%* of all future meetings will involve remote participants.

Through numerous organizational transformation projects, we know how important it is to support new forms of communication.

Here we present our 26 guidelines on how to make these formats engaging.




What are hybrid meetings?

Hybrid meetings are meetings where some participants are connected remotely while the rest of the team is gathered on-site.

Basically, we can consider **any meeting with at least one remote participant** as a hybrid meeting.



A low-angle, blurred photograph of several people walking in a modern office hallway. The people are out of focus, creating a sense of motion. The hallway has a polished floor, white walls, and a glass railing on the left. A door is visible in the background.

From now on, your meetings should have one goal:

Inclusion

- Inclusion must become more than just a buzzword. 42%* of employees leave their meetings without saying what they think!
- We need to consciously drive inclusive experiences to make all voices heard, wherever they are in the meeting.

The greatest energy
should go into improving
your skills in

Moderation



- 54%* of employees believe that their managers need to moderate better.
- As moderators, in order to have truly productive hybrid meetings, we need to step out of our comfort zone and try new tactics and technologies.



CHECKLIST

BEST PRACTICES

Asynchronous – always first

Important conversations take place online

Keep track of your conversations

Introduce feedback rounds

Gather input

Live documentation as supreme discipline

Basic rules – are a prerequisite

Make sure all cameras are on

Avoid side calls and talking

Maintain eye contact with everyone

Remind everyone of the rules regularly

A universal language is mandatory

Be integrative – from the beginning

Say hello to everyone

Use icebreakers

Interaction – remote first

Make the best use of pauses in speaking

First ask your online participants

Presentations are always short and to the point

Recognize and use *un-muted*-toggles

Recognize non-verbal communication

Equal opportunities – through online tools

Make brainstorming inclusive

Mood images through votes

Involve everyone with Q&A-formats

Ensure flawless sound

Technology - used correctly

Mount the webcam at eye level

Test everything, prior to the meeting

Pay attention to what's behind you

Be a virtual news anchor

Always switch notifications off

ASYNCHRONOUS – ALWAYS FIRST

When part of your team is in the office while others are working remotely, your remote colleagues can easily feel burdened or left out of important conversations.

Often the time spent in meetings doesn't make up for the interactions that take place in the office over the course of a day.

You can minimize this friction by adopting an asynchronous mindset: anything that can be done asynchronously is done online — without calling a meeting.

Create online spaces that all your team members can use to stay connected and actively contribute (e.g. Slack, Notion, Asana, Trello, and others).

With these asynchronous means of communication, you can better prepare for your meetings - not only will you make your meetings more efficient; you actually only discuss matters that really need to be discussed live.

By the way: The following tactics also work excellently for globally distributed teams in which not everyone can always attend every meeting, let alone meet in an office.



Important conversations take place online

Discuss everything important online in your internal communication channels - whether it's a quick morning sync result or a "What should we do for our team retreat?"-chat.

If that's not possible in writing, inform your team immediately after a discussion - whether online or in the office - so that everyone stays on the same page.



Keep track

Keep your Notion/Trello/Asana (or whatever tool you use for project management) up-to-date so everyone is aware of the status of each task and each other's priorities.

A great hack is to set up an automatic reminder bot in your internal communication tool so your teammates don't forget to update their dashboards. For example, we set up such a reminder in our team's Slack channel.

Every Monday morning, it gets us to set our priorities for the week and reminds us to consider the latest results in our Jira ticketing system.

For larger projects, we recommend appointing someone from the team to be the project manager to monitor and update these virtual whiteboards.



Introduce feedback rounds

Instead of asking for feedback in the office, post all work-in-progress documents to your Slack channel (or other internal communication channels) to give everyone a chance to give their opinion.

The easiest way to collect feedback is via collaborative cloud-based documents like Miro, Confluence, G-Suite Docs, Sheets or Slides. This allows people to comment on or start a discussion about a specific point right in the document—both asynchronously and in real time.




Gather input

If you use a cloud-based format, it is easy to set up a collaborative document for each meeting and collect input beforehand.

This document should contain your agenda and discussion points, but also those responsible. In this way, your participants know in advance what the meeting is about and can opt out if it is not relevant to them. Your document should also serve as a medium to collect all relevant input from every participant.

Only then will your meeting become an important live exchange that is exciting and goal-oriented. However, this Aha-effect will only occur if the base-information was already shared asynchronously beforehand.

Colleagues who are not usually actively involved in the live exchange can also make themselves heard or be specifically asked about an asynchronously given input.

A woman with dark hair, wearing a white t-shirt and a blue vest, is smiling and looking towards the camera. She is holding a pair of glasses in her right hand and a smartphone in her left. In the background, other people are seated at a table in a bright, modern office setting with large windows.

Quick-Hack: **Proactive unsubscribes**

At the beginning of the appointment, each participant names the agenda items from which (for whatever reason) they will opt out.

A supreme discipline: live documentation

Allow live notes during the meeting and encourage your participants to use them actively! In this way, misunderstandings can be recognized and addressed in real time and - with a little practice - decisions can be made and written down in real-time.

There is no better form of feedback and everyone has the opportunity to intervene in the context of the meeting and current issues.

Ask someone to follow what is happening on your collaborative document and pass it on to the moderator if necessary.

Quick-Hack: Veto-button

Veto-button: (digital) sticker on a board showing "I disagree here" or "I disagree with this". Especially promising if you want to make decisions or work results in a sociocratic rather than a grassroots-democratic way.



BASIC RULES – A PREREQUISITE

Now for the “how” of running the hybrid meetings themselves.

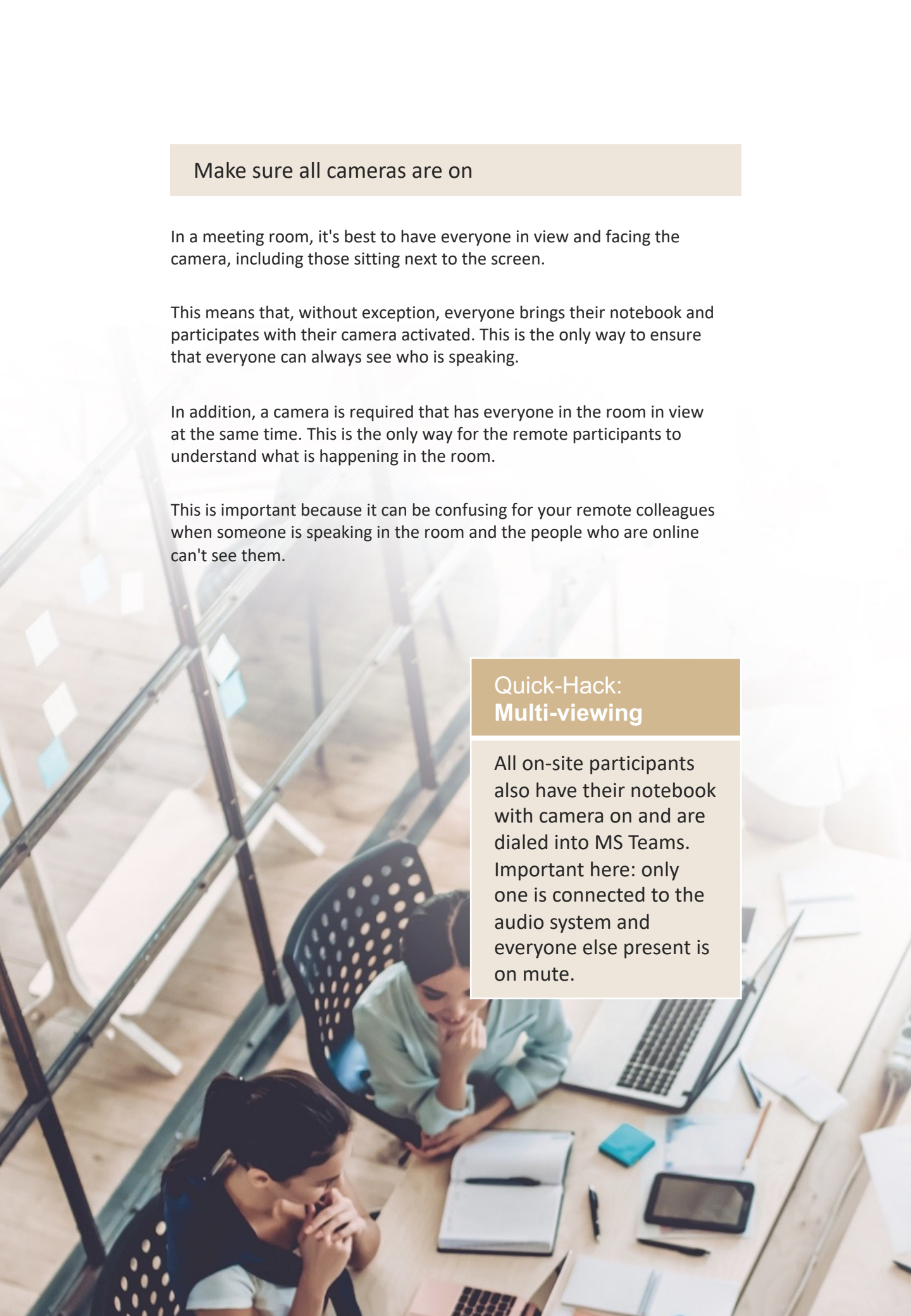
How do you make sure they are productive and that all participants feel included and respected?

It's often easy for people gathered in a meeting room to get lost in impromptu conversation and "forget" about their remote colleagues.

These are the times when your remote colleagues feel the most left out.

Start by establishing some ground rules and principles for coming together in a hybrid environment. Don't forget to remind yourself of your basic rules at the beginning of each meeting - it is advisable to integrate this netiquette into your collaborative document or agenda.





Make sure all cameras are on

In a meeting room, it's best to have everyone in view and facing the camera, including those sitting next to the screen.

This means that, without exception, everyone brings their notebook and participates with their camera activated. This is the only way to ensure that everyone can always see who is speaking.

In addition, a camera is required that has everyone in the room in view at the same time. This is the only way for the remote participants to understand what is happening in the room.

This is important because it can be confusing for your remote colleagues when someone is speaking in the room and the people who are online can't see them.

Quick-Hack: **Multi-viewing**

All on-site participants also have their notebook with camera on and are dialed into MS Teams. Important here: only one is connected to the audio system and everyone else present is on mute.


Avoid side calls and talks

Try to avoid side calls and impromptu conversations as these can be confusing for your remote colleagues. This also applies to jokes or situational humor.

If the whole room erupts in laughter, your remote participants may feel left out.

However, if such a situation arises, explain and inform your whole team, whether online or on-site. Team members present in the room could also have missed the punchline.





Maintain eye contact with everyone

If someone is speaking in the room, make sure he or she tries to make eye contact with your online participants.

Look into the camera often, not just at the people around you.

Quick-Hack: Quadrants-View

Get in the habit of maintaining eye contact with as many people as possible. If you mentally divide the room into 4 quadrants, it helps you to look at them clockwise.

Remind everyone (and yourself) of the rules regularly

It's a good idea to review the ground rules at the beginning of each of your hybrid meetings.

It will help your colleagues become familiar with these principles, and soon they will all come naturally to you as a team.

For example, you can write the rules on a flipchart for the on-site participants and set them up in a clearly visible place. Then you can refer to them visually as well.

For the remote participants, you can link or add to the rules in the agenda document shared live.



A universal language is mandatory

If people in the room speak a language that remote colleagues don't understand, avoid it altogether and conduct all conversations in English (or another language everyone agrees on).

Specific specialist vocabulary, which is particularly well understood in the various departments of corporations, can deter interested participants from taking part in cross-corporate meetings. Try to avoid technical jargon and abbreviations.

Making this agreement in advance is beneficial for everyone involved as it allows everyone to prepare in the right language and avoids confusing switches between different languages.

Quick-Hack: **Blather-Stop**

Prevent endless discussions or speeches (blather) by changing the playing field of the meeting, i.e. instead of talking about a topic or agenda item, everyone writes their input on a (digital) post-it and only the veto buttons are discussed (with a timebox).



INTEGRATIVE – FROM THE BEGINNING

Encourage your colleagues to turn on their cameras so everyone can see each other.

Frequently acknowledge your online participants visually and verbally and make them feel instantly included.

If you plan to conduct interactive activities during the meeting, choose ones that your online colleagues can also participate in.

For example by using a shared online whiteboard or miro board.



Say hello to everyone

At the beginning of your meeting, say hello to all of your online colleagues and welcome each of them by name, if possible.

If you have a large team and this isn't possible, at least send a general greeting like, "Hey remote folks, how are you?"

Quick-Hack: Invite ready to work

Send an invitation with a link to the work environment and preparation information



Use an icebreaker

You can use all kinds of remote-friendly icebreakers to make your online colleagues feel included right from the start.

For example, use a quiz or word cloud poll to quickly check the mood of your co-workers, for example, "How would you describe this month in one word?"

Or start your meeting with stimulating "would you prefer" questions. For example: "Would you rather live in the Arctic or in the Sahara for the rest of your life?"

Such short questions often trigger great emotions!

You can find a collection of many other icebreakers, for example, at the following link: <https://miro.com/blog/ice-breaker-questions-for-team/>



INTERACTION – REMOTE FIRST

To create a truly inclusive hybrid meeting, you need to take a remote-first approach to the way you speak and interact with your meeting participants.

Basically, this means that when you ask a question or ask someone for their opinion in the meeting, don't automatically turn to the person next to you or someone sitting across from you, but explicitly think of all participants and try to reach out to the remote participants first.

It is recommended that the meeting leader appoints a "remote chair" prior to the team meeting. This should be an onsite person who has the role in the meeting of always keeping an eye on the remote participants and the chat. This additional mouthpiece should not be the one who also keeps an eye on your cooperative document.



Make the best use of pauses in speaking

In hybrid meetings, silence is an empowering asset for your remote teammates.

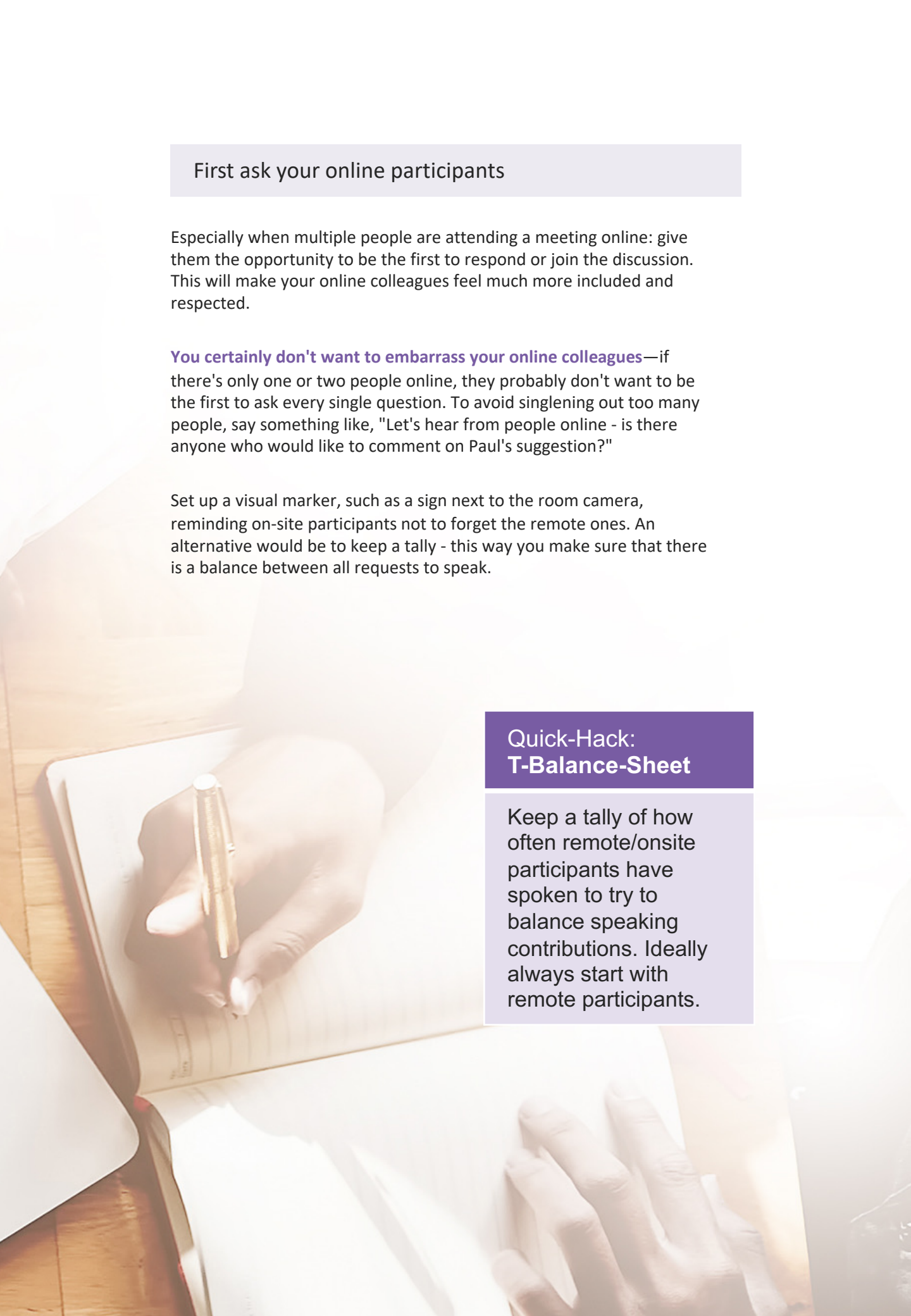
If someone in the meeting room hogs the discussion all the time, your remote colleagues won't have a chance to contribute.

As the leader of the meeting, you should be the one who allocates the time to those who wish to speak. Alternatively, you can appoint someone who shares the role of moderator with you and is explicitly entrusted with this task.

Agree on a procedure in the rules as to whether all reports are processed in sequence or whether there are, for example, two different types of request to speak: for example, a hand signal or holding up a card for "immediate inquiry about this contribution" and another sign for "general contribution to speak".

Quick-Hack: I-am-listening-sign

As soon as a participant notices that people are drifting or mentally disconnected, they hold up (or write this in the chat) an "I am listening" sign. After that, everyone else must also hold up their sign. The last one to notice "loses".

A background image showing a close-up of a person's hand holding a gold-colored pen and writing on a lined notebook. The notebook is open, and the hand is positioned over the left page. The lighting is warm and soft, creating a professional yet approachable atmosphere.

First ask your online participants

Especially when multiple people are attending a meeting online: give them the opportunity to be the first to respond or join the discussion. This will make your online colleagues feel much more included and respected.

You certainly don't want to embarrass your online colleagues—if there's only one or two people online, they probably don't want to be the first to ask every single question. To avoid singling out too many people, say something like, "Let's hear from people online - is there anyone who would like to comment on Paul's suggestion?"

Set up a visual marker, such as a sign next to the room camera, reminding on-site participants not to forget the remote ones. An alternative would be to keep a tally - this way you make sure that there is a balance between all requests to speak.

Quick-Hack: T-Balance-Sheet

Keep a tally of how often remote/onsite participants have spoken to try to balance speaking contributions. Ideally always start with remote participants.

Presentations are short and to the point

After each major chunk of information, pause briefly so that anyone — onsite, but especially online — can jump in with a question if they want to.

You can even intentionally build breaks into your meeting agenda.

For example, give your co-workers a two-minute think time to think about the main points of discussion before moving on to the actual discussion.

In this way, you give all your colleagues the opportunity to ask additional questions or contribute with suggestions.



Recognize and make good use of „unmute“-toggles

A great tactic to make sure your remote participants feel heard is to check the screen for cues that someone wants to speak.

Depending on the video conferencing platform you're using, this can be done either by someone unmuting or by using the "raise hand" feature.

You can say something like, "Caro, you're unmuted; do you have any questions?"



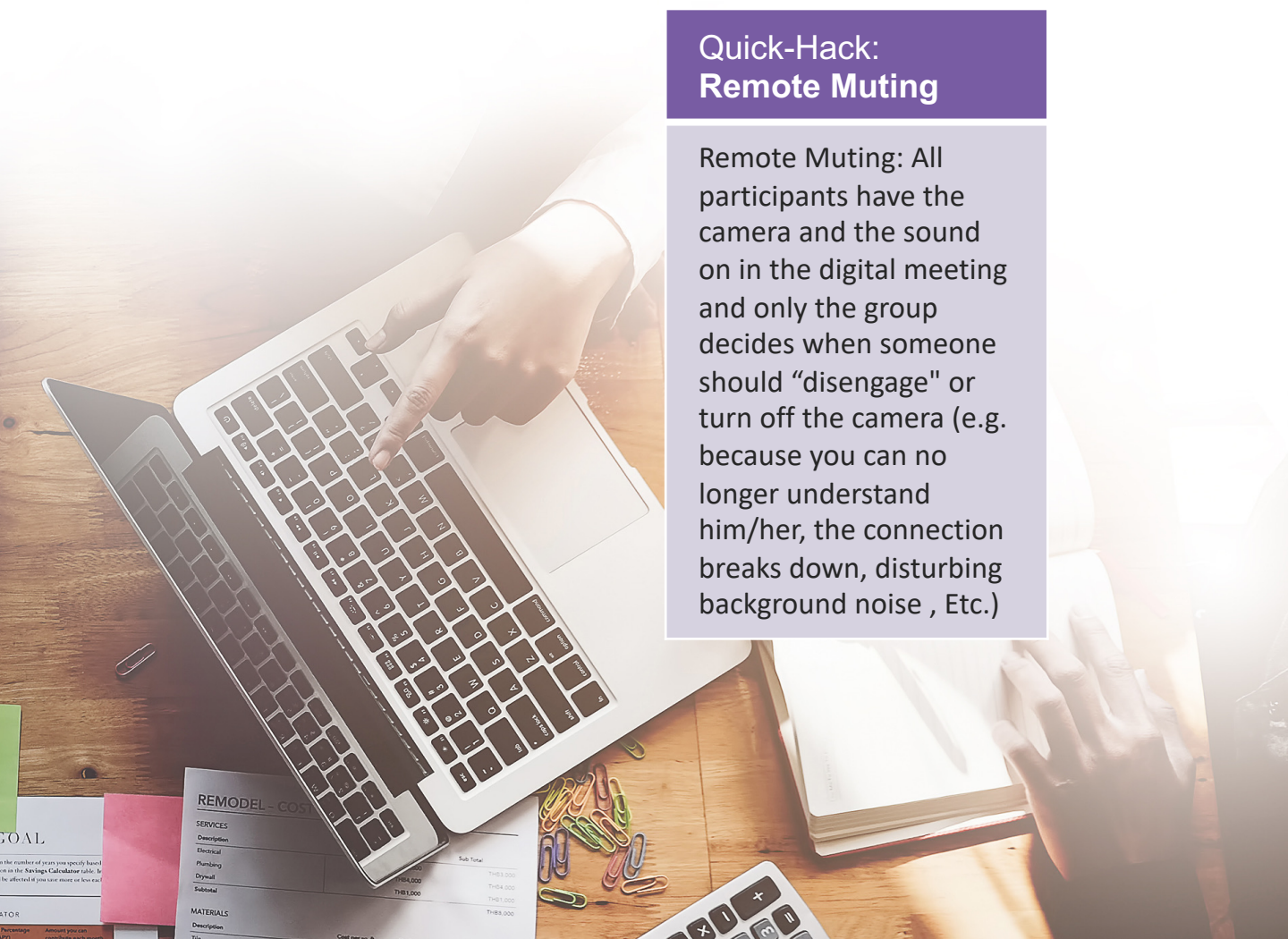
Recognize non-verbal communication

If your remote colleagues have their cameras on – keep an eye on subtle facial features like inhaling or questioning expressions.

If you pay attention to these cues, you can always engage your teammates in a conversation online – such as: "Fabian, I see that you are looking somewhat questioningly, would you like me to clarify something?"

Quick-Hack: Remote Muting

Remote Muting: All participants have the camera and the sound on in the digital meeting and only the group decides when someone should “disengage” or turn off the camera (e.g. because you can no longer understand him/her, the connection breaks down, disturbing background noise , Etc.)



EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES – THROUGH ONLINE TOOLS

Using smart meeting tools like polls, Q&A, or virtual whiteboards can help you level the playing field and gather insights from everyone equally.

This is regardless of whether they are physically in a meeting room or participating online.

Treat your hybrid meeting like an online meeting in that sense.

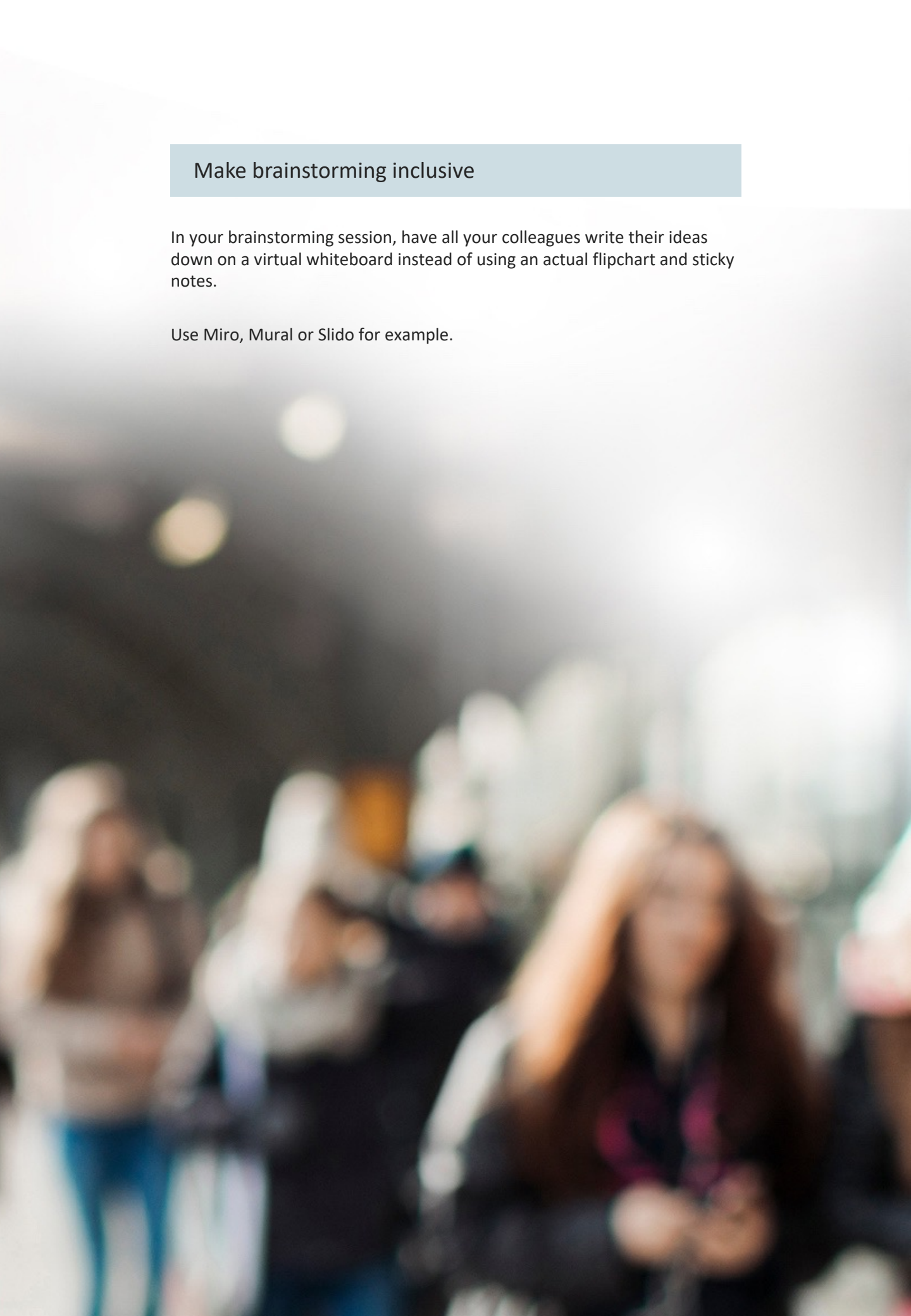
Involving your teammates evenly throughout your hybrid meeting and encouraging them to actively participate via technology will make them feel more included and heard.



Make brainstorming inclusive

In your brainstorming session, have all your colleagues write their ideas down on a virtual whiteboard instead of using an actual flipchart and sticky notes.

Use Miro, Mural or Slido for example.



Mood images through votes

Instead of asking out loud for the opinion of your colleagues, opinion software is recommended for more democratic decision-making. In addition to your collaborative document - for example on Confluence - a shared whiteboard is also suitable for a short vote.

Not only will you be able to gather input from each and every one of your peers (except for a select few who are willing to speak up), but you will also become more inclusive and transparent in your meetings. In the live discussion that follows, everyone has an equal say.



Q&A formats involve everyone

The same goes apply for collecting questions from your teammates.

Not everyone is comfortable interrupting the speaker and asking a question, especially when she or he is participating online.

Give these participants the opportunity to ask questions via a live Q&A – whether in an app, in the meeting chat or live in the shared document.

But also make sure to provide an anonymous option.



Make sure the sound is flawless

Audio quality can make a big difference in the meeting experience for your remote attendees.

Anyone who cannot hear what is happening in the room naturally has difficulties participating in the discussion.

To avoid this, make sure all meeting rooms are equipped with high-quality microphone and speaker systems suitable for a video conference.



TECHNOLOGY – USED CORRECTLY

For hybrid meetings with a larger number of participants, microphones in the meeting room may be useful to ensure that all online employees can hear their colleagues on site when they are asked to speak.

At prosma we use Catchbox, a throwable microphone that has been individually programmed and adapted to our brand.

Before meeting, always check that people can all hear each other well. Everyone needs to hear everything – and feel heard.



Mount the webcam at eye level

Communication should always be at eye level. It is therefore advisable to ensure that the viewing height is the same.

As in the real on-site meeting, you don't look down on others. This often prevents hierarchical differences that are perceived unconsciously. These can trigger a barely identifiable discomfort in your participants.



Test everything before the meeting

Anything that can go wrong will eventually go wrong. Hybrid settings offer almost endless sources of error.

So always come online a few minutes before the meeting starts to test your equipment and always have a plan B.



Pay attention to what's behind you

A busy background with clutter or people walking back and forth can distract other interlocutors.

Be aware of your surroundings so as not to transmit exactly those office space characteristics that we find distressing: background noise, side conversations, noisy or bare rooms, poor acoustics, and so on.

We usually only tolerate these disruptions because they are balanced by the presence of our colleagues on-site: Since the social glue is missing remotely, we all find these framework conditions online to be infinitely more disruptive.

Quick-Hack: Silent Cup

Place serviettes under cups and raise awareness of noise among on-site participants.



Be a virtual news anchor

If you're presenting information in a group, consider using mmhmm, OBS, or ChromaCam* to project yourself onto your slides.

This will make your presentation much more engaging.



Always turn off notifications

All those pings and things when people go online, offline, or post on Facebook: turn them off. Avoid distractions for other conversation partners.

And now to you. Yes: you.

Running hybrid meetings doesn't have to be rocket science, but you do need a few smart facilitation tactics in your toolbox to bridge the gap between your online and face-to-face colleagues.

We hope that the above guidelines have inspired you and that they will help you host inclusive, engaging, and democratic hybrid meetings.



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