



Futurist Dave Wild

Our world has shifted forever.

From the invention of the internet in 1969 to the development of PC video conferencing three decades ago, our workplaces have slowly been moving towards a hybrid environment. With the dramatic acceleration of recent times, this shift is here to stay with 66% of business leaders now re-evaluating physical workplaces to better accommodate hybrid work.*

As a Futurist facilitator I've led strategy sessions across a diverse range of these complex environments. Exploring how best to navigate the shifts, while maximising meeting outcomes. Solving challenges such as:

- Increasing focus of distracted remote participants
- Gaining diversity of ideas through greater engagement
- Maintaining team momentum when plans change
- Achieving clear outcomes in uncertain environments

If you lead meetings, read on to maximise your impact in this hybrid world.

* 2021 Work Trend Index Survey, Microsoft / Edelman Data & Intelligence



Leading Strategic Meetings in a Hybrid World

Futurist Dave Wild

Internationally renowned Futurist Dave Wild is a leading expert in developing Futurework skills.

Living on the edge of the world in New Zealand, he works with leaders and teams across the globe – creating a greater future for their organisations, customers and society at large including:

- Visioning with the Digital Government Leaders of the United Kingdom, South Korea, Estonia and New Zealand
- Coaching Digital and Innovation Leadership Labs across sectors including Finance, Environment and Technology
- Facilitating the NZ Prime Minister's Business Advisory Council to explore the Future of Work
- Delivering Futurist keynote presentations on stages and screens across the world from Sydney to South Auckland to San Francisco



Through this work with a diverse range of leaders across all levels, Dave has built deep expertise in the future-focused skills needed to confidently lead into the future.

For more details see dave-wild.com or to explore future possibilities contact Andrea Bates, Futurist Business Manager at andrea@dave-wild.com



Watch Speaker Showreel (4 min) ▷ dave-wild.com/speaking

Do you sometimes wonder what your future holds?

In the search for answers, it's easy to miss the signals of the future all around you.

It doesn't have to be that way. Just as we're making the machines smarter by writing new code, we can also rewrite our own habits.

Changing the way we think.

Shifting the way we lead.

Creating the Future of Work. Today.

LEADING STRATEGIC MEETINGS

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The Power of Meetings

Throughout time our ability to meet has been central to our way of living. To our ability to understand complex problems. Building stronger relationships. Creating innovative solutions.

So if meetings are so pivotal to society, why are they so often considered to be a barrier to progress? To getting things done. Focusing on what truly matters.

The problem isn't meetings.

The problem is badly run meetings.

This isn't new. We've long since known the importance for leaders of meeting facilitation skills. To be able to guide the conversation to achieve effective results. All while managing the difficult balance of maintaining focus without constraining diverse perspectives.

It's challenging enough to lead a productive, inclusive and engaging meeting when everyone's in the same room.

It's even more difficult when teams meet online – with the resulting loss in dimensionality of audio and visual clues.

The challenge then steps up another level again in hybrid workplaces, where meetings need to be simultaneously facilitated across a blend of physical and digital spaces.

The future of meetings has arrived.

LEADERSHIP INSIGHT

Amazon Founder Jeff Bezos on leading strategically impactful meetings:

"What we do is all of our meetings are structured around a six-page narrative memo. And when you have to write your ideas out in complete sentences and complete paragraphs it forces a deeper clarity of things. So what we do is we just sit and you know, somebody will say why don't you read the memos in advance. Well part of the problem there is that time to read them in advance doesn't materialize out of nowhere. And so this way, you know everybody has the time because we're all sitting around the table reading simultaneously."

→ Explore further: [Jeff Bezos with Charlie Rose](#) (video 35m)

Meeting in a Hybrid World

Online. Virtual. Digital. Distributed. Remote. Hybrid.

When societies go through a revolutionary shift, cultures take time to settle on common language to describe new ways of working.

We've seen it before. While digital is now a common word to describe the recent industrial revolution, in the early stages of the transformation a wide variety of phrases were used – from the information superhighway to ecommerce.

Once again as we adapt to change, a range of words are being used to describe the shifting workplace dynamics.

Then once these new ways of working are no longer new, the cultural norms can again be shorthanded with a single common word.

Meanwhile with a remote workforce distributed across locations, at times we meet virtually online. While at other times we come together in-person. Sometimes with part of the group in the room physically, with others in the same group joining digitally.

In other words – meeting in a hybrid world.

LEADERSHIP INSIGHT

Didi Chuxing President Jean Liu on leading strategically collaborative meetings:

“Securing \$1 billion in investment from Apple was like “speed dating,” the president of Chinese ride-hailing app Didi Chuxing told CNBC. “This [partnership] is still in a very preliminary stage. We got to know the Apple team, they got to know us not too long ago, but we clicked very quickly,” laughed Jean Liu. The surprise partnership made sense for both parties given the amount of shared common ground, she said. “We are both in the mobile internet space. So how do we serve our passengers, our drivers better? How do they [Apple] serve their users better? This is already a common ground... so I think it's very intuitive.”

→ Explore further: [Didi Chuxing boss discusses Apple deal, China's market and growth strategies](#) (article + video 5m)

Meeting Strategically

Not all meetings are strategic.

Sometimes deliberately so. Other times not.

All too frequently teams set out to have a strategic meeting but become trapped in tactical discussions. So what goes wrong and how can you shift this?

The answer is in the meaning of the word strategy.

Paying closer attention to the meaning of everyday words is an under-used development technique. It's a brilliantly simple way of spotting opportunities and blockers others have missed. Breaking a word down into its component parts is like taking an engine apart – the more you understand how the parts work together to achieve a result, the greater your ability to re-engineer for higher performance.

Strategy means a plan of action to achieve major aims.

So when facilitating a strategic meeting, ensure you determine the major aims. Then guide the conversation towards exploring possible actions to achieve.

Refocusing the discussion on the major aims when the team gets lost in the detail. While at the same time guiding out of the abstract towards the tangible, when the group loses sight of the need to arrive at clear decisions.

LEADERSHIP INSIGHT

Tesla and SpaceX Founder Elon Musk on leading strategically inclusive meetings:

"There is a creeping tendency to use made-up acronyms at SpaceX. Excessive use of made-up acronyms is a significant impediment to communication and keeping communication good as we grow is incredibly important. Individually, a few acronyms here and there may not seem so bad, but if a thousand people are making these up, over time the result will be a huge glossary that we have to issue to new employees. No-one can actually remember all these acronyms and people don't want to seem dumb in a meeting, so they just sit there in ignorance. This is particularly tough on new employees."

→ Explore further: [Elon Musk: Tesla, SpaceX, and the Quest for a Fantastic Future](#) (book excerpts)

Creating the Future

Why do we meet?

We meet to connect. To discuss. Share. Solve. Relate.
Understand. Inspire. Support.

So many different reasons. All involving communication across many different levels. Some of these levels can now effectively be replicated by other communication means. From phone calls to the written word.

While other levels can never be replicated through technology alone. [Meaning every leader and organisation now needs to be able to navigate the hybrid world of meetings.](#) Adeptly shifting and guiding others across formats and channels, balancing meeting objectives and team needs.

For example Stanford researchers determined that the default video call setting of seeing yourself on-screen can increase stress – with studies showing when we see our reflection, we can be more critical of ourselves.* Meaning the simple act of facilitating others to adjust camera settings can increase focus and energy while reducing stress.

Creating stronger connections.

For a greater future.

* [Stanford researchers identify four causes for 'Zoom fatigue' and their simple fixes](#)

LEADERSHIP INSIGHT

PepsiCo Former CEO Indra Nooyi on leading strategically visionary meetings:

"I think the fundamental role of a leader is to look for ways to shape the decades ahead, not just react to the present, and to help others accept the discomfort of disruptions to the status quo. We need the wisdom of business leaders, policy makers, and all women and men passionate about easing the work and family burden to come together here. With a can-do sense of optimism and a must-do sense of responsibility, we can transform our society. Transformation is difficult, but I have learned that with courage and persistence – and the inevitable give and take – it can happen."

→ Explore further: [My Life in Full – Work, Family, and Our Future](#) (book excerpt)

STRATEGIC FACILITATION TECHNIQUES

Classically facilitation involves helping others to reach a solution without getting directly involved in the process yourself. However the reality for most leaders is that you're operating in a dual mode when facilitating meetings – facilitating by not leading, while also leading without constraining diversity of thought.

It's a complex and difficult balance. Made all the more challenging with hybrid meetings. Requiring a hybrid style of leadership across a hybrid environment.

In other words hybrid²

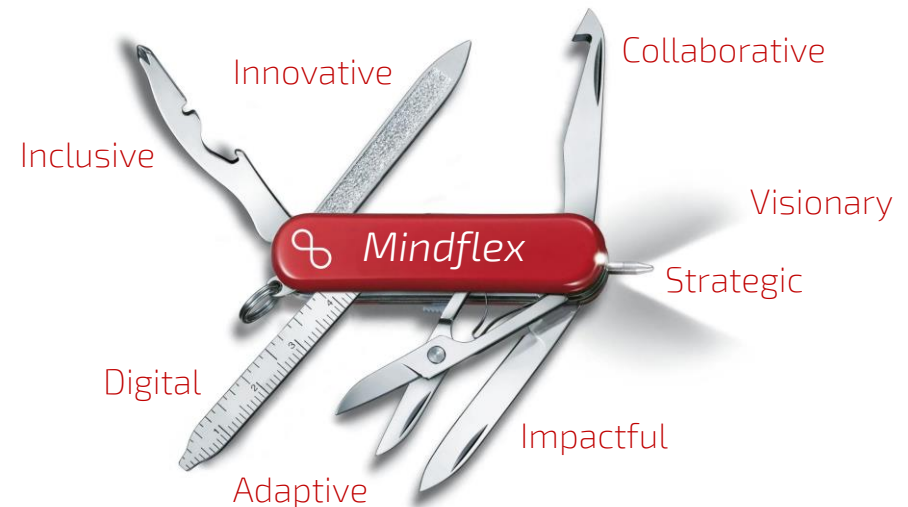
New environments require new approaches. At the foundation of this shift is what we call a Mindflex. Set means to be fixed in place. So rather than requiring a new mindset, in times of change what's needed is a Mindflex.

Giving you the ability to respond and adapt in changing environments. To rapidly learn and apply new leadership approaches.

If your only tool is a hammer then every problem looks like a nail



A complex environment demands a more flexible set of leadership skills



If you're facilitating strategic meetings in a hybrid workplace, achieve greater outcomes with these eight expert techniques:



1. Start before you start

Have you ever been to a meeting where everyone didn't arrive on time? Or perhaps more accurately that question is better phrased as have you ever been to a meeting where everyone arrived on time?

Whether you're meeting online, offline or a blend of both, it's a fact of life that often not everyone will have arrived by the time your meeting's scheduled to start. Leading to the inevitable trade-off between starting on time without everyone present, or wasting valuable time waiting.

Another facilitation challenge is that frequently people arrive at meetings unprepared. Not adequately informed to discuss complex issues, that ideally required some preparation or consideration ahead of meeting.

Instead of hoping that somehow the laws of the meeting universe will change, avoid frustration by designing a facilitation approach that starts before the meeting starts.

→ *Solution:*

- *Think about what you want people to have reflected on prior to meeting.*
- *Don't simply send attachments that most likely won't be read. Avoid creating time-intensive pre-work. Instead assign a thought-provoking activity that can be undertaken in the flow of work ahead of the meeting.*
- *For example ask participants to observe changes and be ready to share a summary word or image.*
- *Then use these reflections or another discussion point as an unofficial start as people arrive – sharing perspectives and advancing thinking before turning to the agenda.*

2. Amplify hidden voices



When the answer seems obvious to you – that can be a signal that you have indeed arrived at the best solution. However it can also signal that you're blind to greater possibilities, that exist beyond the boundaries of your personal perspective and experiences.

Asking questions of your wider team can help shift this. At the same time it's critical to keep top-of-mind that more vocal contributors frequently aren't reflective of the diversity of opinions across the group. So when facilitating meetings apply a range of techniques to amplify diverse ideas from across the group.

→ *Solution:*

- *The most critical step is to recognise that experience is also bias. Otherwise regardless of what people share with you, the risk is you might not hear it.*
- *Take care to create an environment that doesn't require introverts to become extroverts to be heard.*
- *In an in-person environment use techniques such as Post-it noting to get everyone to contribute. While keeping in mind it's not about the note, it's about the conversation – so ask people to speak to their notes.*
- *In an online environment use the meeting chat and other collaboration apps to frame questions giving everyone space to respond. Keep in mind people might miss the question, so also type the focusing prompts in the chat.*
- *When working across a hybrid environment enable those in the room to also contribute to the chat, on mobile devices with cameras and microphones off.*
- *Use a mix of small breakout groups and times with cameras off to give less extroverted members of the team time and space to form their thoughts.*

3. Generate meeting data



As powerful as spoken words are, they are all too easily forgotten or misremembered. With the listener's subconscious often filtering out views that don't align with their own.

For this reason the facilitation technique of capturing spoken words as visual guides is critical. However be careful not to make the mistake many leaders make – dominating the whiteboard or just recording their own notes. In effect risking letting their own subconscious bias the meeting outcomes.

→ *Solution:*

- *Guide meeting participants to capture their thoughts and key points as written words, as part of the natural flow of conversation.*
- *In a physical space use media such as Post-it notes. In an online space use channels such as the chat. In a hybrid space experiment with using digital media such as collaborative whiteboard and note apps.*
- *Keep in mind it's difficult to talk and then capture your thoughts. So increase awareness and empathy by coaching the group to capture each other's comments, taking care to quote exact phrases to avoid distortion.*

4. Notice emotional impact



When leading a meeting, avoid facilitating based solely on the conversation. Sometimes people are telling you what they think you want to hear, while thinking something different.

Other times they might logically agree, while at deeper emotional level their beliefs can differ. While others might not be comfortable openly sharing their thoughts. So always read the room whether you're meeting in-person or online.

→ *Solution:*

- *Guide your team to meet cameras on (role-model and discuss the benefits).*
- *Practise switching into gallery view to notice points of emotional engagement and impact across the group.*
- *Follow these as signals to direct the conversation flow for greater insight and diversity of contribution.*
- *In a hybrid environment set the room and screens so everyone can scan for reactions.*

5. Step away from the screen



In a physical meeting space we naturally look in different directions as the conversation moves around the room. When meeting online as the conversation moves between speakers, our head remains looking in the same direction.

When facilitating in a physical environment it's important to mix modes to lift energy and increase focus. Moving participants between sitting in a group, shifting into breakouts, switching into standing and walking meets.

In digital environments this shift in energy and focus is even more critical to facilitate. Left to their own habits, participants will naturally stay seated in the same position – so support people in gaining a fresh perspective, by deliberately shifting their perspective.

→ *Solution:*

- *Build break and productive time into longer online sessions for participants to shift away from the screen.*
- *Frame a question and ask participants to take some time to reflect on it before responding. Guide them to look out the window or in a different direction. To shift position whether they're in the room or online.*

6. Assign digital hosts



All too often the flow of a physical meet is compromised when it shifts into a hybrid format with others joining on screen. The typically fixed nature of the screen means that frequently the screen dominates, with the group's attention disproportionately directed towards it. Or the reverse occurs where the online participants can be overlooked, as the conversation moves elsewhere in the room.

While technology solutions such as telepresence robots are gradually evolving to overcome these limitations, we're far from matching the fluidity of human interactions. So use the power of human flexibility to connect across hybrid spaces.

→ *Solution:*

- *In a hybrid meeting space, rather than having all online participants on a single screen, use laptops or tablets to literally give online participants a seat at the table.*
- *For each online participant assign another person who's physically in the room to be their host. Hosts move the device to point in the right direction, so online participants can see and be seen.*
- *For longer sessions rotate the hosts where possible, to share the extra effort and attention required.*

7. Scaffold breakout conversations



In both the physical and digital worlds there can be mediocre breakouts and inspiring breakouts. The difference is in how they're designed and run.

Breaking large meetings into smaller sub-groups is a critical facilitation technique. It makes greater use of the investment of everyone's time by enabling parallel processing to occur. It also creates more opportunity for everyone to have a say and their voice to be heard.

Key to facilitating effective breakouts is to provide a clear framework for the breakouts to run within. Rather than simply leaving people to their own devices to have a wandering conversation, deliberately design the set-up and re-entry of your breakouts.

→ *Solution:*

- *Just before the breakout interact with one member of the group, role-modelling how to engage in the breakout (best as a spontaneous engagement).*
- *Focus and elevate breakouts by introducing a slight element of competitiveness i.e. mentioning that as well as looking for what we all have in common, we're also looking for unique ideas from each group.*
- *State a clear question for breakouts to explore – displayed onscreen while guiding the group to photograph or note down (with the question carefully designed to gain most useful group outputs).*
- *Communicate clear timing parameters for breakouts, along with facilitation guidance to ensure everyone gets a voice within the time e.g. highlighting to watch the time and deliberately give everyone a chance to speak.*
- *In a hybrid environment build closer relationships across distance by using laptops to pair or create mixed groups of in-room and online participants.*

8. Create space between



Do you find yourself rushing from meeting to meeting? Whether you're physically running down the hall or virtually switching between spaces, the problem isn't too many meetings. It's how we're designing our days.

We all know the theory. Book meeting-free space into your schedule. Great in theory... while in practice all too often these much needed breaks get hijacked. So take advantage of the prevailing psychology of scheduling meetings on the half-hour. Create space between meetings across timezones for yourself and your team. Breathe. Think. Advance.

→ *Solution:*

- *Review the meetings you've scheduled.
Try adjusting one-hour meetings to 45-50 minutes.*
- *Consider whether a focused 15-25 minutes could lead to the outcomes needed.*
- *If spending a day together online, limit sessions to 90 minutes with 30-minute breaks between and a re-energising hour for a meal break. Achieving more by productively spending less.*



FUTURIST FACILITATION, SPEAKING & COACHING

In addition to our facilitation work, Futurist Dave Wild is an expert keynote speaker and leadership coach.

Inspire *Inspire forward with greater certainty*

As a Creative Futurist living on the edge of the world, Futurist Dave Wild has presented on stages and screens across the globe from San Francisco to South Auckland to Sydney. He's inspired and informed audiences at industry conferences, government meetings and team events for clients such as Microsoft, L'Oréal, Toyota and Red Cross. Inspiring and energising audiences with future insights and tools that open minds to new possibilities ahead.

→ See dave-wild.com/speaking

Shift *Gain momentum by shifting perspectives*

Facilitation is a complex process. And in a complex world it's only getting more complex. Fortunately it's the complexity of facilitating that inspires the way we work. If you've ever been in a meeting that drifted off topic or seemed to go on forever – yet still failed to result in clear actions – you know all too well the challenges of effective facilitation.

→ Explore dave-wild.com/facilitation



Upskill *Upskill to create the future*

Digital. Agile. Collaborative. Diverse. Inclusive. If you look at the critical shifts happening within modern workplaces, they're all designed to enable organisations to become more responsive. To better understand, anticipate and adapt to the changing needs of their customers, communities and stakeholders.

→ Learn more dave-wild.com/futurework

EXPERIENCE & EXPERTISE

- **Air New Zealand (NZ + US)** Leadership programme innovation coaching + team development with North American team visioning strategy
- **Better by Design (NZ regions)** Design Thinking coaching of organisations across NZ to a CEO level including advanced skill coaching of other coaches
- **Frucor Suntory (Australasia)** Innovation leadership coaching and team development
- **Gallagher (NZ + US)** Future of Work leadership explorations with in-person and online collaborations
- **Internal Affairs (NZ + UK + South Korea + Estonia)** Strategic visioning with digital government leaders from United Kingdom, South Korea, Estonia and NZ
- **Microsoft (NZ)** Future exploration with leadership team and all NZ staff with blended on and offline collaboration
- **Public Sector Network (Australasia)** Innovation and Design Thinking training of government agencies across multiple cities in Australia and New Zealand
- **Prime Minister's Business Advisory Council (NZ)** Strategic visioning with Advisory Council and Māori business leaders exploring the Future of Work
- **Xero (Australia)** Futurist keynote and collaboration with Xero's Australian app developer community

"Dave challenged us to move our modes of thinking towards longer-term future possibilities and away from just the obvious and immediate. Dave's impact on our organisation has been profound. We have aimed to develop a more free-thinking, creative approach to problem-solving and to continuously imagine what the future could look like and determine how Bluelab will evolve and thrive in that future state."

– Greg Jarvis, Chief Executive, Bluelab

"What I love most about Dave is his flexibility in adapting to the requirements of the culture of the organisation and the desired outcomes. He offers fresh perspectives and exposes you to global trends and innovations. Dave brings a huge array of tools and I have seen him take people through a journey where even people who don't consider themselves to be creative or innovative start making connections and generating new ways of thinking to start doing things differently for their business."

– Melissa Crawford, GM Future Work, Vector

"Dave Wild is a genius. A futurist, strategist and provocateur. One of the things I love about his style is his ability to project thinking into the future in a pragmatic, relatable way – he connects the information to the audience, making the future relatable and relevant to their world. He is generous with his knowledge and keen to help other people navigate their path to better thinking. He's one of those people that you can relax and let loose on a group knowing it will go well and deliver outstanding results."

– Anna Campbell, Chief People & Transformation Officer, Mitre 10

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