

Modern Hybrid Events Good Practice

A Rewilding the Artist Resource

What is a Modern Hybrid event?

Modern hybrid is a method of delivering an event / workshop / meeting etc. both online and in person where both parties receive a quality accessible event without detriment irrespective of which format the event was attended through.

Why deliver an event in Modern Hybrid format?

Simple answer, accessibility. Many events / meetings / workshops have been inaccessible for people who are disabled or neurodivergent due to lack of creative thinking and knowledge. The onset of the pandemic in 2020 changed the landscape and the expectations of people who have previously been excluded. Delivering a well planned and executed modern hybrid event enables equity for all and should be built into all activities during the initial planning stage. However, a poorly delivered event will add to the barriers already experienced by those who are disabled and / or neurodivergent. Some thought and forward planning will help to eliminate the common pitfalls and enable all participants to feel a valued participant / member of the audience.

Delivering an event in a modern hybrid format can also increase the numbers attending due to other reasons over and above accessibility – financially (travel costs), time, caring duties, location in the world, environmental (travelling).

Modern Hybrid Guidelines

Politeness & participation:

Treat all participants as if they are physically in the room.

Talk to the person/people on the screen, greet them and ask their opinion etc.

Give equal time to and fully include those in the room and online.

Do not stand in front of or block the screen or camera used for filming.

Intension:

Always aim to provide the same quality experience to all participants. The online option should not be lesser.

Technology:

Check internet connections & stability before the event and have a dry run to iron out any problems.

Appoint a dedicated technician to sort problems before and during the event. Provide details of how to contact this person in the run up and at the beginning of the event.

Start together, make sure the online access aspect of the event is working before proceeding so that no audience member misses anything.

Positioning:

Place equipment such as screens, cameras, microphones etc in a place where they will not be knocked or jostled by those in the room.

Position cameras so those online can see everything that is happening in relation to the event. If the event is interactive, make those online visible by positioning the screen within the audience or at the front if delivering the event. If the meeting or event is based around a table or in a circle, position the screen so that the online attendee is also at the table or in the circle, rather than sat to the side.

Access:

Provide an opportunity for all participants to communicate event access requirements. This should be done sufficiently far in advance of the event to leave enough time to put solutions in place. This may include BSL, audio description, translation services, close captions. However, an important aspect that is often missed, but important to those that are neurodivergent, is a low sensory background e.g. all participants muted unless speaking as part of event interaction, minimise the movement of chairs tables etc. and warnings of potential loud noise such as alarms, music / video being shared etc. This can be mentioned at the beginning of the event to all participants. BSL, audio description, translation, close captions.

Consider disabling the chat function if using zoom.

Include regular breaks for comfort

Allow online participants to keep their cameras off for access reasons, if they choose.

Final Note

With a little imagination modern hybrid can work for most events including meetings, workshops & courses, consultations, artist talks, exhibition tours & gallery openings, where both attendees and those delivering them can be either physically in the room or attending online. Working in this manner improves accessibility for all.

Gaia Redgrave

Gaia Redgrave is a freelance Visual Artist and founder of Rewilding the Artist & Cathedral of the Trees. She is an authentic leader focusing on a Culture of Care, kindness, neurodiversity, disability, and equity for all within the visual arts.

She has worked with organisations such as Arts Council Wales (ACW), Welsh Arts International (WAI), Wales Cultural Alliance (WCA), Disability Arts Cymru (DAC), Oriel Davies & g39, Cardiff on a freelance basis, reviewing calls for artists, access policies, cultural contracts, and strategic equality action plans (SEAPs). Gaia is an experienced selection panel member and is currently a member of the co-design group supporting the development of the ACW Strategy for Climate Justice and the Arts.

Gaia believes that everyone should be able to have positive experiences and quality opportunities in life, and not be disadvantaged due to lived experience. She believes in the strength and power of knowledge, kindness, creativity, and the act of supporting each other to enable great things to happen.

Gaia is proud to be an Arts Council Wales Artists Associate & Oriel Davies Associate Artist.