**Nuts and Bolts of Managing a “Hybrid” Rotary Meeting**

**Advice from the Upper Arlington, Ohio Rotary Club**

**Submitted by Heather Stoa, DGE**

Since Covid-19 changed our world, Zoom has taken the place of in-person meetings for many of the clubs in our District and around the world. As our communities open up, Rotarians are anxious to meet again in person, but this is not always an option for many members. My club’s first hybrid meeting (combination of in person and Zoom) was not what those of us on the Zoom side expected; however, one of the best parts of Rotary is networking! I asked my District Governor Elect classmates for assistance and immediately received many suggestions.

The following sent by DGE Maryjane Shackleford of District 6690 was developed by the Upper Arlington Club for her District to share basic advice regarding managing a hybrid meeting. It is based on the experience of the Upper Arlington Rotary Club which has been conducting hybrid meetings for the past month. Following are their tips for using video conferencing in a hybrid Rotary Club meeting:

* Make sure your meeting space is configured with strong Wi-Fi capabilities.
* Utilize at least two Wi-Fi capable devices in the room (laptops seem to work best – Upper Arlington Rotary found that the video conference integration with the live meeting doesn’t work as well with phones or iPads, but it might also work to have only one laptop in the room which is operated by the video conference “host” and have that laptop connected to a camera at the podium). Both devices will log into the meeting using the video conference app you are using.
  + One laptop will be located at the podium (the “Podium Laptop”). The Podium Laptop will be logged in as a “participant” to the video conference (not the host of the meeting with meeting controls).
    - The Podium Laptop will utilize its camera and built-in microphone to pick up the video and audio of the speaker at the podium.
    - For larger spaces, you will want a separate microphone for the Public Address in the meeting room.
    - The Podium Laptop will also have a “video out” cable attaching the laptop to a projector or video display in the room. That video will be for the benefit of in-person meeting attendees.
  + The second laptop (the “Host Laptop”) will be located at the back of the room. That laptop will be the “host” of the video conference session.
    - The person operating the Host Laptop will be responsible for monitoring participants who fail to mute their own microphone and for other video conferencing controls. This is why you don’t want the Podium Laptop to be the meeting host and have to worry about these issues.
    - The Host Laptop should be placed as far from the Podium Laptop as possible in order to avoid a feedback loop. Speaker volume on the Host Laptop should be kept off in order to minimize feedback (or have that laptop audio go to headphones).
    - The Host Laptop will also have any PowerPoint programs or other audio/video programs for the meeting loaded on it, and the operator of the Host Laptop will “screen share” within the video conference, which will also result in the Podium Laptop having the PowerPoint displayed on the screen at the front of the room.
* If you include a Q&A as part of your speaker’s presentation, be sure to remind the speaker to repeat any questions coming from in-person participants so that video conference participants can hear the question. The person operating the Host Laptop will also be responsible for monitoring the “chat” in the video conference to pick up questions submitted by video conference participants.
* You also have the ability with some video conferencing software to publish your meeting to other apps like Facebook Live and to record the meeting and put the link in the Club newsletter, website or other social media so that members and others who cannot attend the meeting have the ability to view the meeting later. This can also be a great public relations and marketing opportunity for your club.
* Open the video conference early so that Rotarians participating in the meeting have the opportunity to “talk amongst themselves” before the start of the meeting.
* Build in time before your first hybrid meeting to test the system to make sure it works well and you are comfortable running the hardware and software.

If your club has figured out another system that works or if you have tips of your own, please share. Hybrid meetings are good for Rotary and good for Rotarians. They are another way for us to stay connected.