

# reworked

## When Should You Meet in Person in a Hybrid Workplace?

AUGUST 05, 2022 | DIGITAL WORKPLACE



By [Kaya Ismail](#)

[Follow @kayaismail](#)

Building a strong culture in a digital workplace requires good communication and cooperation among employees. But to achieve that, companies need to foster openness, trust and transparency at all levels so employees can feel comfortable interacting, learning, sharing ideas and bonding with one another.

Enter meetups.

Microsoft stresses the importance of meetups in its [2022 Work Trend Index report](#). Periodic meetups are a good way to foster communication and build relationships, particularly among new employees who may have never had the chance to meet their colleagues in person and enjoy their company outside of the workplace.

The report found that recent hires — those onboarded from March 2020 on — feel less involved, have weaker relationships with their colleagues and are, as a result, more likely to seek new jobs. Organizing meetups can offer these employees the opportunity to communicate in an informal environment where the focus isn't on the task at hand.

### Meetups in a Hybrid or Remote Workplace

It's understood by now, after more than two years of pandemic working, that hybrid and remote work environments don't allow for the same quality networking among colleagues as the pre-COVID office-based workplace did. But today, leaders have access to a greater arsenal of tools that enable them to organize virtual gatherings that can often be more inclusive than their in-person predecessors.

The purpose of meetups is to enhance employee communication and collaboration, and build a strong, cohesive culture as a result. When team members enjoy one another and respect each other's position in life and at work, it drives a greater sense of community and support that is critical to productivity. Leaders who view meetups in this manner can better justify allocating time and resources to holding these team-building gatherings.

Meetups can take on many different forms, from onboarding and training, to reviews and town halls, to pure networking and socializing. While the various forms that meetups may take depends on the company, its size, its workforce distribution and its goals, hybrid and remote companies will gain from organizing these periodic sessions for their teams.

“By hosting quarterly sessions for teammates to connect in-person, you’re giving them the ability to create spaces where they can comfortably collaborate,” said Hussein Fazal, co-founder and CEO of Canadian software company [Snapcommerce](#).

Of course, while offering the ability to meet in person is great, it's not realistic for many companies today, as workforces get more and more distributed — crossing borders and even continents. Investing time and resources in implementing the right tools to make virtual meetups possible, but also in understanding what employees want and need is crucial to reaping the full ROI of meetups.

## Team-Based vs Company-Wide Meetings?

Most employees today complain of too many meetings. Zoom fatigue, regardless of the actual video-based collaboration platform used, is real, so how can employers justify adding yet more meetings to their teams' already full schedules?

To make meetups work, it's crucial to determine a frequency that works for the majority of workers. It's equally important to identify who should attend the meetup, in the same way we would give careful consideration to who we invite to a work-related meeting. Will the meetup be company-wide or team-based? Will it happen during work hours or after? Will it be mandatory or voluntary?

“While there’s no right or wrong frequency, there are specific events that can help to determine if a company-wide or team-based periodic meetup is right,” said [Infragistics](#) CEO Dean Guida, who advises companies to assess the meetup frequency based on the company structure, the total number of employees, team size and each employee’s preferences.

“Company-wide meetings likely don’t need to happen as often but can be helpful at the end of a quarter or the year to ramp up teams and get them excited for what’s to come,” he said.

Each company's meetup style will differ. There's no right or wrong answer on this. For instance, Snapcommerce conducts quarterly off-sites so team members can interact in person and get to know one another. Meanwhile, [EveryMundo](#) organizes monthly town hall meetings during which the leadership team offers business updates and recognizes birthdays, achievements and work anniversaries, according to Krystal Godfrey, the company's public relations and brand marketing specialist.

### 3 Tips for Productive Meetups

While there's no wrong or right model for meetups, there are some considerations that can make them more productive and help ensure they serve their intended purpose.

#### 1. Have an Open Conversation

Communication is central to any successful remote or hybrid workplace, and today's workers won't hesitate to resign if they find out the company policy isn't completely truthful. The same is true if meetups are presented one way but organized another.

So, for team-based meetups, Guida recommends leaders start a dialogue with their teams to determine how often they would like to meet and what they would like the meetup to accomplish — and then deliver on that.

In the case of company-wide meetups, leadership teams should first determine why they want to bring teams together. Are they looking for team-building, training, onboarding, debriefing? Identifying the purpose of the activity will help determine the frequency these meetings should have.

#### 2. Enable Team Flexibility

Depending on the company size, it may make sense for companies to also consider allowing teams to organize events and activities for themselves.

"Many of our in-person events and activities are now being organized at the grassroots level," said Fazal. "We find that teams want to get together and organize social events. We enable this by giving people the space and budget to do this."

By giving the team the required budget and freedom to organize meetups, companies help demonstrate their support for a healthy, cordial culture, which in turn helps deliver greater results, employee engagement and collaboration.

### **3. Incentivize and Motivate Participation**

Not all employees will be eager to attend meetups. Leaders must respect that for some employees, meetups may not be possible or realistic, especially if the meetup is to take place outside of work hours or far away from their home. The reasons for this will vary, and it's important for organizations to avoid meddling into a person's life outside of work.

That said, sometimes incentives such as on-site childcare services and paid travel may help encourage some of these workers to attend the meetups.

“To entice attendance, EveryMundo provides breakfast and lunch to employees who come into the office in addition to planning fun team-bonding activities,” said Godfrey.

What works and what doesn't will depend on the company and its employee base. Once again, there's no one-size-fits-all, but an honest two-way dialogue with employees can help ensure there is value to unlock from periodic meetups for all parties involved.