

How to Master Hybrid Events

In London conference venues

Hybrid is a format decision, not an AV decision

A hybrid event isn't a physical event with a webcam bolted to the back of the room. It's a format that treats the remote audience as delegates in their own right, and works when the production, presenter coaching, engagement mechanics and technical set-up are all aligned around that principle. Most hybrid events that feel flat fail on the same handful of decisions — not on the choice of streaming platform.

The remote audience is not the same audience

Delegates in the room have coffee breaks, side conversations, a physical presence to signal attention. Delegates on the stream have a laptop, a Slack window in the background, and children walking in. Engagement decays at very different rates.

Working assumption: the average remote delegate stays fully engaged for 40 minutes before their attention drops materially. Beyond an hour, retention is halved. Design the running order around this — 40-minute sessions with genuine breaks work far better than a 90-minute keynote block that treats remote joiners as a separate audience. A good hybrid running order looks like a well-designed webinar interspersed with in-room networking, not like a conference with a camera pointed at it.

The AV kit that actually matters

The gap between a passable hybrid stream and a good one is smaller than the industry sometimes suggests, and it turns on a few specific pieces of kit:

Cameras

One camera on the speaker, at delegate eye height, on the centre line. A second camera on the audience, wide, for reaction shots. A third for the presentation slides (or a direct feed from the AV desk). Fewer than three cameras and the stream feels static. More than three and the cut becomes distracting.

Audio

The single most important line item. A lapel mic for every speaker, plus a boundary mic on the front row of delegates for any Q&A. Room mics fed into the stream mix from the sides, not the ceiling. Bad audio kills a stream faster than any other single thing — worse than bad video, worse than a slow chat function.

Presenter monitor

A confidence monitor at the base of the stage showing the presenter both what's on the main screen and, critically, what the remote audience sees. A speaker who can't tell whether the slide has advanced on the stream will address the room and lose the stream.

Streaming platform

Zoom, Teams, Webex, Vimeo Live, YouTube Live all work for the outbound video. The real differentiator is the interactivity layer: chat, Q&A, polls, breakout rooms. Match the platform to what the remote audience will actually be asked to do. A one-way keynote can go out on any platform; a discussion needs breakout support.

The hybrid producer

Someone — human, not automated — needs to be watching the stream throughout and telling the speaker in the room when to acknowledge the remote audience, read Q&A questions, or wait for stream latency to catch up. On any event of substance, this person is dedicated to the stream, not doubling as the room's tech.

Presenter coaching for a split audience

Speakers who are excellent in a room can be poor on a stream and vice versa. The difference is small habits that need coaching:

- **Look at the camera, not just the room.** Address the stream directly by name a few times per session — "for those of you online..." — so remote delegates feel present.
- **Slow the delivery slightly.** Stream latency and lower audio bandwidth mean subtle vocal signals get lost. Pause a beat longer between sections.
- **Repeat the question.** Any question from the in-room audience needs repeating on the mic before the answer, otherwise the stream just hears the speaker responding to something the remote audience never heard.
- **No side-of-stage conversations.** A speaker leaning off the mic to say something to a producer is invisible to the room and awkward on the stream.

A single 30-minute run-through with each speaker before the day catches most of these. Do the run-through in the actual room with the actual camera set-up, not a rehearsal in someone's office.

Engagement mechanics that work

Making the remote audience feel present is what separates a good hybrid event from a mediocre one. Mechanics that work in practice:

- **Named remote greetings at the top of each session.** "Good morning to those of you joining from Manchester and Edinburgh." Small, but signals that the remote presence is tracked.
- **Poll everyone — in-room and remote — through the same platform.** Slido, Mentimeter, or the streaming platform's own polling. Both audiences see the results in real time.
- **Take Q&A from the stream first.** A moderated Q&A that starts with a remote question tells the whole audience that the stream matters. Room questions can come second.
- **Give remote delegates their own break-out space.** If in-room delegates are networking at coffee, remote delegates can join a Zoom room with a moderator for a discussion. It's not the same experience, but it's better than logging off.

Cost breakdowns — where hybrid really adds up

A rough guide to the incremental cost of hybrid delivery on top of a physical-only event of the same size:

- **AV package uplift:** 20–30% over physical-only, mostly cameras, microphones, and the presenter monitor
- **Streaming platform:** £200–2,000 depending on registration numbers and interactivity requirements
- **Hybrid producer:** £500–1,200 per day depending on scope
- **Presenter coaching (30 minutes each):** £150–300 per speaker if outsourced, free if the venue's producer does it
- **Post-event on-demand hosting:** £300–1,500 if you want the recording available for a defined window

For a mid-sized event, the true incremental cost is around 25% of the physical event budget. That's meaningful

— worth it if the remote audience is genuinely additive (delegates who couldn't have travelled), less worth it if the remote audience is people who would have come in person anyway.

Common failure modes

The stream is set up but nobody watches it. The most common failure. Fix at the invitation stage — give remote delegates a proper registration process, calendar hold, joining instructions and pre-event reminders, just like in-person delegates get.

The chat function turns into a distraction. A moderated chat is fine; an open chat during a serious presentation becomes a running commentary the speaker can't ignore. Turn chat off during main sessions, on during breaks.

The stream lags by 30 seconds. Live streaming has 5–30 seconds of latency depending on the platform and CDN. Time-sensitive interactions (polls, Q&A) need the stream side to buffer or the room side to wait.

The Wi-Fi buckles. A conference with 200 in-room delegates on Wi-Fi is a heavy load. Streaming out on the same connection under peak use is asking for trouble. Ask the venue about a dedicated hard-wired line for the outbound stream.

Cavendish's hybrid infrastructure

Hybrid delivery is standard at Cavendish rather than a specific add-on. Every Cavendish venue has dedicated streaming infrastructure — hard-wired outbound bandwidth, camera positions with pre-cabled runs, in-house AV technicians who run the stream as part of the standard AV package, and a hybrid-producer option when the event needs one. The [hybrid and virtual events page](#) covers the specific rooms and packages.

Frequently asked questions

What's the minimum viable hybrid set-up?

One camera on a tripod at delegate eye height, a good lapel mic on the speaker, the venue's streaming service, and someone actively watching the stream during the session. Everything else is nice-to-have.

How much does hybrid delivery add to my event budget?

Typically 20–30% on top of the AV line versus a physical-only event of the same size. It rarely adds to the venue, catering or delegate-materials lines.

What streaming platform should I use?

Whatever your delegates already know. Zoom for external audiences, Teams for internal corporate events, YouTube Live for consumer or press-heavy events. The choice of platform is less important than the production around it.

How long should hybrid sessions be?

40 minutes maximum for a keynote block, 60 minutes for a discussion or panel. Breaks matter as much as the sessions — schedule a 15-minute break between blocks and keep the stream running with a holding graphic and music.

Can we record the event and offer it on demand afterwards?

Yes, most streaming platforms record automatically. The recording quality matches the live stream, so if the live production is good, the on-demand version is too. Speaker consent is required before publishing.

