

What's next for our meetings ?

A PRIMER FOR HYBRID CONSULTATIONS - QUESTIONNAIRE

The Past,
Present and
Future...

None of us could have predicted how the Coronavirus would change the shape of our meetings.

For over a year now, we have had to adopt and adapt new ways of working, and many clubs have continued to meet online using Zoom.


Now, as the UK looks to release restrictions on meetings and social gatherings what's next for our club format ?

The Committee's role in shaping the future

Each club is different and as a result there cannot be one comprehensive solution as to how to proceed.

Each committee should consult with its members on matters of club business.

Use this document to help your committee, support your club members to decide the shape of meetings in the future.



Do we go back to in-person meetings ?

Do we stay meeting online ?

Should we have a hybrid meeting format ?

Definitions – meeting types



In person



Online



Alternating meetings



Hybrid (a blended online and in person meeting)



Any combination of the above

Why can't we
just go back to
normal ?



Responsibility to membership, it's their decision to make



Global members



Shifts in peoples working arrangements



Meeting venue suitability/existence ?



Safety concerns of members (vulnerable people at home etc.)

Managing a safe return

All future plans should be developed in accordance with the Government's evolving legislation around COVID. These can be found at –

<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-coronavirus-restrictions-what-you-can-and-cannot-do>

District 91's liability insurance policy does not cover any litigation or other liability resulting from any individuals possibly contracting COVID-19 from attending a club event, whether or not the club follows all government regulations

Cost

The added cost of hybrid meetings can be minimal (i.e. successful hybrid meetings may be possible with equipment presently available within a club e.g. mobile phones, laptop) and questions of cost should not necessarily deter clubs from pursuing a robust discussion/consultation at this stage.

Guidelines on costs will be available once a pilot programme to test equipment options have been undertaken.

What should we consider before we approach to our members with a questionnaire?

Accessibility

Transparency/Openness

Bias

Anonymity

Informed participation

Accessibility

Toastmasters clubs consist of members with wildly varying technical ability and experience. Any questionnaire should be easily accessible with the minimum of technical barriers and be written in as clear language as possible. A useful resource can be purpose built portals such as www.surveymonkey.co.uk which are constructed to provide a seamless user experience.

Transparency/ Openness

It is vital that this process be clearly developed and communicated as a consultative exercise that will be feeding into a subsequent review/planning phase. It is also very important that exercise this be unambiguously positioned within an overall consultation timeframe, with deadlines on responding to participants with the results and undertaking of next steps made clear.

Bias

It is very difficult to completely remove bias from consultations. This questionnaire should not be undertaken to justify a decision but only to help shape further discussion or plans to gather more information. Care should still be taken to remove leading questions (e.g. How much do you believe the club would be improved by the adoption of hybrid meetings) and keep language neutral

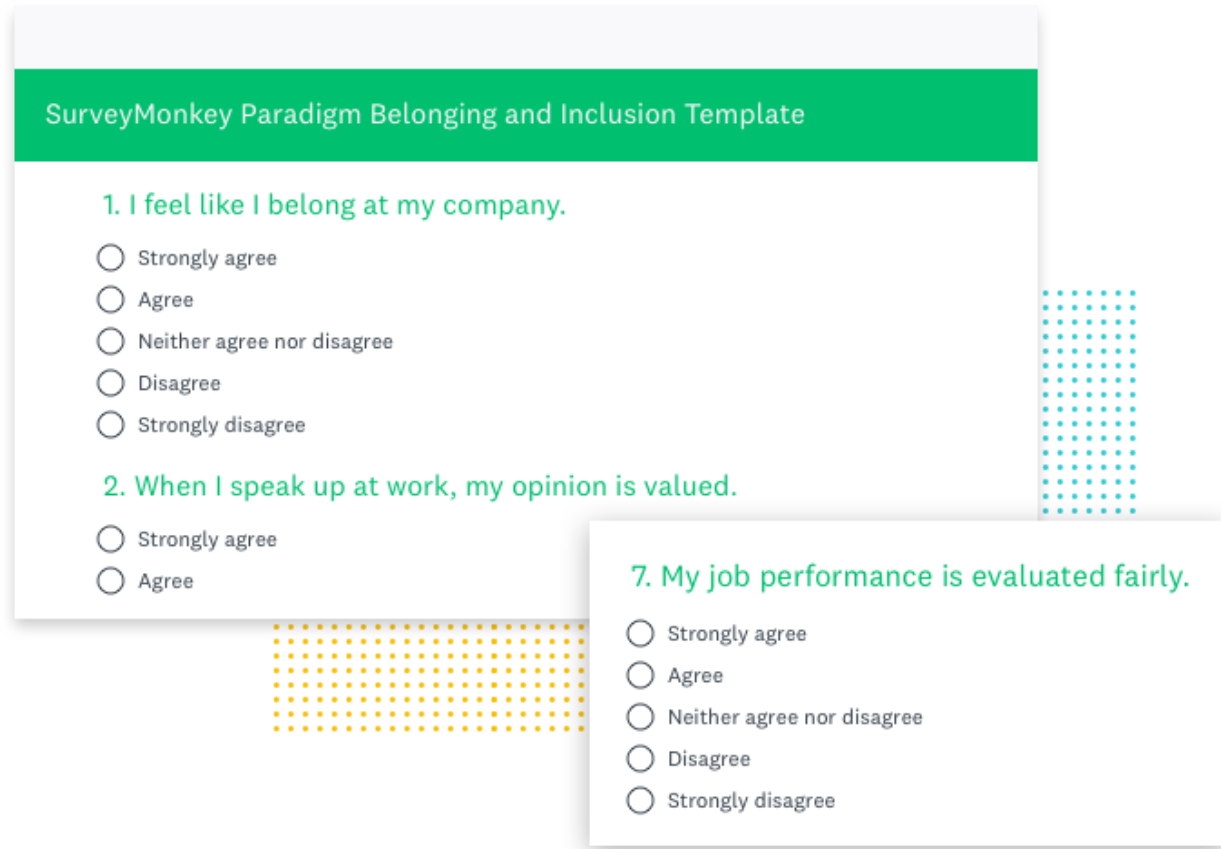
Anonymity

All responses should be anonymous to allow members the opportunity to share their true feelings.

Informed participation

Some clubs may have dedicated a series of discussions/speeches prior to consulting the members but should not automatically assume any level of knowledge (particularly if they have members who have found online participation unfulfilling and reduced participation accordingly). It is therefore advisable to clearly define the topics and elements under discussion, either via supporting information or as part of the questionnaire.

What is survey monkey and why might we use it ?



Anonymous – link can be sent via email or Whatsapp

Free

Quick and Easy to use

A 10 question limit

How might we
devise a useful
consultation
questionnaire ?

Introductory/‘grounding’ question

Driver for change

Appetite for change

Momentum for change

Resistance to change

General

Comments

Introductory/ 'grounding' question

Members may be excited or concerned by what they perceive hybrid meetings to represent, it is helpful to remind them of what the core purpose of Toastmasters is (and indeed why they joined) so that they can be encouraged into a more objective frame of mind. *e.g. What aspect of public speaking are you looking to improve at toastmasters.*

Driver for change

While the transition to online meetings has provided some members with an opportunity to develop useful workplace skills (or a time saving) it will have been a distraction and necessary burden for others. *e.g. How have you found the transition to online meetings?*

Appetite for change

Appetite for change – While members may have taken the opportunity of the lockdown, given little other choice, to improve their online skillset, they may not have any interest in continuing once physical meetings are available (particularly as online clubs are already available) *e.g.* *When we return to physical meetings how likely are you to be interested in continuing with developing your online speaking skills?*

Momentum for change

If the consultation process indicates that the members are ready to pursue change it will require champions and engaged individuals from within the club to undertake the process and provide the necessary skills in the future *e.g. How interested are you in developing skills around internet streaming or online broadcasting?*

Resistance to change

It is not uncommon for a small highly motivated group to bring about change onto a passive or unwilling larger group. It is therefore key to gain some understanding of the support for the status quo and resistance (possibly well justified) against change *e.g. If club meetings alternated between physical meetings and online meetings would this effect your attendance?*

General

There is usually some annual turnover of members within all clubs, anecdotal evidence suggests that larger societal shifts stemming from the pandemic (e.g. changing work patterns, transport requirements) will continue to effect membership, particularly in clubs with high commuting memberships. It may be useful to gain some insight, however limited, into how this might impact the club over the period of consultation and possible implementation (i.e. if broader adoption of working from home means a significant proportion of members may look elsewhere this could be a secondary driver for change) *e.g. If working from home continues to be broadly adopted following the resumption of physical meetings do you think it will impact your attendance?*

Comments

As members may have other concerns not captured in the question format above it is good practise to allow some scope for free text comments to be provided *e.g. If you have any comments or would like to provide more detail or context please do so below*

Construction of questionnaire

Participant time commitment

Manage biases

Challenge assumptions

Clarity on Timescales

Participant time commitment

Ideally the questionnaire should be short enough so that it does not require significant time commitment to complete (~few minutes) but long enough so that the responses provide sufficient confidence to support the next steps. There may be a limit on the number of questions imposed by the choice of format e.g. some free accounts have 10 questions available.

Manage biases

In terms of addressing potential unconscious bias it can be helpful to include two questions for each core question type (i.e. driver /appetite /momentum /resistance) but with the choice of answers reversed (i.e. if the responses for the first question take the form of 'strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree' then the second could be 'strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree')

Challenge assumptions

It is best to provide an introduction paragraph before the questionnaire to remind consultees why it is being undertaken and define any necessary terminology *e.g. 'a hybrid meeting incorporates elements of both a physical/face-to-face meeting and an online/'Zoom' meeting'*.

Clarity on Timescales

It can be helpful to clearly state timescales and proposed next steps *e.g.* *'Once the questionnaire closes on xx/xx/xx we will analyse the results over the next week and publish them on xx/xx/xx. This will then inform our discussion to be held on the xx/xx/xx.'*

Delivery of questionnaire

Most clubs use a number of different methods to communicate directly with their members (e.g. Facebook, WhatsApp, email, Easyspeak, etc). Ideally the questionnaire should be promoted on as many channels as are actively used, although care should be taken to avoid public forums where non-members might access it.

A window of two weeks should be sufficient to allow for sufficient promotion and for members to have an adequate opportunity to respond. It can be effective to launch the questionnaire at a club meeting and remind members at subsequent meetings. It is worth keeping an eye on the number of responses and reflecting that in communications while the questionnaire is open can provide an effective 'nudge' to consultees *e.g. we've had 15% of members respond in the last few days so please respond if you get a chance / 55% of the club have responded, please make sure that your voice gets heard*

Frequently Asked Questions 1

I know the club members just want it to go back to normal, why even send this out ?

Members' circumstances can change quickly and it is good practise to consult openly and transparently

What if the level of response is low?

If it is less than 40% of active members, then it is likely that the members are not interested in hybrid meetings and perhaps the Club Committee should be focussing its energies on other issues.

So, we do a survey and that's it?

This exercise is only effective as part of a larger consultative/change process and should only be informing next steps and not be providing the sole mandate for decisions. People should also be given the option of one to one conversations

Frequently Asked Questions 2

I am zoomed out, what if the club vote to stay online ?

While this is unfortunate there are very likely to be alternative options available

I am an overseas member and my club is now in person only, what are my options ?

There were many online TM clubs before the pandemic and likely to be even more after. Also many Toastmasters are increasingly members of multiple clubs so it's a growing community

We don't have the money to do this or the equipment

There are potentially cost effective solutions available so money may not be a barrier, particularly if the membership is motivated to pursue the option. Thus ensuring this reflects the memberships' desires is key.

Contact details

If you have any comments or suggestions regarding this information, please contact

hybrid@d91toastmasters.org.uk

Or visit -

<https://d91toastmasters.org.uk>