

Electronic meeting observations

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Introduction

- The following lists what works well/not so well in only using electronic meetings.
- The views expressed herein are the consolidated views of IEEE 802.1 leadership.

What works well

- Getting through topics that have already progressed to a certain stage of maturity (i.e., finishing off easy comments and topics).
- Voting during plenary meetings using DVL. This does require setup in advance but the voting process itself works better than the "counting hands" used in the past.
- Easier to follow proceedings without needing to sit at the front of the room.
- More preparation time if a session spans over a second week, e.g., to prepare motions, liaisons, or closing plenary deck.
- Higher participation?
- Lower participation expenses.
- Lower carbon emissions (but "ghost flights" make this partially moot).
- No travel-induced sickness.

What does not work so well (1/3)

- Progressing controversial topics and comments is a lot harder and far less efficient.
- Sweet spots for some, horrible times for others resulting in sessions spanning more days than in-person and in overlaps with other SDO meetings or obligations.
- Integrating calls with the day-job.
- Day-to-day business and personal activities interfering with meetings more than at an in-person meetings.
- Near impossible to get to know participants, which may have been acceptable for a few months but is likely to impact future ways of working.

What does not work so well (2/3)

- More preparation time required, e.g., for setting up meeting agendas.
- Less flexibility in the agenda, once it has been published.
- Webex prevents parallel interventions between participants during a meeting, which makes it harder to come to consensus and draws energy out.
- Impossible to “read” how participants react as video streams could overburden the infrastructure, plus not everyone is able or willing to stream anyway.

What does not work so well (3/3)

- Possible participation decay if in-person sessions (and attendant socialization opportunities) do not resume, as expressed by a few participants.
- Cross-checking IMAT with Webex logs when used to identify non-registration compliant participants adds complexity.
- Privacy concerns linked to being forced to use only electronic media are likely hindering the free exchange of ideas or other thoughts whether in public or in private.
- Internet connections are not always 100% reliable.

Conclusions

- Face-to-face meetings are essential for effectively progressing our work.
- Compact meeting weeks work better than having more regular weekly electronic meetings.
- Returning to the same cadence of face-to-face meetings we had before the pandemic, with some regular weekly electronic meetings in between, seems to be the preferable way forward.
- Using Direct Vote Live for voting works great and should be kept, even after returning to face-to-face meetings.